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CORPORATE COMPLICITY IN ECONOMIC WRONGDOING OR IN COLLECTIVE HARMS: A FRAMEWORK FOR IMPUTING INDIVIDUAL FIRM RESPONSIBILITY

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Abstract

The scholastic principles of double effect and legitimate material cooperation with wrongdoing are essential tools in disentangling firm responsibility or liability for facilitating others' wrongdoing or contributing to a collective harm. Implementing these principles in business ethics requires further distinctions on the different types of material cooperation. Moreover, these conceptual tools can be sharpened even further by situating them within a much larger framework of analysis that takes into account the capacity of the moral agent(s), the nature of the injury, and the causal relations.

Foundational tools

The scholastic principles of double effect and of legitimate material cooperation are the obvious building blocks for an analytical framework that weighs relative harms and benefits, even as it imputes individual responsibility. In his exposition on whether or not it is lawful to kill in self-defense, Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) proposes a framework that has come to be known as the principle of double effect (PDE), sometimes known as the doctrine of double effect or double-effect reasoning.[1] An act that leads to both good and bad consequences is morally permissible if:

- The act considered in itself is not wrong.
- The agent does not intend the resulting evil either as the goal or as a means.
- The resulting good outweighs the ill effects, and the agent has exercised care in mitigating or avoiding the unintended deleterious consequences (Cavanaugh, 2006, 36).

In the principle of legitimate material cooperation, Alphonsus Liguori (1696-1787) argues that material cooperation[2] is morally licit if:

- The cooperator's act is not evil in itself.
- The cooperator is motivated by a good intention.
- The cooperator's reason is proportioned to:
    - the gravity of the perpetrator's wrongdoing.
    - his/her proximity to the wrongdoing.[3]

While there is overlap in some of their requisite conditions, the principles of double effect and legitimate material cooperation are not identical. As will become apparent in the following model, they each have their respective functions.

Some suggest that the framework of "cooperation with evil" is merely a special case of the principle of double effect.[4] Others disagree with such conflation and note critical differences between these two concepts.[5] To begin with, they argue that double effect involves a single object (act) that has a mix of good and harmful consequences. In contrast, material cooperation entails two distinct acts, the

1. See Aquinas (1947-1948, II-II, q. 64, a. 7, reply, emphasis original). Cavanaugh (2003, 149) is emphatic that we should not call this a "principle" or a "doctrine" because it gives the wrong impression that it is an authoritative religious teaching rather than a philosophical way of thinking. Hence, he suggests using "double-effect reasoning." For this study, I will call it the principle of double effect in line with common usage.
2. Kaveny (2000) argues that some issues are better described in terms of "appropriation of evil" instead of the traditional "cooperation with evil." For example, we have the case of benefitting from scientific research from aborted fetuses or from embryonic stem cell research.
3. This last condition is related to our earlier differentiation between *immediate versus mediate* material cooperation and *proximate versus remote* material cooperation.
4. See, for example, Oderberg (2004, 211). In fact, Oderberg argues that the ethics of cooperation in wrongdoing and its ultimate dependence on the principle of double effect are an indirect validation of the latter.
5. Keenan and Kopfensteiner (1995, 26-27)

cooperator's and the wrongdoer's. Thus, in double effect, we have only one moral agent whose critical choice is whether nor not to proceed with an intended act that has mixed outcomes. In contrast, material cooperation entails two separate moral agents, and the key issue is whether or not the cooperator will get involved in the wrongdoer's misdeeds. Cases of material cooperation are more frequently encountered than that of double effect.

No doubt, double effect and material cooperation are two distinct principles with their particular uses. Nevertheless, both concepts converge. Our primary issue is that of material cooperation—whether or not it is morally licit to unintentionally facilitate someone's wrongdoing as a by-product of our economic choices. However, it is clear that we have to weigh the good that we intend with our action vis-à-vis someone's wrongdoing which we inadvertently promote—an instance of double effect.

Building on these principles

An agent's capability, available resources, and social location determine the individual's responsibility for collective harms. The degree of responsibility is determined by the agent's ability to act otherwise. The following typology can facilitate discourse on the blameworthiness of the various types of material cooperation.

Avertible versus *inavertible material cooperation*

The first normative distinction is whether or not the proposed act is avertible or inavertible material cooperation. Given the foreseen problematic outcomes from our actions, are there alternatives that can achieve our goals without the harmful effects? Are there options that might produce second-best outcomes that are close enough to our desired ends without the injurious side effects? An affirmative answer to either of these questions means that our material cooperation is avertible. Should we persist in our original course of action despite the availability of less hurtful substitutes, then we deserve censure for the unnecessary harms we have brought about.[6]

Permissible versus *impermissible material cooperation*

If there are no feasible alternatives, our next distinction is to evaluate whether or not we have permissible or impermissible material cooperation. This is where we evaluate the three aforesaid conditions. Actions that fail to satisfy all three criteria are impermissible material cooperation and are therefore blameworthy.[7]

Permissible but liable versus *permissible and non-liable material cooperation*

Actions that satisfy the three conditions are permissible material cooperation. However, even as they are permissible, such material cooperation does not absolve the cooperator of responsibility. The cooperator is freed merely from blameworthiness but not from the liability of mitigating the resulting harmful consequences, to the extent possible. This applies especially to cases of unintended but foreseen consequences (indirect voluntary acts).[8] Cooperators who fail to make good on these liabilities are blameworthy. However, they are faulted not for having caused the deleterious consequences, but for failing to ameliorate these unavoidable harms.[9] Examples of permissible acts that do not carry liabilities

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6. For example, a supermarket may refuse to carry items from a meat plant that has been repeatedly fined for health and labor standards violation. By doing so, the supermarket seeks to protect its shoppers from unsafe products and also avoid being made party to the food manufacturer's abusive employment conditions. This is an example of an avertible material cooperation because there are numerous other suppliers without such problems. An example of an inavertible material cooperation is in the case of small towns where options for employment, shopping, and other economic activities are limited. One may have to patronize or work for companies with unethical business practices in an effort to avert even more serious harms.

7. For example, the City of Baltimore sued Wells Fargo for pushing its loan officers to promote subprime loans among borrowers who could have qualified for better terms or who should not have been given housing loans to begin with. Too many subprime loans were made at unrealistic terms leading to many blighted neighborhoods in Baltimore because of foreclosures. One of the city's star witnesses in the law suit is a former Wells Fargo champion saleswoman-loan officer who had sold millions of such subprime loans for the bank. See Price (2009). With the benefit of hindsight, she regrets having been party to such wrongdoing. The broker and the bank's resulting commissions from these lucrative subprime loans were ill-gotten gains from duping unsuspecting, vulnerable borrowers. In this case, the broker's material cooperation with Wells Fargo is immediate since her action is indistinguishable from the bank's (pushing inappropriate loans that were sure to fail or were grossly disadvantageous for the clients but profitable for the broker and the bank). The broker is in an impermissible material cooperation. She could not satisfy any of the three necessary conditions for legitimate material cooperation.

8. See Gonsalves (1990, 45).

9. For example, logging companies may be blameworthy, not for cutting down trees, but for failing to replant trees in those areas they have cleared.

are the instances of excusable[10] or justified[11] material cooperation.

Blameworthy versus *faultless material cooperation*

At the end of this decision tree diagram is either blameworthy or faultless material cooperation. Instances of blameworthy material cooperation include those that are avertible (but pursued nonetheless), those that are impermissible (but pursued nonetheless), and those that are permissible with accompanying liabilities that are then left unattended. Cases of faultless material cooperation are those that are permissible and do not carry liabilities, as in the case of excusable or justified material cooperation, or those that are permissible for which liabilities had been fulfilled. The tree diagram allows us to compare the gravity of different types of blameworthiness relative to each other. *Ceteris paribus*, we can say that there is a prima facie case for ranking degree of culpability in the following diminishing order of severity:

- avertible material cooperation (e.g., buying poached ivory)
- inavertible but impermissible material cooperation (e.g., aiding and abetting repressive oil exporting nations)
- permissible material cooperation with attendant liabilities that are ignored (e.g., leaving severe pecuniary externalities unattended)

Character and capacity of actors

A major area of consideration in the scholastic principles of double effect and material cooperation is the character and the capabilities of the moral agent(s) involved in the wrongdoing or in the collective harm. After all, the agent's capacity partially determines the ability to head off the ensuing harm or the wrongdoing.

A. Knowledge and intention

Knowledge and intention are at the heart of moral and legal culpability. Thus, in the scholastic formulation of cooperation with evil, an agent whose factual causal contribution to the harm constitutes remote material cooperation at best, but who intends the harm just like the primary wrongdoer is deemed to be in formal cooperation. To intend the evil despite one's minor causal contribution is to be in formal cooperation with the evildoer. In law, ethics, and moral theology, the actor's knowledge and intention are key considerations in the ascription of personal culpability.

For example, in the notion of a justly attachable cause, the defendant must have intended the outcome-event.[12] Or, recall the complicity and parallel acts principles. Both principles are similar in the sense that they describe agents acting similarly. However, the key difference between these two principles is the central importance of shared intentionality in the complicity principle but not in the parallel acts principle wherein agents act similarly but independently of each other. The shared intentionality under the complicity principle makes their individual and collective culpability that much greater.

Or, take the case of the *Uniform Commercial Code*. It has a discernible triage (a "commercial culpability scale") whereby losses are apportioned based on the following criteria in order of descending blameworthiness:

- the "intention principle" in which those who intentionally brought about the loss-creating situation are most culpable
- the "knowledge principle" in which those who had the best knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the loss are next most culpable
- the "negligence principle" in which whose who should have foreseen the loss-creating situation

10. A poor U.S. household that is compelled to buy sweatshop items to make ends meet is an instance of an excusable material cooperation in the sweatshop's exploitation of its workers.

11. Charitable NGOs and multilateral development agencies that continue to work in North Korea, Myanmar, and Darfur are in effect relieving these odious governments of their duties to take care of their own citizens. Such external assistance indirectly leaves these autocratic regimes with more resources to persist in their wrongdoing. These NGOs and multilateral agencies can be described to be in justifiable material cooperation. Their laudable actions prevent even greater harms in the absence of their services.

12. Edgerton (1924, 373-75)

are next most culpable

- the "strict liability principle" in which those who are in the best position to avoid the loss at least cost are the next most culpable.[13]

In other words, *ceteris paribus*, "the intentional actor is more culpable than the knowing actor,"[14] the knowing actor is more culpable than the negligent actor, and the negligent actor is more culpable than the actor best placed to avoid the loss at least cost. Observe the relative importance of intention and knowledge in the imputation of responsibility.

Knowledge and intention are necessary conditions for economic complicity. Unlike torts in which remedy is sought *ex post* for an injury, economic complicity often deals with ongoing wrongdoing. Consequently, complicit economic actors are fully aware of the causal link between their activity and the ultimate harm. There is ample empirical evidence to alert them to the blameworthy nature of their acts, or at least to the harmful ripple effects of their economic choices. For example, cigarette manufacturers, wholesalers, and retailers are fully aware (or at least should be aware) of the overwhelming empirical evidence linking tobacco use and a wide variety of diseases. Knowledge of the consequences and the blameworthiness of their actions is a necessary condition to faulty material cooperation.[15]

There is a second reason for why the moral agent's knowledge is central to our study. Economic complicity has a much higher bar to satisfy compared to other types of economic responsibility. For example, all the major participants in the 2008 global banking crisis (from the reckless subprime mortgage lenders to the highly leveraged investment bankers and insurers) can be said to be morally responsible for the harm suffered by ordinary citizens who lost their life savings in the wake of the crisis. However, we do not call them complicit because at the time of their actions, they did not intend nor were they aware of the consequences of their actions on the global financial system.[16] If lenders, bankers, and insurers persist in these practices today, knowing what they know now, they would be gravely complicit in putting the global financial system at risk. *Ex ante* knowledge and intention are critical in identifying who is complicit in economic wrongdoing. We add the following in our framework:

Accountability is a function of the moral agents' knowledge and intention.

B. Voluntariness and capacity to act

The "commercial culpability scale" also highlights the importance of the actors' capacity to act. In particular, note the weight accorded to both foresight and loss-avoidance. The same is true in tort law which is said to have four distinct functions, namely: to distribute the losses, to let "deep pockets" bear the cost of the damage, to deter future losses through political mechanisms, or to minimize losses through market incentives.[17] Again, observe how these functions are ultimately related to the parties' relative capacity for action.

Take the case of negligence. This is one of the principal criteria used extensively in tort law. Courts have often adjudicated damage claims on the basis of which party had been negligent in not foreseeing the risk of harm either before or at the time of the injurious act. An indication of the importance accorded to negligence is the courts' use of objective foreseeability rather than a mere subjective foreseeability rule. Subjective foreseeability means that the person must have been able to foresee or did actually foresee the harm. However, objective foreseeability merely requires that a reasonable person in the same position would have foreseen the harm.[18]

The preference for objective rather than subjective foreseeability reflects the widely held belief and expectation that people ought to use the means at their disposal to head off harms. In fact, the failure to take precautions ordinarily adopted is considered to be the cause of whatever damages may result from such neglect. Moreover, the harm would still be attributed to the negligence even if there were intervening factors that ordinarily would have absolved the agent of causal responsibility.[19] This is

13. Phillips (1982, 228-229)
14. Phillips (1982, 254)
15. Of course, the problem here is that they may not deem tobacco production and distribution to be faulty actions.
16. The exceptions to this are the executives who were warned by their staff of the dangers of their investment strategies. These are morally liable for the subsequent damages.
17. Calabresi (1975)
18. Honore (1973, 7-97 [56])
19. Cooperrider (1960, 954). Recall the earlier "cause versus a mere condition" test.

important for our study because many accumulative harms in the marketplace are foreseeable and preventable. Thus, the capacity to foresee and to act on available information becomes an even more important factor in assessing individual moral responsibility for economic harms.

Or, consider loss avoidance. In both commercial law and torts, losses are often allocated to the party that was in the best position to have undertaken, *ex ante*, the least-cost loss avoidance measures that would have averted the harm. This runs contrary to popular moral sentiment that calls for losses to be borne by those who had been at fault or by those who had caused them, or both. After all, remedies are sought from the courts in order to rectify wrongs and to punish the wrongdoers. The field of Law and Economics has a different explanation for this seemingly counterintuitive manner of allocating losses. Instead of being backward-looking in a traditional corrective justice approach to torts, advocates of Law and Economics suggest that courts are in fact forward-looking. By imposing the losses on the people most capable of taking least-cost loss avoidance measures *ex ante*, society as a whole will be in a much better position to forestall such harms in the future. People are rational. They will compare the cost of preventative measures with the cost of subsequent losses and then take the course of action that would cost them the least: take *ex ante* precautions or simply pay the losses *ex post*. In either case, society benefits from a more efficient allocation of its resources.

We do not have to weigh the merits or demerits of such a Law-and-Economics approach to distributing losses. All I am doing in briefly rehearsing this is to highlight the importance accorded to the actors' resources and capacity to act. Legal responsibility and liability are based not on causal contribution or contributory fault but on the parties' respective personal endowments (e.g., ability to foresee risk), resources, societal roles, and whatever else is relevant for their capacity to act. If this is true for legal culpability, how much more for moral responsibility?

Closely related to the issue of the actor's capacity to act is the question of voluntariness. Perfect voluntariness entails full knowledge and full consent. However, most cases fall short of these because of deficiencies in either or both of these conditions, such as ignorance, passion, fear, force, and habit.[20] In addition, we have cases of economic compulsion whereby people give up vital interests in an effort to protect even more critical welfare interests.[21]

The moral agents' capacity to act is relevant for economic complicity because voluntariness in our actions is in part dependent on our ability to choose otherwise, *ceteris paribus*. Moreover, what people bring to their respective acts (such as intention, societal role, etc.) are relevant considerations.[22]

Insights from the Law-and-Economics approach to torts are useful for our study because efficiency is an economic constraint that cannot be ignored. There is something to be said about imposing more of the social burdens on those who are best able to bear them or on those who are best able to take the least-cost *ex ante* preventative measures to avert such harms.

There is another important measure of personal capacity to act that is peculiar to our contemporary era. Globalization has highlighted the critical importance of collaborative work given the increased complexity of economic life. Even the largest firms are compelled to work with their competitors in formal or informal networks. Offshore outsourcing and joint research-design centers underscore our networked society. Effective networking is expensive because it entails search, bargaining, and transaction costs. Moreover, the capacity to network with others is part of human capital. This is tacit knowledge (know how and know who)[23] in contrast to codified, book-learning (know what and know why). Moreover, tacit knowledge is expensive and time-consuming to develop. In other words, it is an uncommon, valuable personal (or corporate) resource.

This capacity to network is important for our study because many of the cases of soft complicity we examined are subject to collective-action problems. They can only be rectified with the concerted action of ever wider circles of people working together, not an easy feat in economic life considering the prevalence of the problem of the commons. The scholastic notion of general justice requires that we contribute to the common good in proportion to our resources and capabilities. This capacity for

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20. Fagothey (1972, 36-37)

21. For example, the fresh high school graduate enlists for "volunteer service" in the armed forces for lack of a job or in order to earn money for college. Or, take the case of desperate mothers who sell themselves into prostitution as a last resort for want of economic opportunities. There is less than wholehearted consent in these two cases.

22. Moore (1999, 27, 45)

23. Know-who pertains to the relationships one has developed with people who can be tapped to do various tasks as the need arises. It is a tacit knowledge that is particularly important whenever there are difficult situations that need the cooperation and specialized skills of many people.

networking is one such important personal resource in our era of globalization. We could call this "moral networking," that is, putting our tacit knowledge of know-who to good use by organizing people in collective action to head off communal wrongs.

Both legal philosophy and Christian ethics stress the importance of capacity to act in the ascription of individual responsibility for collective harms. The notion of the indirect employer in law is based on the power of such an agent to materially change the employment relationship between the worker and the direct employer. Hebrew debt legislation, their redemption of indentured kin, almsgiving, and the New Testament parables on the importance of lending a hand are just a few examples of how taking responsibility for others is a perennial theme in Christian morality. It is an obligation to intervene and provide assistance to those who are no longer able to function for the common good (principle of socialization). In both cases, the power to make a difference in warding off or ameliorating harm is relevant data. One's moral duty is not merely based on how close one is to the harm (causal nearness) as is commonly thought, but it is also a function of the personal capacity to avert such harm. Thus, we add the following to our framework:

Accountability is directly proportional to moral agents' voluntariness and capacity to act, *ceteris paribus*.

C. Bonds and ties

The bonds and ties among the relevant parties are critical factors to consider as we weigh moral responsibility. Many would find the proximity principle[24] to be intuitively appealing. Since we are talking of moral responsibility in economic life, we inevitably have to deal with the allocation of scarce resources to their competing uses. Relationships matter in talking of economic moral responsibility because they define the type, the scope, and the strength of our mutual obligations. What ties matter, why, and how do we reconcile the competing demands of equally essential bonds?[25] The nature of our relationship to each other determines the duties we owe one another. Not surprisingly, relationships are also important in torts:[26]

The role of bonds and ties in the ascription of responsibility is not a mere idle academic exercise. It has profound practical implications. For example, France has been steadfast in its opposition to reducing agricultural subsidies to its farmers. Similar agricultural protectionism can be found in many of the other OECD nations, especially those that are among the wealthiest in the world such as the U.S., Japan, South Korea, and many EU member nations. The damage of these policies on poor nations is well known and well documented. In spite of this, protectionist nations justify their policies on the basis of their prior obligations to their own citizens. The same issue was evident in the 2008-2009 emergency stimulus packages in the U.S. and in China that included stipulations on buying locally.

Bonds and ties are important for economic complicity because they are relevant in setting the moral standards against which faults are to be measured. Blameworthiness is a function of the obligations violated in these moral standards, and bonds and ties are among the determinants of such duties and the strength of their respective claims. Of course, one problem here is in determining the standards to be used in prioritizing what is sure to be a clash of legitimate claims. Moreover, who gets to choose these standards and how do we justify them?

For Christian ethics, this is where the biblical notion of righteousness (*sedeq*) enters the framework of analysis. Its English equivalent of "justice" does not capture its full richness. *Sedeq* is a central theme that runs through both the Old and the New Testaments. It pertains to the satisfaction of all the demands of our relationships.[27] In our earlier brief sketch of the divine order of creation, we noted that there are at least five relationships that are critical for the common good: (person to God; person to others; community to each member in its ranks; community to the marginalized; stewardship of the earth). The first relationship (person to God) governs and shapes the nature and the demands of all the other relationships. Thus, for example, our love of God defines and empowers our love of neighbor, care for the poor, and respectful use of the goods of the earth. *Sedeq* and the common good provide a framework for

24. We are more responsible for those who are close to us (biologically, culturally, geographically, etc).
25. Among these choices is the question of whether we should accord priority to those nearest and dearest to us or to those who are neediest. See Hallett (1998).
26. Prosser (1971, 5) notes that " Liability in tort is based upon the relations of men with another; and those relations may arise generally, with large groups or classes of persons, or singly, with an individual."
27. Achtemeier (1962 a & b); Donahue (1977, 68)

dealing with the clash of competing claims. For example, in the earlier example of agricultural protectionism, it is true that nations have obligations to their own citizens. But these claims are not absolute and may in fact be trumped by other even more compelling and prior claims, such as those of the marginalized (preferential option for the poor). The common good and biblical *sedeq* are central considerations for Christian ethics. We add the following in our framework of analysis:

Accountability for harms (or omissions to prevent harm) is partly determined by the bonds and ties between the wrongdoers and the injured.

Proximity principle: "I am more accountable for harms to (or failures to help) persons socially, physically, or temporally close to me than for harms to more distant others."[28]

D. Faulty action

Three conditions must be satisfied if there is to be contributory fault: causal contribution, faulty action, and a direct link between the blameworthy action and the harm.[29] There must be faulty action on the part of the agent.

Faultless market participants can be held to account for economic ills by virtue of their group membership.[30] However, for this study, we are limiting culpability only to those with a contributory fault to the harm (fault liability). We are not dealing with strict liability but with fault liability.[31] We add the following to our framework:

We have prima facie moral responsibility for the resulting harm from our contributory fault.

Conclusion: A Framework for Individuating Collective Responsibility

Given the severe space constraint, I will only outline a framework for assessing corporate complicity or liability, or both, in others' wrongdoing or in accumulative harms.[32]

I. Nature of the Injury

A. Severity of harm

Toxicity of harm principle: Our accountability increases proportionately with the likelihood or the gravity of the ensuing harms, or both.

Dispersion principle: Our accountability diminishes as the aggregate harm is divided up over more people or over time.

B. Permissible or avertible harm

Our accountability diminishes if the harm is not avertible as per the principles of double effect and legitimate material cooperation.

C. Contributory negligence

Our accountability diminishes if the injured parties contributed to their own harm.

D. Recurring harms

We are more accountable for our material cooperation in recurring wrongdoing.

II. Causal relations[33]

28. Kutz (2000, 262)
29. Feinberg (1970, 222)
30. Recall the first group of Feinberg's typology of collective responsibility described in appendix 1.
31. Under strict liability, a person is held liable even if she is not at fault. The question of whether or not there can be moral complicity without contributory fault (e.g., by virtue of group membership) is beyond the scope of this project.
32. Se Barrera (2011, Part I) for a more detailed exposition on this framework.
33. I draw the following principles from Kutz (2000): dispersion, positive acts, parallel, individual difference, control, autonomy, complicity, and direct causation.

A. Admissible causes

We are accountable for our causal acts, including inducing or occasioning harms, and failure to prevent harms (omission).

B. Scalar property of causation

B.1 Degree of causal contribution

Principle of causal contribution: Our accountability is proportional to our causal contribution and increases with the immediacy, proximity, and indispensability of our material cooperation.

Positive acts principle: We are more accountable for the harm we cause than for the harm we fail to prevent.

Parallel acts principle: Our accountability diminishes if other people act similarly.

Individual difference principle: We are accountable for a harm only if it would not have occurred but for our action (or omission).

Control principle: We are accountable only for events we could control.

Autonomy Principle: We are not accountable for others' wrongdoing unless we coerced or induced them to do so.

B.2 Intervening events

Direct causation principle (half-life principle): Our accountability for harms diminishes with intervening events. [Associated conceptual tool: "cause versus a mere condition" test]

B.3 Concurrent causation

Complicity principle: Our intentional participation in the wrongdoing of others makes us accountable for the entire harm regardless of the causal difference we made.

Principle of diffusive responsibility: Accountability diminishes in the face of like contributory acts to the same harm.

III. Character and Capacity of Actors

A. Knowledge and Intention

Our accountability increases in proportion to our knowledge and intention.

B. Voluntariness and Capacity to Act

Our accountability is directly proportional to our voluntariness and capacity to act, *ceteris paribus.*

C. Bonds and ties (including social roles)

Our accountability is a function of our bonds and ties to the injured parties.

Proximity principle: We are more accountable for harms to people who are socially, physically, or temporally close to us.

D. Faulty Action

We have prima facie moral responsibility for the resulting harm from our contributory fault.

IV. Socioeconomic Milieu: Nature of Economy

Accountability is a function of the nature of economic life and its requirements.

V. Moral Backdrop: Value Commitments and Public Morality

Accountability is a function of societal moral standards.

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