

Cooperation in evil: understanding the issues

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1. Introduction

1.1 *The complicity of intellectuals*

In a recent book, *Complicities: The Intellectual and Apartheid*, Mark Sanders examines the complicated rôle of South African thinkers during the apartheid era.¹ He begins with the five-volume report of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission which attributed culpability not only to specific agents, but to various groups (including the churches and “the health sector”) and to the wider community. It challenged South Africans to recognize “the little perpetrator” in each of them and to accept their responsibility both for what had happened and for ensuring that such evil is never repeated.² But, Sanders says, “until recently, there has been no full-scale philosophical exposition of complicity on which to draw”.³ He turns therefore to Émile Zola,⁴ Karl Jaspers⁵ and Jacques Derrida⁶ for an explanation of how even those who do not formally support a particular evil can live symbiotically with it and have some responsibility for it. Sanders’ book might have been enriched by some acquaintance with moral-theological reflection upon sin (original, social-structural and personal) and cooperation in evil. But his work still challenges us to consider the rôle that intellectuals – pastors, moral theologians, textbook writers, media commentators, bioethicists, ethics committee members, hospital chaplains, healthcare movers and shakers – play in complicity with evils, including those that the Church, at least, very publicly opposes.

In a world ablaze with headlines about cloning, over-the-counter abortifacients, resource shortages in hospitals, withdrawal of feeding from the unconscious, and umpteen other problems, the subject of cooperation might appear rather obscure or self-indulgent. Yet those of us who work in moral theology and especially in advising people or organizations with real dilemmas know how often cooperation issues arise. The third volume of Grisez’s tour de force, *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, excellently demonstrates just how common this is.⁷ But as Henry Davis remarked half a century ago, there is no more difficult question in the whole range of moral theology than that of

¹ Mark Sanders, *Complicities: The Intellectual and Apartheid*. London: Duke University Press 2002.

² *Ibid.* p.3.

³ *Loc. cit.*

⁴ Who in *J'accuse* (1898), an open letter to the President of France in defence of Alfred Dreyfus (the Jewish artillery officer wrongly convicted of treason), wrote: “La vérité, je la dirai... Mon devoir est de parler, je ne veux pas être complice” (“Truly, it is my duty to speak up: I will not be an accomplice to this crime.”) Sanders, *op. cit.* pp. 4-5.

⁵ Jaspers proposes a kind of “metaphysical guilt” or co-responsibility for horrendous evil in *The Question of German Guilt* (1946). He writes that “there exists a solidarity among men as human beings that makes each co-responsible for every wrong and every injustice in the world, especially for crimes committed in his presence or with his knowledge.” Sanders, *op. cit.* pp. 6-7.

⁶ Sanders, *op. cit.* p. 9, notes that “complicity – the foldedness or ‘contamination’ of oppositional pairs – has been a key concern of deconstruction from the beginning”. For Derrida complicity cannot be avoided: one chooses in order to avoid the worst.

⁷ Germain Grisez, *The Way of the Lord Jesus, Vol.3: Difficult Moral Questions* (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press 1997), including his extended essay on cooperation at pp. 871-898.

cooperation in evil.⁸ Perhaps this explains why so little has been written on it compared with the headline issues. The present book might help to fill the gap.

1.2 *Traditional distinctions*

We must all confront the issue of cooperation in evil because, especially for those who live “in the world”, it is inevitable that they will engage in such cooperation from time to time – indeed sometimes it is their duty to do so. Even Christ’s little band paid taxes some of which were no doubt used for wicked purposes; despite his entreaties, when Jesus cured the sick some of them went on to sin some more; after repeatedly evading his persecutors, Christ eventually allowed himself to be arrested, thereby occasioning his false trial and terrible execution. All sorts of wickedness goes on in our society, and we finance it through our taxes, elect leaders who allow it and fail to do much to change things. More immediately, almost anything we do can be an occasion, opportunity or means for someone else to do something wrong. To avoid all cooperation in evil would require that we abandon almost all arenas of human activity – such as family, workplace, government, health system, Church – and could well constitute a sin of omission.⁹

Reflection upon cooperation in evil begins, therefore, with some commonplace human experiences:

- we are all involved in webs of relationships which enable people (including ourselves and others) to achieve both their good ends and bad ends whether by good means or bad means; in this context our actions inevitably affect others
- which ends and means those other people choose are often beyond our control or influence
- sometimes we choose to involve ourselves in other people’s bad ends or means, by seduction or conspiracy or deliberate cooperation in that evil, making at least part of their bad willing our own;
- at other times we make no such choice, but the otherwise good things that we do foreseeably assist others to achieve their bad purposes;
- this is an example of an act with a double effect – one good and intended; the other bad, not intended but foreseen – and so the principles of cooperation are really expressions of the principle of double effect;
- accepting the bad “side-effects” of cooperation has implications for those who perform the act of cooperation, those who are assisted by it in performing their evil act, and other parties who may be affected; it is sometimes reasonable and sometimes unreasonable to engage in an act foreseeing and permitting such side-effects; and so
- people in this situation must decide whether to go ahead with their contemplated action despite its connection with the morally objectionable action of another, or alter their plans, thereby possibly foregoing achieving whatever good they had proposed.¹⁰

⁸ Cited in James F. Keenan SJ, “Prophylactics, toleration and cooperation: contemporary problems and traditional principles”. 29 (2) (June 1989) *International Philosophical Quarterly*: 209 and “Collaboration and cooperation in Catholic health care”. 77 (April 2000) *Australasian Catholic Record*: 163.

⁹ Cf. 1 Cor 5:9-10. Grisez *op. cit.* p. 871: “some unreflective and/or unsophisticated people imagine problems regarding co-operation can (and perhaps should) be avoided by altogether avoiding co-operation. That, however, is virtually impossible and sometimes inconsistent with doing one’s duty.”

¹⁰ See M. Cathleen Kaveny, “Appropriation of Evil: cooperation’s mirror image”. 61 (June 2000) *Theological Studies*: 280-83. She makes a persuasive case for the category of “appropriation of evil” as a mirror image of cooperation in evil.

3.4 *Pluralism*

Another “exception” proposed by, for instance, Lewis, is that if there is a difference of opinion amongst theologians or conscientious health professionals there must be latitude for practitioners and patients to decide for themselves.⁸⁰ Yet on almost every bioethical teaching of the Church there are theologians or practitioners who disagree. As early as the 1975 *Declaration* the CDF saw this coming and made the point that widespread theological dissent from the Church’s teaching on a matter such as contraception or sterilization has no doctrinal significance in itself. Theologians do not offer “a theological source which the faithful might invoke, forsaking the authentic magisterium for the private opinions of theologians who dissent from it.”⁸¹

3.5 *Reasons to cooperate and not to cooperate*

There are lots of good reasons to cooperate materially in any particular evil. There is the good aimed at in the cooperator’s own chosen purpose. There are the spin-offs in terms of keeping one’s job or position in the healthcare world, such as the opportunity to do all the other good things which the job or position allows (e.g. saving, healing and caring for others); the income this brings, thereby supporting a reasonable life-style for oneself and one’s dependents or a reasonable margin for the institution to focus on its mission; the friendship with the others with whom one works; and so on. When considering whether to engage in an action which has the foreseeable effect of assisting someone else’s wrongful purposes, we must ask ourselves: how important are the benefits expected from this action, how probable, how lasting, how extensive and for whom? What kind of loss or harm would result (and how serious, and for whom...) from foregoing this proposed action? People with dependents, for instance, have more to lose from refusing to take part in certain procedures, than do people with no dependents. People who can readily get another good job will be freer to say no. Someone who cannot readily fulfil some important responsibility, except by agreeing to cooperate materially, will have more reason to do so than someone with a ready, morally acceptable alternative.

On the other hand, for reasons which I will explore in the next part of my paper, there are strong reasons not to cooperate in many cases. Given the risks to self and others both of material cooperation in evil and of foregoing acts which materially assist someone else’s evil acts, *what would count as relevant and sufficient and even decisive reasons* to take such risks or permit such evil foreseen side-effects? To cooperate materially in evil a more serious reason is required:

- the graver (or more probable or more lasting or more extensive or less preventable) the evil of the principal agent’s act in itself;
- the graver (or more probable or more lasting or less preventable) is the harm which may be caused to the principal agent, e.g. by helping and even apparently encouraging him/her to engage in a wrongful act and possibly further wrongful acts, with all the moral and spiritual consequences of that for the principal agent;
- the graver (or more probable or more lasting or more extensive or less preventable) is the harm which may be caused to third parties, especially the innocent, e.g. by assisting or apparently encouraging the principal agent to do something which damages third parties or their interests, perhaps giving the impression that, on the cooperator’s view, the wrong done is trivial; or by engaging in activity which may foreseeably corrupt third party observers;

⁸⁰ Lewis *op. cit.* p. 162.

⁸¹ CDF, *Quaecumque sterilizatio*: §2. See also CDF, *Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian* (1990).

- the graver (or more probable or more lasting or less preventable) is the harm which may be caused to the cooperator him/herself, e.g. by inclining the cooperator to do similar acts in the future and worse; by gradually corrupting him/her; by compromising the cooperator's ability to give witness to true values; by damaging his/her relationship with God, the Church and fellows;
- the harder it is to protest the evil and/or to avoid or minimize scandal in both the ordinary sense and, more importantly, in the theological sense of leading people into sin;⁸²
- the more easily the same good could be achieved by another course of action without similar or worse side-effects; and
- the more difficult it would be for the principal agent to proceed without the cooperator's involvement.⁸³

Some writers would add immediacy and proximity to this list of factors. But for reasons I have explored previously, the most important factors in determining the reasonableness of a particular instance of material cooperation will only sometimes correlate with immediacy and proximity.⁸⁴

All these matters are in fact difficult to assess and usually incommensurable with each other and with the goods hoped to be achieved by the cooperator's act. After appropriate moral reasoning and discernment, two people of good will and right reason might come to a different judgment. In this situation, instead of high-blown polemic and name-calling, respectful dialogue is required and possibly some judgment from a competent authority.

3.6 *Different moral worldviews*

Furthermore, the principles of cooperation highlight a difference in moral worldview. For some there are moral absolutes, such as that against formal cooperation, which cannot be compromised in any weighing exercise, and even merely material cooperation in another's wrongdoing is a serious matter requiring justification.⁸⁵ Morality on this account is part of the vocation to human perfection

⁸² See Griese *op. cit.* pp. 414-6 on "Dissipating the appearances of evil in scandal situations".

⁸³ Grisez *op. cit.* Vol. 3 (1997), p. 883: "In considering bad effects... one must take several different measures of magnitude into account. How extensive is the damage?... How lasting is it?... How greatly will the damage disrupt the person's life?... In regard to adverse effects on the cooperator's feelings and dispositions, the extent of injury depends on the likely seriousness of their negative effect on his or her subsequent actions. In regard to moral detriment to the wrongdoer, occasions of sin for the cooperator, and scandal to third parties, the extent of injury to the person adversely affected depends on whether the sin is or would be venial or mortal, less or more grave, more or less likely to be repented. In regard to tensions with victims of wrongdoing, the bad effect can be a more or less serious impediment to a good relationship that should be more or less central to the lives of those involved. In regard to impairment of the cooperator's witness and other obstacles to fulfilling his or her vocation, the bad effects can be a more or less serious detriment to serving goods whose service is more or less central to a person's vocation..."

⁸⁴ Fisher, "Co-operation in evil." As Grisez (*op. cit.* Vol. 3 (1997), p. 890) points out, "involvement in others' wrongdoing usually is more likely to impede a cooperator's witness, be an occasion of sin to him or her, have bad moral effects on the wrongdoer, and scandalize others if it is immediate material cooperation than if it is mediate, and, when mediate, if it is proximate than if it is remote. Still, closeness of involvement is morally insignificant unless correlated with some factor that affects the strength of a reason not to cooperate."

⁸⁵ Grisez, *op. cit.* Vol. 3 (1997), p. 871: "insofar as doing anything facilitates or contributes to another's wrongdoing, it cannot serve an authentic common good. If one is unjustifiably involved in another's wrongdoing, one is doing evil, and that cannot serve good or build up genuine community even with a

or holiness under grace, and the (rebuttable) presumption is *against* cooperating even materially, unless there is a sufficiently strong reason to warrant proceeding.⁸⁶ Such an approach seems to underlie the various magisterial judgments outlined in the first half of this paper.

There are, however, a good many “tax-lawyer” moralists who seem to regard the moral law as a series of constraints on human freedom and happiness, rather than the roadmap to both. On this approach the rôle of the moral adviser is to help people find a way around the moral law or at least a way of sailing as close to the wind as possible without falling in the water. Preference fulfilment and social acceptability are paramount; conversion and self-sacrifice have little place here. Using traditional casuist categories,⁸⁷ more 1970s situationism⁸⁸ or proportionalism,⁸⁹ or the new (and otherwise very attractive) talk of virtue and narrative,⁹⁰ these writers end up reducing almost all cases of cooperation in evil to material not formal cooperation and almost all cases of material cooperation to permissible cooperation. Duress, probable opinion, proportionate reason, the common good, prudence and epikeia – such very traditional-sounding labels are attached to these novel schemes for paying less moral tax. And those who come to conclusions in line with the magisterium are quickly dismissed as “scrupulous”, “conservative” and “inhuman”.

I do not mean to suggest that there are the only two moral worldviews or that everyone (or anyone) fits neatly and clearly into one or the other. Rather I am suggesting that two polarities are particularly evident in the scant literature on cooperation and that this might help to explain why two people can describe and judge the same example of cooperation so differently. While the range of moral approaches at one pole offers a “line of best fit” for the several recent Church documents

wrongdoer; if one is justifiably involved in another’s wrongdoing, community is prevented or damaged insofar as the other’s bad will and one’s good will are opposed, at least with respect to that matter.”

⁸⁶ Amongst the authors one might associate with such an approach are John Paul II, Benedict Ashley, Joseph Boyle, Romanus Cessario OP, Augustine di Noia OP, Robert George, Germain Grisez, William E. May, Ralph M’Inerney, Livio Melina, Servais Pinckaers OP and Janet Smith.

⁸⁷ *E.g.* Keenan, in the several places cited.

⁸⁸ Lewis *op. cit.*, for instance, presents the principles of cooperation as tools which should not be applied in a “narrow and blinkered way” but transcended as required in the quest for “better and more creative solutions in particular circumstances”. He suggests that individual conscience must have primacy and that the serious obligation to respect the freedom of others means that one should be willing in some cases to cooperate in what is objectively evil but not so considered by the principal agent. Where this leaves the conscience of the cooperator is far from clear...

⁸⁹ The second of St Alphonsus’ conditions for the moral acceptability of material cooperation is that the cooperator have in view as his end a reason that is “just” and “proportioned” to the gravity of the wrongdoing to which his action contributes and the moral proximity of that contribution to the wrongful deed. Grisez (*op. cit.* Vol. 3 (1997), p. 878) has explored well some of the deficiencies of this formulation of what makes some material cooperation licit and other material cooperation illicit and has proposed a more precise analysis which I, for one, find persuasive. Grisez explains that the only real issue of “proportion” here is the necessary comparison between reasons for engaging in the act of material cooperation and reasons for not doing so. The graver the evil assisted and the more closely the cooperator is involved, Alphonsus might be read to suggest, the more serious would the cooperator’s reasons have to be for going ahead with his own action. Fair enough. But, as Grisez points out, there will be other reasons not to cooperate which are not well captured by Alphonsus’ formulation: the “psychological” effects on oneself and effects on one’s future options; the effects on the instigator and the cooperator’s relationship with him or her; the effects on third parties and the cooperator’s relationships with them. “The magnitude of the various bad side effects, how likely they are to occur, and how much confidence the cooperator has in his or her own judgments also can affect the strength of the reasons to forgo an act that would constitute material cooperation.”

⁹⁰ In his passionate defence of *The Many Faces of AIDS* Keenan praises the “new and profoundly challenging ideas” that are replacing the old categories of cooperation in evil and the like. “Attempts to replace duties with virtues, the classical with the historical, the object with the acting person, the normative with the narrative are emerging.” (Keenan, “Prophylactics...” 219)

considered above, those gathered around the other pole can offer no such account and so tend to dissent on many issues. This might in turn help explain why the “debate” over such issues so often generates more heat than light.

4. Why it matters so much

4.1 *Cooperation, the love of God and the Christification of the human person*

I want to conclude this paper by suggesting three reasons why the question of the permissibility of cooperation in evil matters so much and why one would be reluctant to engage in even material cooperation in serious evil unless there were very persuasive reasons to do so.

First, *we must love the Lord our God* with all our minds and wills.⁹¹ The goal of human life is the pursuit of holiness – becoming lights to the world, more and more conformed to Christ, living stones of God’s house and temples of his Holy Spirit, perfect like our Heavenly Father.⁹² As John Paul II wrote in *Veritatis splendor*:

The new evangelization will show its authenticity and unleash all its missionary force when it is carried out through the gift not only of the word proclaimed but also of the word lived. In particular, the life of holiness which is resplendent in so many members of the People of God, humble and often unseen, constitutes the simplest and most attractive way to perceive at once the beauty of truth, the liberating force of God’s love, and the value of unconditional fidelity to all the demands of the Lord’s law, even in the most difficult situations. For this reason, the Church, as a wise teacher of morality, has always invited believers to seek and to find in the Saints, and above all in the Virgin Mother of God “full of grace” and “all-holy”, the model, the strength and the joy needed to live a life in accordance with God’s commandments and the Beatitudes of the Gospel... The life of holiness thus brings to full expression and effectiveness the threefold and unitary *munus propheticum, sacerdotale et regale* which every Christian receives as a gift by being born again “of water and the Spirit” in Baptism...⁹³

Yet so often we fail not just to reach but even to pursue this goal. Instead of offering a distinctively Christian form of witness to the life of God’s kingdom, even to the point of martyrdom, we settle for more comfortable collaboration with the powers of this world. As Paul puts it so graphically, rather than lifting up Christ and his Church to God we take them down into the bed of the prostitute.⁹⁴ In so doing we damage our relationship with God, making God a cooperator in evil, for it is only by God’s power that we are supported in being and by God’s permissive will that we are free to do what ill we do. We also compromise our ability to give witness to the true and the good as *alteri Christi*, and so undermine the progress of the Gospel. A keen sense of the privilege that it is to be apostles and prophets, saints and even martyrs, and a deep commitment to the new evangelisation, will give us a greater sensitivity to the issues of cooperation in evil than any purely secular account which sees the principles of cooperation as, at best, useful action guides and, at worst, hindrances to human freedom and happiness.⁹⁵

⁹¹ Mt 22:35-38; Lk 10:25-28.

⁹² Mt ch. 5; Lk 6:36 etc; Rom 12:1-2, 11-14; ch. 6; 1 Cor 2:16; 3:10, 16-17; 6:19-20; 12:27; 2 Cor 6:3-10; Eph 2:19-22; Phil 1:27; 3:17-21; Col 3:12-17; 1 Thess 5:5-11; 2 Thess 3:13. See also Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* on the universal call to holiness.

⁹³ John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*: §107.

⁹⁴ 1 Cor 6:15-17.

⁹⁵ Catholic Health Australia, *Code of Ethical Standards*... §8.17: “Material cooperation may also compromise one’s ability to witness to certain values or principles. Catholic facilities and their professionals share in the Church’s “prophetic” calling to witness to the truth of the Gospel, and so they

4.2 *Cooperation, the love of neighbour and mission to others*

In addition to and as an expression of whole-hearted love of God *we must love our neighbours*.⁹⁶ This is a large part of the reason for the presumption *against* material cooperation in evil as it is for the case *for* material cooperation. Out of love of our neighbours we desire to help them and to help them do good. We need a very serious reason indeed to do anything that foreseeably helps them to do serious evil, given the potential moral and spiritual consequences for them. But cooperation in evil, especially by “good” people and especially when “successful”, can reassure sinners and encourage obduracy.⁹⁷ Innocent third parties such as unborn children can also be harmed. And onlookers can be misled. What we do will inspire and educate or else mislead others; it will encourage those who imitate us to acquire virtues or vices. The example that healthcare administrators and senior clinicians give to juniors can, for example, elevate or corrupt those juniors.⁹⁸ Thus Eleazar declared that he would rather die painfully than lead the young to disobey God’s holy law,⁹⁹ Our Lord inveighed against those who corrupt others¹⁰⁰ and Paul counselled caution lest we scandalise our brothers even at table.¹⁰¹

will be wary of doing anything which might compromise the mission of the facility or the Church more broadly. The reasons which would justify cooperation by institutions sponsored by the Church are usually required to be more stringent than they need to be in the case of individuals, since institutions have a higher public profile and a correspondingly greater prophetic responsibility. The best way to avoid compromising that witness is for the facility or individual to explain their basic commitments clearly and publicly, and to testify to them in ways which help to ensure there is no misunderstanding that they have lessened their commitment to those values.”

⁹⁶ Mt 22:39-40; Lk 10:27-37; Rom 12:9-10.

⁹⁷ Grisez, *op. cit.* Vol.3 (1997), pp. 880-881.

⁹⁸ Thus Grisez, *op. cit.* Vol.3 (1997), p. 881: “Third parties can be scandalized by someone’s material cooperation. This can happen in various ways. Sometimes the fact that ‘good’ people are involved makes wrongdoing seem not so wrong and provides material for rationalization and self-deception by people tempted to undertake the same sort of wrong. Perhaps more often the material cooperation of ‘good’ people leads others to cooperate formally or wrongly, even if only materially. Thus, if medical residents, compelled to choose between giving up their careers and materially cooperating in morally unacceptable procedures, give in to the pressure, their example may lead other health care personnel, who could resist without great sacrifice, to cooperate materially when they should not. This bad effect might suffice to require the residents to forgo what otherwise would be morally acceptable material cooperation.”

⁹⁹ “Now they tried to make the elderly and noble Professor Eleazar eat pork. But he preferred an honourable death to a tainted life and was determined never to break God’s law. So he spat out the meat and freely submitted to torture. His long-time friends amongst those in charge of the unlawful sacrifice took him aside and urged him to save himself by bringing along some meat of his own choosing and pretending it was the meat of the pagan sacrifices. But Eleazar had lived virtuously since childhood, had earned his grey hairs with distinction and had faithfully followed God’s holy Law. Making a high resolve, worthy of such a man, he declared himself quickly, saying he’d rather go to hell. “Such dissimulation would be unworthy of someone my age,” he said. “What if the young should think that in my ninetieth year I’ve changed to some alien religion. It would defile my life and disgrace my old age if just for the sake of living a little longer I should lead the young astray by my pretence. In any case, even if I can evade the punishment of men for a time, I can never escape the grip of the Almighty. Better for me to submit manfully now, act my age and leave to the young an example of how to live and die well.” He was led to execution and those who had only a little while ago conspired to save him now turned against him, because they thought his words sheer madness. And so he died, leaving us all an example of virtue and fortitude.” (2 Macc 6:18-31)

¹⁰⁰ “If any man therefore sets aside even the least of the Law’s demands and teaches others to do the same, he will be least in the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:19); “Woe to the world because of the things that cause sin! Such things must come, but woe to the one through whom they come.” (Mt 18:7 *cf.* Lk 17:1-2);

All these concerns, it seems to me, depend for their bite upon two things. First, a strong sense of moral solidarity with others: that we are, contrary to Cain, our brothers' and sisters' keepers; that our example does, as the Maccabean heroes saw, impact upon those around us; that as Jesus commanded we must always be lights to the world, trying to draw people into the life of God's kingdom and wary of ever being an obstacle to their entry; that our actions, as Paul insisted, do affect the whole body of Christ. The contemporary secular writer on complicity, Mark Sanders, has likewise been concerned to show that a rich sense of human "folded-together-ness" will yield a much broader sense of co-responsibility for evils than will an individualism which focuses only upon personal blame, especially for grave acts of commission.¹⁰² For this very reason, concerns about material cooperation in evil are likely to be less keenly felt in cultures strongly affected by Dutch-Calvinist or Anglo-American individualism. But recent philosophical work on the rôle of community and tradition in the formation of moral character and theological work on original and social sin suggest that we ignore the social dimension of our personal choices at our peril.¹⁰³

Furthermore, these concerns depend for their piquancy upon a high sense of the moral possibilities of one's neighbour. I have suggested above that, all too often, "harm minimisation" programmes at least implicitly amount to giving up on the other party as beyond anything better.¹⁰⁴ Catholic healthcare agencies must always seek to offer our society witness to the dignity of the human person as a free and responsible agent made for greatness and therefore worthy of our high expectations and our best care.

"Better to have a millstone tied around your neck and be thrown into the sea than to cause one of these little ones to be led into sin" (Mt 18:16); "Woe to you scribes and pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in men's faces" (Mt 23:13); "Woe to you scribes and pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over seas and land to win a convert and then make him twice as fit for hell as you are yourselves"(Mt 23:15).

¹⁰¹ 1 Cor 8:10-13; 10:25-29; Rom 14:1-3, 15, 20-21. cf. CCC 2284 and 2287: "Scandal is an attitude or behaviour which leads another to do evil... Anyone who uses the power at his disposal in such a way that it leads others to do wrong becomes guilty of scandal and responsible for the evil that he has directly or indirectly encouraged."

¹⁰² Sanders, *op. cit.*

¹⁰³ Amongst those who have written about the communitarian basis of human valuing and choice, Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor and Michael Sandel are best known. On original and social-structural sin see: John Paul II, *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*: Apostolic Exhortation on Confession, 2 December, 1984: esp. §16 and John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*: Encyclical on Social Concerns, 30 December, 1987: §46.

¹⁰⁴ "Harm minimization" has become the catch-phrase for all sorts of programmes, including the nudge-nudge-wink-wink strategy of some parents, schools and pastors who tell their charges (perhaps cynically, perhaps well-meaningly) "if you can't be good, be careful". Beginning with "if you can't" falsely implies that the particular behaviour — sexual promiscuity, abortion, substance abuse, speeding — is somehow unavoidable. Grisez (*op. cit.* Vol.3 (1997), pp. 98-102) shows that this is not only incompatible with sound philosophy but also with defined Catholic teaching. Of course addicts are in a different category to those who simply choose to take drugs, and youthful sexual experimenters in a different category to predatory adults. There are degrees of gravity, and in some cases personal responsibility may be reduced. But reverence for the human person, hope even amongst great difficulties and faith in the power of divine grace counsel against despairing of anyone, even adolescents and addicts. Many people do in fact overcome vices and addictions, but that is only likely to happen if we as a community continue to hold out the hope (and provide the support) that make this possible. If, on the other hand, we class people amongst the "moral incurables", best dealt with by damage limitation measures, then we may only confirm the despondency that drives or maintains many in their tragic situation. It is hard to see how condom counselling and injecting rooms can avoid communicating the message to the users, especially young people: "To be honest we don't have much faith in you, and we do not really expect you to give up sex/drugs. It would be nice if you did, and we'd help you if you showed willing. But since you probably won't, we'll at least help you avoid harming yourself or others."

4.3 *Cooperation, the love of self and authenticity of life*

Christ commands that we *love* our neighbours as *ourselves*. Appropriate self-love includes an abiding concern for the kinds of persons we become as a result of our choices. Much reflection upon the nature of the human act, virtue, and implicitness, immediacy and proximity in cooperation reflects a sharp awareness of the reflexive effects of human choice and habit, and of how corrupting cooperation can be. As Cathleen Kaveny has pointed out:

The Catholic moral tradition is agent-centred. According to this tradition, the most significant aspect of a human action is the way in which it shapes the character of the person who performs it. Thus, according to traditional Catholic doctrine, individuals who engage in deliberate evildoing harm themselves far more than they do those who suffer injustice at their hands... Agents who engage in actions [foreseeably but unintentionally resulting in the death of a human being], particularly if they do so repeatedly, can accustom their minds and hearts to causing the death of another human being, albeit unintentionally... The experience of causing the death of a fellow human being can be brutalizing, even if it is justified. While not sinful in itself, it can make sinning in the future far easier.¹⁰⁵

This consciousness of the self-creative effects of choice and thus of the burden of personal responsibility¹⁰⁶ and integrity¹⁰⁷ helps explain Christ's apparently extreme exhortations – to cut off from ourselves everything that might cause us to sin and enter heaven disabled rather than hell with all our limbs; to avoid sexual promiscuity, violence and acquisitiveness not just of action but even of the mind; and to be ever conscious of that which emerges from the deepest recesses of the human heart.¹⁰⁸ A keen sense of who we are, of our Christian identity and vocation, is essential to moral discernment in all difficult cases. But a healthy resistance to occasions of, temptations to, and habits of sin is especially necessary when discerning whether to cooperate materially.¹⁰⁹ Sometimes this

¹⁰⁵ Kaveny, *op. cit.* pp. 303-4 citing Vatican II, *Gaudium et spes* §27.

¹⁰⁶ John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*: §74: "Formal cooperation in evil... can never be justified either by invoking respect for the freedom of others or by appealing to the fact that civil law permits it or requires it. Each individual in fact has moral responsibility for the acts which he personally performs; no one can be exempted from this responsibility, and on the basis of it everyone will be judged by God himself (*cf.* Rom 2:6; 14:12)."

¹⁰⁷ Kaveny, *op. cit.* p. 306 notes that "unless the cooperator exercises great vigilance, the principal agent's description of that action could 'seep' into the cooperator's moral identity, by affecting the self-conception of the kinds of acts of which he or she is capable... Particularly if working in very close quarters with the principal agent, it is very difficult for a cooperator not to get swept up into the principal agent's project in such a way that he or she wills its success."

¹⁰⁸ Mt ch 5; 12:33-35; 15:10-20; 18:8-9; 23:25-28; Mk 7:20-21; Lk 12:34.

¹⁰⁹ One bad side effect of some material cooperation is the temptation to cooperate formally. There are two ways this might happen. First, one may so often, repeatedly, habitually and unreflectively engage in some act of material cooperation that one becomes blasé about it, dulled to the evil side-effects, and happy enough to admit them as one's intention. Second, cooperation often involves engaging in a team relationship with the principal wrongdoer(s) and can thus lead to deeper involvement, including a sharing of purposes. Thus, merely material cooperation can easily become the occasion of formal cooperation. This might explain why the traditional advice has been that the more remote the cooperation, the easier it is to justify. Grisez (*op. cit.* 1997, pp. 879-880) observes: "In materially cooperating, one's very accepting of the action's primary bad side effects—its contribution to another's wrongdoing and that wrongdoing's bad effects—can have bad effects on oneself. One's feelings can be adversely affected... Performance, especially repeated performance, tends to become habitual; interaction with wrongdoers tends to generate psychological bonds and interdependence. Thus, cooperation often leads to opportunities and temptations to engage in further cooperation. Even if the initial cooperation otherwise is morally acceptable material cooperation, the further cooperation may be