

AUGUSTINE ON INVOLUNTARY SIN: A PHILOSOPHICAL DEFENSE

I. The concept of 'involuntary sin' in Augustinian scholarship

It is widely accepted that there is an apparent discrepancy between Book I and Book III of Augustine's *De libero arbitrio*, which is prominently reflected in his account of moral responsibility of evil-doings.¹ In the first book of *De libero arbitrio*, traditionally dated to 388², Augustine argues that an act is culpable only if it is voluntary.³

¹ The discordance between the first and the last book of *De libero arbitrio* is traditionally interpreted as the confrontation between early and old Augustine. See for instance, Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography (A New Edition with an Epilogue)*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press), 2000, 146-57; James Wetzel, *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 1992, 86-87; William S. Babcock, 'Augustine on Sin and Moral Agency', *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 16 (1988): 28-55, esp. 34-41; Philip Cary, *Inner Grace: Augustine in the Traditions of Plato and Paul*, (New York: Oxford University Press) 2008, 36-41. However, this discrepancy thesis has been countered by recent scholarship. See for instance, Josef Lössl, 'Wege der Argumentation in Augustinus' *de libero arbitrio*', *Theologie und Philosophie* 70 (1995): 221-254. Most recently, Simon Harrison follows Goulven Madec and De Captiani to argue for the unity of this work. See id. *Augustine's Way into the Will: The Theological and Philosophical Significance of De libero arbitrio*, (Oxford: Clarendon) 2006, 28-62. Harrison masterfully establishes the intimate textual relation in three books, especially the textual correspondence between Book I and Book III (60). The discrepancy between Book I and Book III can be thereby interpreted as an argumentative strategy rather than a gap between early and late Augustine. Nevertheless, Harrison does not pay enough attention to the qualification concerning the power of *uoluntas* in Book III, which will prove to be crucial for an appropriate understanding of *uoluntas* in Augustine's mature thought. For another recent effort to establish the unity of this work, see Carol Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology: An Argument for Continuity*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 2006, 198-236.

² For the dates of *De libero arbitrio* and other earlier writings by Augustine, see G. Madec, *Introduction aux 'Révisions' et à la Lecture des Oeuvres de Saint Augustin*, Paris: Institut d'Étude Augustiniennes, 1996. It deserves notice that this traditional dating is mainly based upon the assumption that in *Retractiones* Augustine has offered a chronicle catalogue of his works. However, this method has recently been called into question by Pierre-Marie Hombert in his excellent work, *Nouvelles recherches de chronologie Augustinienne* (Paris: Études augustiniennes), 2000, esp. a summary at pages 2-5. It is a pity that Hombert's superb research on Augustinian chronology did not treat his early works before the *Confessiones*. Here I follow the traditional dating merely to introduce Alflatt's influential work on the development of the concept of involuntary sin in Augustine's earlier works.

³ See for instance, *lib. arb.* (The abbreviations of Augustine's works are cited from A. D. Fitzgerald (ed.), *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1999,

Furthermore, the voluntary nature of sin is based on the facility of the will to abstain from evil-doing.⁴ In Book III, which is conventionally believed to be finished in 395, Augustine comes to realize the effects of Adam's Fall, claiming that

So we apply the word 'sin' not only to that which is properly (*proprie*) called sin, that is, what is committed knowingly and with free will (*libera uoluntate et sciente*), but also to all that follows as the necessary punishments (*supplicium*) of that first sin.⁵

In his influential study on the notion of involuntary sin in Augustine's moral philosophy, Malcolm E. Alflatt identifies this clarification as an explicit inclusion of involuntary acts in the definition of sin.⁶

Hereafter, Alflatt recognizes a radical change in Augustine's position concerning the moral responsibility for that which is involuntary. He believes that Augustine's earlier identification of sin with voluntary evil is maintained until the writing of *De duabus animabus* of 391/2.⁷ On the other hand, the recognition of involuntary sin can be found in *De fide et symbolo*, preached on December 3rd, 393.⁸ However, the only book written by Augustine between these two works is

xxxv-xlii) I, 1, 1. 'Vnde si dubitas, illud attende quod supra dictum est, malefacta iustitia Dei uindicari. Non enim iuste uindicarentur, nisi fierent uoluntate.' Ibid. I, 11, 21. 'nulla res alia mentem cupiditatis comitem faciat quam propria uoluntas et liberum arbitrium.'

⁴ *lib. arb.* I, 13, 29. 'Ex quo conficitur ut, quisquis recte honesteque uult uiuere, si id se uelle prae fugacibus bonis uelit, adsequatur tantam rem tanta facilitate, ut nihil aliud ei quam ipsum uelle sit habere quod uoluit.'

⁵ *lib. arb.* III, 19, 54. '...sic non solum peccatum illud dicimus quod proprie peccatum uocatur – libera enim uoluntate et ab sciente committitur – sed etiam illud quod iam de huius supplicio consequatur necesse est.' The English translation is quoted with slight modification from John H.S. Burleigh, *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press), 1953.

⁶ Malcolm E. Alflatt, 'The Development of the Idea of Involuntary Sin in St. Augustine', *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 20 (1974): 113-134, at 117. Cf. also Babcock 1988; Wetzel 1992, 96; Timothy Chappell *Aristotle and Augustine on Freedom. Two Theories of Freedom, Voluntary Action and Akrasia* (New York: St. Martin's) 1995, 136-9; Cary 2008, 40-41.

⁷ In *De duabus animabus* 11, 15, Augustine offers a well-known definition of sin in terms of the will and its freedom to do otherwise. 'Voluntas retinendi uel consequendi quod iustitia uetat et unde liberum est abstinere.'

⁸ *f. et symb.* 10, 23. 'Anima uero cum carnalia bona adhuc appetit, caro nominatur. Pars enim eius quaedam resistit spiritui, non natura, sed consuetudine peccatorum. Vnde dicitur, *Mente serui legi Dei, carne autem legi peccati*. Quae consuetudo in naturam uersa est secundum generationem mortalem peccato primi hominis. Ideoque scriptum est, *Et nos aliquando fuimus naturaliter filii irae*, id est uindictae, per quam factum est ut seruiamus legi peccati.' Cited in Alflatt 1974, 118.

Acta contra Fortunatum Manichaeum, which is reasonably focused in Alflatt's article.⁹

According to Alflatt's interpretation, in the beginning of his debate with the Manichaen Fortunatus, Augustine sticks to the assertion that, 'anyone who does not sin willingly (*uoluntate*), does not sin.'¹⁰ The free decision of the will is taken as a necessary definitional component of sin.¹¹

In Alflatt's view, it is Fortunatus' appeal to a number of crucial Pauline texts, such as Rom. 7:23-25; 8:7; Gal 5: 17, which force Augustine to acknowledge the necessitating force of the sinful habit that we inherited from Adam and Eve.¹² First, Augustine stresses that the full freedom of decision only belonged to Adam. Then he claims that Adam's original free agency had perished with the first voluntary sin, 'But after he voluntarily sinned, we who have descended from his stock were plunged into necessity (*in necessitatem*).'¹³ Augustine argues that our minds could be taken captive by the habit that is initiated by our free decision. However, once the habit is formed, 'the soul is so implicated that afterwards it cannot conquer what by sinning it has fashioned for itself.'¹⁴

In his research into Augustine's reflections on moral agency, William Babcock qualifies Alflatt's dramatic account, which narrowly

⁹ For the dates of these earlier writings by Augustine, see note 2.

¹⁰ *c. Fort.* 20. '...qui non uoluntate peccat, non peccat.' The English translation is mine.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, '... si manifestum est, peccatum non esse ubi non est liberum uoluntatis arbitrium...', cited in Alflatt 1974, 127.

¹² *Cf. c. Fort.* 21, 'Nam dictum est ab Apostolo, quod *prudencia carnis inimica sit Deo: legi enim Dei non est subiecta; nec enim potest*. Patet ergo his rebus, quod anima bona, factione illius quae legi Dei non est subiecta, peccare uidetur, non sua sponte. Namque idem sequitur, quod *caro concupiscit aduersus spiritum, et spiritus aduersus carnem; ut non quaecumque uultis, illa faciat*. Dicit iterum; *Video aliam legem in membris meis, repugnantem legi mentis meae, et captiuum me ducentem in lege peccati et mortis*. Ergo miser ego homo, quis me liberabit de corpore mortis huius, nisi gratia Dei per Dominum nostrum Iesum Christum, per quem mihi mundus crucifixus est, et ego mundo?'

¹³ *c. Fort.* 22. 'Postquam autem ipse libera uoluntate peccauit, nos in necessitatem praecipitati sumus, qui ab eius stirpe descendimus.' The English translation of this work is slightly modified from that in the series *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* (Oxford; repr.: Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1994)

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, '... eadem ipsa sua consuetudine sic implicatur (sc. anima), ut postea uincere non possit, quod sibi ipsa peccando fabricata est.' In this public debate with Fortunatus, Augustine does not clarify how Adam's voluntary sin could be translated into the involuntary sins of his descendants. As noted earlier, this problem is addressed in the account of the Fall in Book III of *De libero arbitrio*.

locates Augustine's first recognition of involuntary sin in the debate with Fortunatus. He argues that Augustine had already noticed the penal character of sin and the difficulty of abstaining from sinful habits in Book I of *De libero arbitrio* and *De duabus animabus*.¹⁵ In *De duabus animabus* 10, 12, Augustine calls attention to the fact that the decision of the will can place an agent under compulsive conditions but cannot thereby be excused of the agent's subsequent wrongdoing.¹⁶ Babcock underscores that Augustine acknowledges the obstructive influence of carnal habits on our willing at the end of *De duabus animabus*, which led the Manichaeans to believe mistakenly in the existence of an evil soul in human beings.¹⁷ This emphasis on the role of *De duabus animabus* in the development of Augustine's idea of involuntary sin is further elaborated on in James Wetzel's book on Augustine's moral philosophy.¹⁸

The sharpest criticism of Alflatt's study comes from Robert O'Connell, who throws in question Alflatt's reading of *De libero arbitrio* III, 18, 50-19, 54 as a clear recognition of involuntary sin.¹⁹ According to O'Connell's textual analysis, in paragraph 54 as cited

¹⁵ See for instance, *lib. arb.* I, 11, 22 and *duab. an.* 13, 19. For comments on these passages, see Babcock 1988, 38.

¹⁶ In this passage, Augustine comments in details on the four cases of an agent writing disgraceful words. First, he takes into consideration an obvious case: one's hand is used during the sleep. Obviously, the sleeper will not be held guilty for this wrongdoing because he is not conscious of what he is 'doing' and is employed as an instrument. In the second case, the agent is conscious but his other members are bound and in constraint. Augustine insists that this person could be exempt from sin as well, if he is unwilling to commit the act of writing disgraceful words. It seems that in these first two cases, the agent is excused from punishment because he is either ignorant or unable to resist what he is forced to do. In the third case, the agent is asleep while the evil act takes place. However, he knew in advance that his hand would be employed for a malicious end during sleep. To prevent being awakened during the blameworthy action, he drank a lot before going to sleep. It is evident that the agent is unconscious at the crucial moment of action. Nevertheless, this unconsciousness could not prove his innocence because it results from a free decision of the will, which the agent made consciously and willingly. Likewise, in the fourth case, the agent is bound willingly (*uolens*) in chains. He is rightly judged to have sinned, although he is really unable to resist this evil act when it happens.

¹⁷ Cf. *duab. an.* 13, 19. 'Ideo contingit, ut cum ad meliora conantibus nobis consuetudo facta cum carne et peccata nostra quodam modo militare contra nos, et difficultatem nobis facere coeperint, nonnulli stulti aliud genus animarum, quod non sit ex Deo, superstitione obtusissima suspicentur.' Cited in Babcock 1988, 39.

¹⁸ Cf. Wetzel 1992, 90-98.

¹⁹ See O'Connell 1991, esp. 25-27. O'Connell argues that Alflatt was misled by John Burleigh's inaccurate English translation to believe that all actions impeded by ignorance and difficulty are of necessity and sinful. For more details, check *infra* note 66.

earlier, Augustine does not extend the definition of sin to unwilling evilsdoings, but rather notes that the application of the term *peccatum* to the effects of sin is an improper use and should be justified.²⁰ As O'Connell argues, Augustine justifies this improper use by appealing to our solidarity with Adam and Eve. From our original ancestors, we inherited ignorance (*ignorantia*) and difficulty (*difficultas*)²¹, not as natural but as penal conditions of this life. For we all committed sins in the persons of Adam and Eve. Ignorance and difficulty are the deserved punishments for the sin that we ourselves committed voluntarily in Adam and Eve. In this sense, the penal conditions of human life are the effects of voluntary sin not only of the first human beings, but also of ourselves. O'Connell insists that in Augustine's account of fallen agency, the sinner and the bearer-of-punishment must be the same person.²²

According to O'Connell's interpretation, we are born as mortals into these punitive conditions just as the agent in those cases of *De duabus animabus* 10, 12, who willingly accepted being unconscious or bound before doing a disgraceful thing under external compulsion.²³ There, the actions accomplished under this kind of compulsion are deemed voluntary and culpable for the complicity at the outset.²⁴ In short, these actions are '*uoluntaria in causa*'. Likewise, fallen people are rightly reproached for wrongful acts under the obstructive influence of ignorance and difficulty, because these involuntary conditions are punishments for their voluntary sin in the past when they were all in Adam.²⁵

²⁰ Ibid., 32-35.

²¹ Augustine formulated our initial state as ignorance and infirmity for the first time in the third book of *De libero arbitrio* of 395. In Augustine's terms, we are born 'with the blindness of ignorance and the tortures of difficulty.' See *lib. arb.* III, 19, 53. '...ut cum ignorantiae caecitate et difficultatis cruciatibus nasceremur...' This is not to deny that an awareness of the effects of original sin can be found in his earlier works before this date. Cf. M. Verschoren, 'The Appearance of the Concept Concupiscentia in Augustine's Early Antimanichaean Writings (388-391)', *Augustiniana* 52 (2002): 199-240. For a more recent presentation of Augustine's understanding of the Fall and its influences on his earliest works, see C. Harrison 2006, 168-197.

²² O'Connell 1991, 30.

²³ For details of this passage, see note 16.

²⁴ As William Babcock rightly comments, we can be justly held responsible for forced actions simply because the initiating decision, which renders us complicit, is under the control of our will. Babcock believes that the emphasis on the initiating will and its effects prepares the way for Augustine to recognize involuntary sins. See Babcock 1988, 38.

²⁵ Ibid., 35. O'Connell also takes this identity in Adam as a vestige of Plotinian conception of the fall of the soul. See note infra 33. Alflatt also supports the conception

It deserves notice that Alflatt himself does address this insight in his second article on 'involuntary sin', which is unjustly disregarded in O'Connell's criticism. Following Guy de Broglie's reading of *De correptione et gratia*, Alflatt also argues that the notion of our solidarity in Adam is crucial to Augustine's understanding of moral responsibility for the compulsive conditions that we suffer as a burden from birth.²⁶ Alflatt gives a close examination of involuntary sin in the baptized in Augustine's later works and comes to his conclusion, which is not far from O'Connell's reading of *De libero arbitrio* III:

Because all men were in Adam, **the will** of every individual shares in the responsibility for his first wrong choice, and thus can be held guilty for the consequences of that choice – even those consequences which occur in the individual after his own guilt has been removed in baptism, and which occur even though he has not willed them.²⁷

Both Alflatt and O'Connell are right to detect our moral responsibility for the inborn ignorance (*ignorantia*) and impotence (*difficultas*) that plunged Adam's descendents into necessity. However, according to their interpretations, Augustine's defense of moral agency seems to rely exclusively on the theological hypothesis that 'we are radically identical with Adam and Eve'.²⁸ They even implicitly assume that the first evil will of Adam and Eve is precisely our own will. We all committed a severe sin even before birth and therefore involuntarily suffer an innate powerlessness of the will as the righteous punishment.

In more recent studies, it is further argued that this point eventually paves way for Augustine's mature conception of irresistible grace.²⁹ The inborn perversity of our wills signifies the loss of freedom

of 'voluntarium in causa' but refuses to apply it to the wrongful acts under the influence of ignorance and difficulty. See Alflatt 1974, 116.

²⁶ Cf. G. de Broglie, 'Pour une meilleure intelligence du *De Correptione et Gratia*', *Augustinus Magister* (Congrès International Augustinien, Paris, 21-24 septembre 1954), 3, 317-37, Cited in M. Alflatt, 'The Responsibility for Involuntary Sin in Saint Augustine', *Recherches Augustiniennes* 10 (1975): 171-186, at 181. For the sources of the notion of our solidarity in Adam, Alflatt mentions *ciu. Dei* XIII, 14; *nat. et gr.* 4, 4-5, 5; *ench.* 50; *nup. et conc.* II, 5, 15. See *ibid.*, 180-1.

²⁷ Alflatt 1975, 185, the emphasis is added.

²⁸ O'Connell 1991, 35. Cf. also Alflatt 1975, 180-185.

²⁹ See for instance, Drecoll 1999, 187-199; *id.* 'Gratia', in *Augustinus-Lexikon*, vol. 3 ed. C. Mayer (Basel: Schwabe & Co.) 2004, 182-242; Josef Lössl 1995; *id.* 'Augustine on the Will', in *The Will and Human Action. From Antiquity to the Present Day* eds. T. Pink and M. Stone (London: Routledge), 2004, 53-77; Donato Ogliari, *Gratia et certamen. The Relationship between Grace and Free Will in the Discussion of Augustine with the So-called Semipelagians*, (Louvain: Peeters) 2003, 250-255; Cary 2008, esp. 43.

of will (*libertas uoluntati*) to do right in this world, even though this does not take away our free decision (*liberum arbitrium*) to do more evil.³⁰ Accordingly, unless our will being cured by the pre-destined grace of God, the guilt of our involuntary sin will not be forgiven. In light of this, the will of a fallen person by itself does not possess any facility of abstaining from evil-doings, which Augustine has explicitly recognized in the first book of *De libero arbitrio*. Therefore, in his revision of his earlier responses to Simplicianus, which is written one year later than the completion of *De libero arbitrio*, Augustine concedes, 'I labored for the free decision of human will, but the grace of God won out.'³¹

It is evident now that the solidarity or identity of the human race with Adam is undeniably central to Augustine's theological justification of his doctrine of original sin and divine grace. To clarify the relationship of our soul to that of our first ancestors, Augustine devotes much effort to investigate the mysterious origin of human souls.³² Augustine's theory on the origin of the soul is a controversial issue, which goes beyond the scope of this essay.³³ It suffices here to note

³⁰ See for instance, *c. ep. Pel II*, 5, 9. '*...peccato Adae arbitrium liberum de hominum natura perisse non dicimus, sed ad peccandum ualere in hominibus subditis diabolo; ad bene autem pieque uiuendum non ualere, nisi ipsa uoluntas hominis Dei gratia fuerit liberata et ad omne bonum actionis, sermonis, cogitationis adiuta.*' For classical treatments of the relationship between *libertas* and *liberum arbitrium*, see Maurice Huftier, 'Libre arbitre, liberté et péché chez saint Augustin', *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 33 (1966): 187-281. Christopher Kirwan *Augustine* (London/New York: Routledge), 1989, 82-88; Wetzel 1992, 220-1. For a more detailed discussion of this issue, see my article 'Augustine on *Liberum Arbitrium*' (in Chinese), in *Zhongwai Renwen Jingshen Yanjiu* 2 (2009), 112-125.

³¹ *retr.* II, 1, 1. 'In cuius quaestionis solutione laboratum est quidem pro libero arbitrio uoluntatis humanae, sed uicit dei gratia.' Cf. also *prae. sanc.* 4, 8.

³² Cf. *lib. arb.* 20, 56-58; *Gn. litt.* X; *ep.* 190; *an. et org.* etc.

³³ For an influential account of Augustine's reflections on the origin of human souls, see Robert O'Connell, *The Origin of the Soul in St. Augustine's Later Works*, (New York: Fordham University Press), 1987. O'Connell insists that a Plotinian theory of the pre-existence of the soul underlies Augustine's reflections on the origin and nature of the soul. Even though Augustine did clearly exclude the hypothesis that souls had done neither good nor evil before birth in his later comments on Romans 9:11, O'Connell argued that the Plotinian thesis could still be identified in Augustine's insistence upon our solidarity with Adam, which is the sole foundation for Augustine's account for original sin in *De libero arbitrio* III. For criticism of O'Connell's extraordinary interest in the theory of the pre-existence of soul in Augustine's writings, see Gerald O'Daly, 'Did St. Augustine Ever Believe in the Soul's Pre-Existence?' *Augustinian Studies* 5 (1974), 227-35; id. 'Augustine on the Origin of Souls,' in H.-D. Blume (hrsg.), *Platonismus und Christentum. Festschrift für Heinrich Dörrie* (Münster) 1983, 184-91; John M. Rist *Augustine, Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1994, 317-320; and more recently in Ronnie J. Rombs, *Saint*

that Augustine never articulates a definite opinion on this crucial question, which underlies our identification with Adam and Eve.³⁴ In addition, Augustine never claims that we are held responsible for original sin, which is essentially involuntary, as a result of the free decision of our own will.³⁵ Furthermore, it is difficult for us to believe by our own experience that we once had a will in Adam and Eve before birth. To summarize, at least from a philosophical point of view, it is not evident that these inborn conditions of *ignorantia* and *difficultas* result from one's own decision of the will in the past, which is completely inaccessible to oneself.

The precedent studies on 'involuntary sin' are preoccupied with Augustine's theological arguments for our identity with Adam and Eve. This is simply because, I believe, they never took it seriously, how we can be held responsible for that which is not a result of our voluntary decision at all, not even an effect of free choice in the past. This negligence is in accordance with their simplistic understanding of Augustinian *uoluntas*. They fail to understand that the *uoluntas* of a fallen agent is never an absolute and indifferent power to make a choice. As a result, they rightly notice the essential association of responsibility with *uoluntas*, but are unable to envisage that the moral responsibility based on the freedom of *uoluntas* can have nothing to do with the choice of will.³⁶

In the following discussion, I endeavor to reconstruct Augustine's reflections on the moral responsibility for our innate qualities,

Augustine and the Fall of the Soul: Beyond O'Connell and His Critics, (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press), 2006.

³⁴ See for instance, *ep.* 190, 1, 2. 'De qua re antequam aliquid admoneam sinceritatem tuam, scire te uolo in tam multis opusculis meis numquam me fuisse ausum de hac quaestione (sc. de origine animae) definitam proferre sententiam, et impudenter referre in litteras ad alios informandos, quod apud me non fuerit explicatum.'

³⁵ Cf. for instance, *c. Iul. imp.* I, 57. 'Sic autem aliena sunt originalia peccata propter nullum in eis nostrae uoluntatis arbitrium, ut tamen propter originis contagium esse inueniantur et nostra.'

³⁶ For the distinction between the freedom of the will and free choice, see note 30. Alflatt believes that our responsibility for moral acts is grounded on the intention of the will. An act is sinful just because the underlying intention is perverse or this act is a result of one's intention in the past. It is implicitly presupposed that the will is free to adopt a good or an evil intention. See Alflatt 1975, 178ff. At the beginning of his account of moral agency in Augustine's writings, Babcock assumes that two conditions are indispensable for attributions of moral responsibility. First the moral agent in question should be able to do otherwise than what he has actually done. This is the principle of alternative. Second, 'the person must, himself or herself, determine which alternative is realized, acting or not acting, acting in this way or acting in that way.' According to Babcock, these two conditions are met by the freedom of the will, especially in Augustine's early writings. Cf. *id.* 1988, esp. 28-9. O'Connell also maintains that if our inborn conditions are not consequences of our free choice in

which can necessitate wrongful actions against the free decision of the will. The philosophical perspective of Augustine's insights has been veiled by their theological contexts, especially those concerning original sin and divine grace, and therefore is unfairly ignored by the recent scholarship on involuntary sin. As a result, it was widely believed that Augustine lost his philosophical insights into the freedom of the will in his theological debates on original sin and divine predestination, especially in his bitter controversy with the Pelagians. In this account, this paper attempts to show that Augustine's later position on involuntary sins is also **philosophically** defensible. In his theological reflection on our solidarity in Adam and the justice of predestined grace, Augustine attained a more realistic understanding of the will, which is also intelligible in a philosophical context. Certainly, this is not to suggest that one can appropriately comprehend Augustine's notion of *uoluntas* without knowing his doctrines of original sin and victorious grace.³⁷ It simply intends to reveal that Augustine's later profound understanding of *uoluntas* offers a more reasonable defense of our moral responsibility for the innate difficulty of the will. To justify this account, one needs not commit to our mysterious identity in Adam or the essential dependence of human will upon the prevenient grace.

II. *Consuetudo* and moral responsibility

Before moving on to the difficult problem of our responsibility for inherited *ignorantia* and *difficultas*, I want to deal with the moral responsibility for wrongful actions necessitated by our formed habit (*consuetudo*), especially the carnal habit (*consuetudo carnalis*).

The responsibility for one's own habit was a familiar topic in the Ancient world.³⁸ Even the enthusiastic defenders of free will, such as

Adam and Eve, wrongful acts committed under their influence will not be conceived of as sinful actions. See id. 1991, esp. 35.

³⁷ The literature on Augustine's theology of grace and original sin is tremendous. Recent important monographs include Pierre-Marie Hombert, *Gloria Gratiae: Se glorifier en Dieu, principe et fin de la théologie augustinienne de la grâce* (Paris: Institut d'études augustinienes) 1996; Josef Lössl, *Intellectus gratiae: die erkenntnistheoretische und hermeneutische Dimension der Gnadenlehre Augustins von Hippo* (Leiden: Brill), 1997; Drecoll 1999; Ogliari 2003; C. Harrison 2006; Cary 2008.

³⁸ Following earlier studies, Fitzgerald points out that Augustine's conception of *consuetudo* is deeply influenced by his predecessors, such as Plotinus, Porphyry, and Cicero. See Fitzgerald 1999, 409. For detailed treatment of the sources of Augustinian *consuetudo*, see J. Prendville, 'The Development of the Idea of Habit in the Thought of St. Augustine,' *Traditio* 28 (1972): 29-99, esp. 45ff.; 82.

Julian of Eclanum, also acknowledged the compulsive force of habit as a result produced by the will itself.³⁹ In Augustine's writings, *consuetudo* (*carnalis*) refers above all to the excessive and ungovernable tendency or addiction of the soul towards temporal things or carnal pleasures, which becomes habitual after being repeated without encountering resistance from the rational mind.⁴⁰ This tendency is blameworthy because it blocks either our contemplation on the eternal truth or our enjoyment of spiritual delight.⁴¹ As Prendville emphatically points out in his excellent account of Augustinian *consuetudo*, though this habitual inclination is frequently associated with the weakness of flesh (*caro*), 'the ultimate seat of habit is in the conscious part of Man, so that he can exercise some kind of responsibility over the origin and eradication of his habits'.⁴²

In one of his sermons, Augustine distinguishes four stages of the progression from simple pleasure to determinate habit: (1) the titillation of pleasure in heart, followed by (2) consent; then (3) deed,

³⁹ See for instance, *c. Iul. imp.* IV, 103, (2). Aug: Nam et ille qui dicit: *Non quod uolo ago*, certe secundum uos (sc. Iulianum) necessitate consuetudinis premitur; hanc autem necessitatem, ne liberum auferatis arbitrium, eum sibi uoluntate fecisse contenditis et tale aliquid in natura humana factum esse non creditis, ut ex uoluntate primi hominis, de quo est origo humani generis, fieret necessitas peccati originalis in posteris.

⁴⁰ As Fitzgerald rightly observes, 'habit is often construed in a negative way, even if the goal of Augustine's use and analysis of the term is not: 'id ergo agit spiritus in domanda carne, ut soluat malae consuetudinis quasi pacta peruersa et fiat pax consuetudinis bonae.' (*doc. Chr.* I, 24, 25) See, id. 1999, 409. For further references of *consuetudo* in Augustine's corpus, see Prendville 1972.

⁴¹ Cf. for instance *conf.* VII, 1, 1-2; VII, 17, 23. For a detailed discussion on the context of the latter occasion of *consuetudo*, see James Wetzel, 'The Question of *Consuetudo Carnalis* in Confessions 7.17.23', *Augustinian Studies* 31(2000): 165-171.

⁴² Prendville 1972, 71. Prendville's conclusion is based on Augustine's introduction of the word '*animae*' in his expression *consuetudo facta cum carne* in *c. Fort.* 22. 'Sed quemadmodum illa nix calore resoluitur, et desinit nix esse, ut possit calefcere: sic illa carnis prudentia, id est, consuetudo facta cum carne, cum fuerit mens nostra illuminata, et ad arbitrium diuinae legis totum hominem sibi Deus subiecerit, pro illa consuetudine animae mala facit consuetudinem bonam.' He also mentions that in another passage from *De fide et symbolo*, Augustine definitely refers to the term *caro* in this context as the blameworthy disposition of the soul. Cf. *f. et symb.* 10, 23. 'Anima uero cum carnalia bona adhuc appetit, caro nominatur. Pars enim eius quaedam resistit spiritui non natura, sed consuetudine peccatorum, unde dicitur *mente seruio legi Dei, carne legi peccati*.' See also *mus.* VI, 11, 33. 'Haec autem animae consuetudo facta cum carne, propter carnalem affectionem, in Scripturis diuinis caro nominatur.' All these passages are cited from Prendville 1972, 70-1. For another analysis of *caro* in Augustine's conception of *concupiscentia carnis*, see my article, 'Did Augustine Lose the Philosophical Battle in the Debate with Julian of Eclanum on *Concupiscentia Carnis* and *Voluntas*?' in *Augustiniana* 57 (2007): 185-208, esp. 190-2.

then (4) habit.⁴³ Unsurprisingly, no step in the genesis of *consuetudo* can take place without the involvement of the will. First, any kind of pleasure, even the initial pleasure of cognition (*cogitationis delectatio*), cannot come into being without the approval of the will.⁴⁴ Consent is undoubtedly an explicit act of the will. Furthermore, without the motivational function of the will, a decision of the mind will never be transformed into an overt act.

In his analysis of *duae uoluntates* in *Confessiones* VIII, Augustine offers a masterful depiction of *consuetudo* as a consequence of the disposition of the will:

The consequence of a distorted will is passion. By servitude to passion, habit is formed, and habit to which there is no resistance becomes necessity... The new will, which was beginning to be within me a will to serve you freely and to enjoy you, God, the only sure source of pleasure, was not yet strong enough to conquer my prior will, which had been strengthened by its antiquity.⁴⁵

Here the will interacts with the compulsive force of habit. On the one hand, the formation of habit originates from and depends on the disposition of the will, which can transform a rational being into a slave to lust (*libido*). In his response to Julian, Augustine clearly stresses that a habit is the fruit of the will (*fructus*) and is acquired only by the will.⁴⁶ On the other hand, a habit manifests its power by strengthening or even necessitating the preceding submission of the will to lust. In Augustine's own case, the direct effect of this compulsive force is the self-division of the will and the impotence of the will to embrace the Christian faith unreservedly. In one passage of his early works, Augustine even reduces the diversity of the acts of the will

⁴³ S. 98, 6. 'prima est enim quasi titilatio delectationis in corde; secunda, consensio; tertium, factum; quarta, consuetudo.' Cited from Fitzgerald 1999, 409.

⁴⁴ Cf. *trin.* XII, 12, 17. For detailed comments on this text, see my article, 'Rethinking Augustine's Adaptation of 'First Movements' of Affection,' forthcoming.

⁴⁵ *conf.* VIII, 5, 10. 'Quippe ex uoluntate peruersa facta est libido, et dum seruatur libidini, facta est consuetudo, et dum consuetudini non resistitur, facta est necessitas.... Voluntas autem noua quae mihi esse coeperat, ut te gratis colerem fruique te uellem, deus, sola certa iucunditas, nondum erat idonea ad superandam priorem uetustate roboratam.' The translation is quoted with modification from *Confessions*, trans. H. Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 1991.

⁴⁶ *c. Iul. imp.* IV, 103, (3). 'Nonne conditionem suam <sua> conditione perdit (sc. peccatum), ut per uim consuetudinis fiat sine uoluntate, cum consuetudo non facta sit nisi uoluntate? Nonne rei huius natura fructibus suis negatur? Quandoquidem consuetudo fructus est uoluntatis, quoniam ex uoluntate gignitur, quae tamen id quod agit negat se agere uoluntate.'

(*uoluntates* in plural) to the diversity of habits.⁴⁷ In other words, the freedom of the will to make its own decision is diminished or limited by the presence of *consuetudo*. The impediment of *consuetudo* paralyzes the faculty of the will until the latter is rid of this disease with the aid of divine providence.

Nevertheless, we are rightly held responsible for the decision of the will under the shadow of *consuetudo* for two reasons.

First, through the mediation of *consuetudo*, the faculty of the will feels the effects of its past decisions. Here, Augustine explicitly takes the historicity and facticity of human agency into account. The agent of a concrete act at a certain moment is not 'the man without a past'.⁴⁸ The continuity of life and personal identity are presupposed in the practice of attributing moral responsibility. When the problem of moral agency is concerned, what matters is primarily one's voluntary decisions in the past. Borrowing an expression from Alflatt and O'Connell, we can claim that the wrongful acts necessitated by *consuetudo* are *uoluntaria in causa*.

More importantly, the decision of the will is also free from any internal compulsion, including *consuetudo* in the form of an older will. The *consuetudo* defines the condition of the faculty of the will but cannot force the will to attain a new disposition. In Augustine's account of two wills at war in *Confessiones*, The will under the shadow of *consuetudo* cannot command the mind to attain a wholehearted love of God. On the other hand, *consuetudo* in the form of an older will towards blameworthy lust cannot command the will to desert its partial love for God either.⁴⁹ In the later discussion on the responsibility for original sin, it will be manifest that this freedom of the will justifies our responsibility for our moral actions under involuntary conditions of the mind.

The first condition for the attribution of moral responsibility for *consuetudo* has been well stressed by earlier studies. According to this interpretation, the freedom of the will to do otherwise in the acquisition of *consuetudo* is assumed as the genuine ground for responsibility.⁵⁰ It is presupposed that the will possess absolute control over its

⁴⁷ *diu. qu.* 40. 'Ex diuersis uisis diuersus appetitus animarum, ex diuerso appetitu diuersus adipiscendi successus, ex diuerso successu diuersa consuetudo, ex diuersa consuetudine diuersa est uoluntas.' This *quaestio* is entitled 'cum animarum natura una sit, unde hominum diuersae uoluntates?'

⁴⁸ The phrase is borrowed from Aki Kaurismäki's namesake film. It is about the adventure of a man who awakens after a brutal mugging with no memory of his former life.

⁴⁹ Cf. *conf.* VIII, 8, 20.

⁵⁰ For instance, in his comments on the well-known passage from *Confessiones* VIII, 5, 10, Prendville emphasizes that Augustinian *consuetudo* is brought into being

choice before acquiring a sinful habit, though this freedom can be diminished after the formation of the habit. That we are responsible for *consuetudo* can be justified simply because its origin is a voluntary decision of the will as a two way power.

However, Augustine maintains that the freedom of the will to choose between good and evil only belonged to Adam, Eve, and the Devil before their fall.⁵¹ After being expelled from the Garden of Eden, human beings were irrevocably plunged into necessity (*necessitas*). In the third book of *De libero arbitrio*, this necessity is unquestionably identified with *ignorantia* and *difficultas*, the two penal conditions that define the existence of every individual life in this world.⁵² It is evident that the cloud of necessity hangs over the formation of *consuetudo* in a fallen agent.

As Prendville incisively points out, Augustine is quite aware of the essential relationship of *consuetudo* to original sin and its effects. In his earlier exegesis of St. Paul written in 394/5, Augustine first relates the self-formed habit to the innate inclination to evil.⁵³ He undeniably interprets *consuetudo* as an intensification of *concupiscentia* in his reply to Simplicianus of 396:

If it is asked: whence it is that in his flesh dwelleth no good thing, which means that sin dwells there? From where, if not from his inherited mortality and from his addiction to (sensual) pleasure? The former is the penalty of original sin, the latter of repeated sinning. We are born into this life with the former, and add to the latter as we live. These two things, nature and habit (*consuetudo*) conjoined, render cupidity (*cupiditas*) strong and unconquerable. This is what he calls sin which, he says, dwells in his flesh, obtaining a certain domination and kingdom, so to speak there.⁵⁴

by a free act of his own, because 'at any moment in the making of his habit, the process could have been stopped.' See id. 1972, 59. Prendville does notice the mysterious relationship of *consuetudo* as a personal sin to *concupiscentia carnis* as the original sin, which is implied in *Confessiones* but further elaborated on in the work *Contra Iulianum opus imperfectum*. However, he does not take the essential independence of the will into account and therefore fails to elucidate convincingly our responsibility for these two sins that can take effect against the decision of our will. See also note 36 for the emphasis on the principle of alternative as the foundation of moral responsibility in other studies on moral agency.

⁵¹ Cf. for instance, c. *Fort.* 22; *lib. arb.* III, 18, 52.

⁵² See note 21.

⁵³ The exegeses in question are *Expositio quarundam propositionum ex epistola apostoli ad romanos* and *Expositio epistolae ad Galatas*. Cf. Prendville 1972, 74-77.

⁵⁴ *Simpl.* I, 1, 10. 'Quod si quaesierit aliquis: Vnde hoc est, quod dicit habitare in carne sua non utique bonum, id est peccatum? – Vnde nisi ex traduce mortalitatis et adsiduitate uoluptatis? Illud est ex poena originalis peccati, hoc ex poena frequentati peccati; cum illo in hanc uitam nascimur, hoc uiuendo addimus. Quae duo scilicet

He who is not yet under grace does not do the good he wills. He does the evil which he does not will, being overcome by *concupiscentia*, not simply because of the bondage of mortality (*vinculum mortalitatis*), but also because that the *concupiscentia* is strengthened by the weight of habit (*moles consuetudinis*).⁵⁵

A post-lapsarian agent is conquered by the inclination to evil and therefore loses the freedom to accomplish righteous acts, first due to mortality, as the punishment for his or her original sin, and then because of the self-afflicted habit, which intensifies the evil inclination.⁵⁶

The reference to original sin and *concupiscentia* as its penalty is also implied without further elaboration in Book VIII of *Confessiones*.⁵⁷ However, the older will in the form of *consuetudo* is nothing but a powerful manifestation of the inherent infirmity of the will, which first reveals itself in *concupiscentia carnis*.⁵⁸ As Solignac brilliantly

tanquam natura et consuetudo coniuncta robustissimam faciunt et inuictissimam cupiditatem, quod uocat peccatum, et dicit habitare in carne sua, id est dominatum quendam et quasi regnum obtinere.' The translation of *Ad Simplicianum* is cited with slight modification from John H.S. Burleigh, *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press), 1953.

⁵⁵ Ibid., I, 1, 11. 'Non enim quod uult facit bonum qui nondum est sub gratia; sed quod non uult malum, hoc agit superante concupiscentia, non solum uinculo mortalitatis sed mole consuetudinis roborata.' I retranslated this passage to follow the original more literally.

⁵⁶ For Augustine's frequent references to *mortalitas*, see Prendville 1972, 78ff.

⁵⁷ Cf. *conf.* VIII, 10, 22. Augustine insists that he no longer approved of the older will, which was strengthened by the habit to prefer lust over the love of God. 'Et ideo non iam ego operabar illam, sed quod habitabat in me peccatum de supplicio liberioris peccati, quia eram filius Adam.' See Prendville 1972, 60. For a recent account of the conception of original sin in *Confessiones*, see Paul Rigby, *Original Sin in Augustine's Confessions*, (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press), 1987. For comments on this text, see esp. 72-3. A more general survey of Augustine's notion of original sin can be found in Jesse Couenhoven, 'Augustine's Doctrine of Original Sin', *Augustinian Studies*, 36 (2005) 359-396.

⁵⁸ In this principally anti-Manichaean context, Augustine does not relate the *consuetudo* as the illness of the mind to original sin in the form of *concupiscentia carnis*; but it is not difficult to establish such a relation. First of all, Augustine's irresolution was definitely solved by the divine aid that removed his past sins. Moreover, the past sins in question cannot be voluntary sins with an explicit approval of the mind or *uoluntas*, for he mentions earlier in Book VIII of *Confessiones* that he does not approve the older will but rather suffers it involuntarily. See *conf.* VIII, 5, 11. 'Sic intellegebam me ipso experimento id quod legeram, quomodo caro concupisceret aduersus spiritum et spiritus aduersus carnem, ego quidem in utroque, sed magis ego in eo, quod in me approbabam, quam in eo, quod in me improbabam. Ibi enim magis iam non ego, quia ex magna parte id **patiebar inuitus quam faciebam uolens**.' The emphasis is mine.

formulates in his comments on this text, '*la consuetudo n'est pas autre chose que la ratification personnelle de la concupiscence*.'⁵⁹

Certainly, Augustine further elaborated on and justified the reduction of *consuetudo* to man's inherited inclination to sin in his later works, especially in his responses to Julian, which is the focus of Prendville's article.⁶⁰ While, the foregoing textual testimonies suffice to demonstrate that by the mere appeal to the voluntary origin of *consuetudo*, they cannot account for the culpability of sinful habits. The interpretation of '*uoluntarium in causa*' relies heavily on a naïve misconception of *uoluntas* as a two way power to choose between good and evil, which comes from nowhere and is not subject to any kind of necessity, at least before the formation of a carnal habit. However, for a post-lapsarian agent, having such an absolute power of the will is simply a seemingly beautiful myth.⁶¹ This illusion distorts the reality of the human will conditioned by the existential condition of the self on the one hand, and the essence of the human will as a psychological dynamism that moves essentially towards the good on the other. In his criticism of Julian's conception of *liberum arbitrium*, Augustine astutely points out that an absolute power of choice with no preceding cause deprives a rational being of authorship over its own choice and therefore the responsibility for the evil disposition of the will.⁶²

In Augustine's moral psychology, the culpability of so-called involuntary sin is grounded on a more profound and solid understanding of *uoluntas* and moral agency, which above all justifies our responsibility for the initial state of human nature. This initial state, as the effect of original sin, manifests itself first and foremost in *concupiscentia carnis*, the innate tendency of the soul to evil, which lies beneath the formation of *consuetudo*.

⁵⁹ Cf. Aimé Solignac, 'La psychologie augustinienne de la volonté', *Bibliothèque Augustinienne* 14 (Paris: Desclée; De Brouwer), 1962, 541.

⁶⁰ Cf. for instance, *c. Iul.* VI, 18, 55; *C. Iul. imp.* I, 105; IV, 103; V, 64; VI, 12. See Prendville 1972, esp. 96ff. As Prendville acknowledges in the footnote, the analogy between *consuetudo* and *concupiscentia* has been noticed by Joseph Mausbach. Cf. Mausbach, *Die Ethik des heiligen Augustinus* 1-2, 2nd edition (Freiburg: Herder) 1929, II, 220-1.

⁶¹ I defend this claim in the article, 'Augustine on *liberum arbitrium*,' see note 30.

⁶² *C. Iul. imp.* V, 56, (2), 'Cum uero de illo exorta est (sc. uoluntas), de natura exorta est, quia homo natura est, et quia potuit etiam nolle quod uoluit, de libero arbitrio eius exorta est, quod et ipsum, sicut fateris, pertinet ad naturam. Si ergo et uoluntas in homine uel in eius libero arbitrio de nihilo exorta est, quis eam fecit? ... Cur ergo propter illam damnatur homo, quo non uolente exorta est in illo uoluntas mala, cuius erat tantum capax, non efficax? Si autem, ut iure damnetur, eo uolente in illo exorta est, cur eius ipsius uoluntatem de illo exortam negas, quo uolente exortam esse et quo nisi uolente exoriri non potuisset non negas?'

III. *Concupiscentia* and moral responsibility

As repeated in foregoing discussions, Augustine formulates the effects of original sin on the human race as *ignorantia* and *difficultas*, or *caecitas* and *infirmetas*. I shall focus the attention particularly on *difficultas* or *infirmetas* (*uoluntatis*), which has been revealed to be a synonym of *concupiscentia*.⁶³

First, *ignorantia* is above all an intellectual defect that leads to disgraceful errors, though it also 'hinders the will from being moved to do a good deed or to refrain from an evil deed'.⁶⁴ In comparison with *concupiscentia*'s intimate relationship with the infirmity of the will, the impeding effect of *ignorantia* on the faculty of will is relatively external and indirect. Moreover, it has been well established that *concupiscentia* is a graver disease of the mind than *ignorantia*.⁶⁵ Accordingly, as an inborn inclination to evil, *concupiscentia* is more difficult to surmount when the faculty of will lies beneath the necessity of sin. Therefore, if we can establish the freedom of will and moral agency in such a compulsive situation, a similar conclusion can be easily reached in the case of *ignorantia*.

Augustine never doubts that we should be held culpable for wrongful acts committed under the necessity of sin, whether *ignorantia*

⁶³ In *De libero arbitrio*, Augustine mentions *consuetudo carnalis* (carnal habit), *concupiscentia carnis*, *libido* (lust), and *pars (animae) tardior atque carnalis* (the slower, carnal part of the soul) to explicate the opposition and resistance that the soul experiences in *difficultas*, see *lib. arb.* III, 18, 52; III, 19, 53; III, 22, 65. For explicit identification of *difficultas* with *concupiscentia carnis*, see for example, *pecc. mer.* II, 2, 2-4, 4; *spir. et litt.* 34, 51. See Bonner 1986-1994b; Dodaro 1989, 346-7; Rist 1994, 102, 135-6, 320-7.

⁶⁴ *pecc. mer.* II, 17, 26. 'Nolunt homines facere quod iustum est, siue quia latet an iustum sit siue quia non delectat. Tanto enim quidque uehementius uolumus, quanto certius quam bonum sit nouimus eoque delectamur ardentius. Ignorantia igitur et infirmetas uitia sunt, quae inpediunt uoluntatem, ne moueatur ad faciendum opus bonum uel ab opere malo abstinendum.' Unless otherwise noted, all the following English translations of Augustine's anti-Pelagian works are cited with moderate modification from Roland Teske's superb rendition, published in the series *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. J. E. Rotelle (New York: New City Press), I/23-26.

⁶⁵ *c. Iul.* VI, 16, 50. 'Ex hoc autem concupiscentia peior est quam ignorantia, quia ignorantia sine concupiscentia minus peccat; concupiscentia uero sine ignorantia grauius peccat. Et nescire malum, non semper est malum: concupiscere autem malum, semper est malum. Bonum quoque ipsum utiliter aliquando ignoratur, ut opportune sciatur: nullo autem modo fieri potest, ut carnali concupiscentia bonum hominis concupiscatur: quandoquidem nec ipsa proles libidine corporis, sed uoluntate animi concupiscitur, quamuis non sine libidine corporis seminetur.'

or *concupiscentia*. In his first introduction to the concepts *ignorantia* and *difficultas* in the third book of *De libero arbitrio*, Augustine claims

Yet even certain acts done through ignorance (*per ignorantiam*) are blamed and judged to need correction... There are acts done by necessity (*necessitate*) that are to be blamed where the man willed to act rightly and could not.⁶⁶

To justify blame in the latter case, Augustine appeals to some of his favorite verses from the Epistles of St. Paul such as Rom 7:18-19 and Gal 5:17.⁶⁷ In the latter, Paul refers to the conflict between spiritual and carnal concupiscence. In one of his last contributions, Augustine recognizes *concupiscentia carnis* or the infirmity of the will as both a punishment and a sin.⁶⁸ He insists that wrongful acts necessitated by *concupiscentia carnis* are also sins that should be absolved:

After all, the spirit wills not to have the concupiscence of the flesh (*concupiscentia carnis*), but cannot be free from it at present. For this reason the spirit still groans in itself, awaiting the adoption, the redemption of its body, when it will have its flesh in such a way that it can no longer sin (*non posse peccare*). Now, therefore, the spirit not

⁶⁶ *lib. arb.* III, 18, 51. 'Et tamen etiam per ignorantiam facta quaedam inprobantur, et corrigenda iudicantur... Sunt etiam necessitate facta improbanda, ubi uult homo recte facere, et non potest.' The translation is slightly modified from Anna S. Benjamin's rendition, which comes closer to the original than that of Burleigh in this case. Burleigh's version runs, 'Nevertheless, some things are done in ignorance which are held to be wrong and worthy of correction... Wrong things are done by necessity when a man wills to do right and has not the power.' As mentioned earlier, O'Connell argues that Burleigh's inaccurate translation of these sentences misled Alflatt to recognize 'involuntary sins' in Augustine's thought. O'Connell is right to emphasize that Augustine here simply talks about wrongful acts rather than genuine sins. These acts can be called sins only in an improper way, in O'Connell's opinion, in that the involuntary conditions of moral ignorance and difficulty are consequences of the agent's earlier voluntary deeds. Cf. O'Connell 1991, 25ff. Nevertheless, it is evident that a fallen agent can be held responsible (*improbari*) for these wrongdoings, though not in the same way as for a genuine voluntary sin as committed by Adam and Eve. Furthermore, it will be manifest in later analyses that in Augustine's late writings, even these two properties of human nature are identified definitely as sins (*peccata*) and therefore should be punished if not forgiven. Therefore, it is not completely groundless to call the wrongdoings necessitated by our initial state involuntary sins. What is more pressing is to account for their blameworthiness in a way that demonstrates they are substantially distinct from voluntary sin in their full sense.

⁶⁷ *lib. arb.* III, 18, 51. 'nam unde sunt illae uoces: *Non enim quod uolo facio bonum, sed quod nolo malum, hoc ago*; et illud: *Velle adiacet mihi, perficere autem bonum non inuenio* (Rom 7:18-19); et illud: *Caro concupiscit aduersus spiritum, spiritus autem aduersus carnem: haec enim inuicem aduersantur; ut non ea quae uultis faciat*? (Gal 5:17).

⁶⁸ See for instance, *C. lul. imp.* I, 47; I, 101; VI, 17.

only can sin after baptism, but is at times **drawn** to (*trahi*) consent by concupiscence of the flesh, even though it struggles valiantly against it, and it commits some sins (*peccata*), even though slight ones (*uenialia*). We always have reason to say in this life, *Forgive us our debts*.⁶⁹

Here, Augustine depicts *concupiscentia carnis* as an inherited burden that cannot be removed by any individual in this life, even one who has been inspired by grace with a spiritual longing for the good. However, the necessity of its presence is not in conflict with our responsibility for wrongful actions caused by its actuality. In this passage, these wrongdoings are indeed identified as venial sins.

Rather, even *concupiscentia carnis* itself is treated here as an evil that should be condemned. First, it can deprive the spirit of peace simply by its presence. Moreover, by grabbing (*trahere*) the consent of the will, it can easily transform from an inborn defect into an evident blameworthy disposition of the soul, though not necessarily into an evil deed (*opus malum*).⁷⁰ In light of this, even spiritual and virtuous people cannot be sinless in this world and therefore should be rebuked (*corripiti*) for the actuality (*actus*) of *concupiscentia* in this life as a vestige of their original sin.⁷¹

It is evident now that Augustine remains steadfast in the culpability of evil actions under the necessity of sin, especially under *concupiscentia carnis*. However, his philosophical arguments for justifying this belief change in accordance with his understanding of the compulsive force of *concupiscentia carnis* and its essential relation to *uoluntas*. A glimpse into the development of his thought from *De libero arbitrio* III to *Contra Iulianum opus imperfectum* will help us determine

⁶⁹ *c. Iul. imp.* I, 101, (3). 'Vult enim et istam carnis concupiscentiam non habere, sed non potest nunc, propter quod adhuc in se ipso ingemescit adoptionem expectans redemptionem corporis sui, ubi sic habeat carnem, ut iam peccare non possit. Nunc ergo non solum potest peccare post baptismum, uerum etiam, quia et bene reluctans concupiscentiae carnis aliquando ab ea **trahitur** ad consensionem et quamuis uenialia, tamen aliqua peccata committit, habet, cur semper hic dicat: *Dimitte nobis debita nostra*.' The emphasis is mine.

⁷⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, II, 221, (1). '...sed peccatum, sine quo nemo nascitur, creuit uoluntatis accessu originali concupiscentia **trahente** peccantis assensum.' The emphasis is added. Cf. also *ibid.*, IV, 61. 'Concupiscentia carnis mala est et quando ei non consentitur ad malum; ipsa est enim qua caro concupiscit aduersus spiritum, etiamsi aduersus eam concupiscente spiritu non perficiat quod conatur, id est opus malum.'

⁷¹ For the importance of rebuke and correction of original sin, see *corr. et gr.* 6, 9. 'An uero ideo prauitas ista corripienda non est in homine, quia non eius propria qui corripitur, sed communis est omnibus? Imo uero corripiatur et in singulis, quod est omnium. Non enim propterea cuiusquam non est, quod ab ea nullus immunis est.'

whether Augustine ever supplies us with a compelling account of the moral responsibility for 'involuntary sins' in his constant meditations on original sin and its effects. The point here is not to establish a precise chronology of the conception of involuntary sin (*concupiscentia* in this context) in Augustine's later works, not even the continuity or discontinuity of Augustine's theology, but rather to examine in a philosophical way how Augustine deals with this issue in different theological and historical contexts.⁷² What matters here are the philosophical insights in his account of our responsibility for this inborn quality.

As clarified in earlier analyses, the *difficultas* in Book III of *De libero arbitrio* refers to the opposition and resistance that the soul experiences in willing and accomplishing a righteous act.⁷³ We noticed as well that this moral difficulty is often associated though not explicitly identified with *concupiscentia* in this text.⁷⁴ However, at this relatively early stage of thought, Augustine does not regard the necessitating force of *concupiscentia* as an inherent weakness of the will. For this reason, he believes that the presence of such an iniquity does not completely eradicate the capacity of the will to pursue the good. Even though deprived of the ability to attain beatitude merely by the decision of the will, a fallen agent still possesses the power to strive for excellence by praying for aid from divine providence in order that the *difficultas* can be conquered. Therefore, one is rightly held responsible for his further wrongdoings because such an agent has failed to make any progress by neglecting to use this inherent power.

These points provide Augustine with a philosophical account of our responsibility for moral actions under the yoke of sin near the closing of *De libero arbitrio*, where *ignorantia* and *difficultas* are treated as natural rather than penal conditions of human nature.

Natural ignorance and natural impotence are not reckoned to the soul as guilt. The guilt arises because it does not eagerly pursue knowledge, and does not give adequate attention to acquiring facility in doing right.⁷⁵

⁷² For recent efforts to reconstruct the development of Augustine's reflections on original sin and divine grace, especially in their essential relation to the freedom of human will, see Hombert 1996; id. 2000; Lössl 1997; Drecoll 1999; 2004; Cary 2008.

⁷³ Cf. *lib. arb.* III, 18, 52. 'ex difficultate cruciatus affligit... et resistente atque torquente dolore carnis uinculi...'

⁷⁴ See note 63.

⁷⁵ *lib. arb.* III, 22, 64. 'Non enim quod naturaliter nescit et naturaliter non potest, hoc animae deputatur in reatum; sed quod scire non studuit, et quod dignam facilitati comparandae ad recte faciendum operam non dedit.'

Later on, moral difficulty is envisaged as a conflict between the sublime part of the soul and the carnal part, without denying the soul's capacity to attain a correct judgment concerning the good and to seek help from divine grace.⁷⁶ Therefore, even though unable to attain the good merely by willing it, the descendants of Adam can refrain from sinning by appealing to divine assistance. The power to pursue the good is persistent in post-lapsarian agents, though fatally diminished by the first voluntary sin. Accordingly, wrongful actions in this life are not **directly** necessitated by ignorance and difficulty, but rather result from the voluntary failure of the will to employ its innate power. In short, due to this immanent power, the actions under consideration are not involuntary sins, nor simply voluntary in origin, but definitely based on voluntary decisions.

Two points are worth noting here. One is that *concupiscentia* or *difficultas* as a natural condition of human race is believed to be sinless. The other point is that this natural condition impedes but does not necessitate the decision of the will. In other words, the presence of *difficultas* as punishment for our sin in Adam does not change the voluntariness of our moral actions in this life. Therefore, the moral responsibility at stake is simply the culpability of our voluntary sins, for the faculty of the will never loses the power to advance and make its own choice rather than being drawn down involuntarily by innate moral difficulty.

Some scholars, for instance William Babcock, have identified the restricted power or freedom of the will as the vestige of the absolute ability to do otherwise, by which Augustine 'carves out a narrow and yet crucial area of moral agency within the great impairments that afflict human beings after the first human sin.'⁷⁷ This solution to fallen agency, as Babcock himself concedes immediately, is 'fragile and unstable', for from the theological point of view, it proves to be less compelling than the interpretation of our initial conditions as punishment for our own sin in Adam.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Ibid. III, 22, 65. 'Et quod agnoscens quid sibi agendum sit non continuo uolet implere, hoc quoque nondum accepit. Praecessit enim pars quaedam eius sublimior ad sentiendum recte facti bonum: sed quaedam tardior atque carnalis non consequenter in sententiam ducitur; ut ex ipsa difficultate admoneatur eundem implorare adiutorem perfectionis suae quem inchoationis sentit auctorem; ut ex hoc ei fiat carior dum non suis uiribus, sed cuius bonitate habet ut sit, eius misericordia subleuatur ut beata sit.'

⁷⁷ William S. Babcock, 'Sin, Penalty and the Responsibility of the Soul: A problem in Augustine's *De Libero Arbitrio* III', *Studia Patristica* 27 (1993): 225-230, at 230.

⁷⁸ Babcock 1993, 230.

However, this is only a superficial explanation for Augustine's later rejection of this solution, which still relies heavily on the presumption that our moral agency can be established merely on the ability to do otherwise. In his later writings, Augustine abandons this presumption primarily because it fails to account for the real enslaved state of the will before being liberated by grace. Nevertheless, this theological insight concerning the reality of the human will is also grounded on his careful observations on the faculty of will and its freedom which goes beyond the scope of freedom to do otherwise.

It is well known that Augustine coined the phrase *peccatum originale* in his exegesis of Romans in *Ad Simplicianum* of 396.⁷⁹ Commentators have pointed out, however, that Augustine develops his mature doctrine of original sin in *De peccatorum meritis et remissione et de baptismo paruulorum* of 412, his first polemic writing against the Pelagians.⁸⁰ There Augustine refers to the term *peccatum originale* as the sin of infants inherited from Adam.⁸¹ Original sin exerts its effect first and foremost in the disobedience of *concupiscentia carnis*, especially in the case of sexuality.⁸² In this work,

⁷⁹ *Simpl.* I, 1, 10. Cited in note 51. For references to other important expressions of original sin, such as *peccata originalia* and *peccatum naturale*, see Athanase Sage, 'Le péché originel dans la pensée de saint Augustin, de 412 à 430', *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 15 (1969): 75-112, at 76-81.

⁸⁰ As noted in Rigby's entry of 'Original Sin' in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, it was generally accepted before 1967 that Augustine already reached a full-grown interpretation of original sin and grace in *Ad Simplicianum*. In his classic article of 1967, Athanase Sage first argued that the Pelagian controversy gave Augustine the opportunity to develop a doctrine of original sin that profoundly influenced the Christian tradition ('Péché originel: Naissance d'un dogme', *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 13 (1967): 211-48). In recent studies, some Augustinian scholars have proposed earlier dates of this doctrine, for instance, in *De Genesi ad litteram* (TeSelle *Augustine the Theologian*, (New York: Herder and Herder), 1970, 265); in *Ad Simplicianum* (W. Babcock, 'Augustine and Paul: The Case of Romans IX,' *Studia Patristica* 16 (1985): 473-79; T.G. Ring, *Ad Simplicianum, zwei Bücher über verschiedene Fragen*, (Würzburg: Augustinus Verlag), 1991); in *Confessiones* (Rigby 1987). For more recent approaches, see note 72. It is beyond the scope of the current study to determine the exact date of the birth of the doctrine of original sin. The main concern here is the responsibility for *concupiscentia* as an effect of original sin. Augustine's insights into *concupiscentia carnis* as the infirmity of the will is elaborated on in his bitter debates with the Pelagians. On this account, I follow Sage's influential viewpoint.

⁸¹ *pecc. mer.* I, 9, 9. 'Hinc enim etiam in paruulis nolunt credere per baptismum solui originale peccatum, quod in nascentibus nullum esse omnino contendunt.'

⁸² *Ibid.*, I, 29, 57. 'Bonum ergo coniugii non est feruor concupiscentiae, sed quidam licitus et honestus illo feruore utendi modus propagandae proli, non explendae libidini accommodatus. Voluntas ista, non uoluptas illa nuptialis est. Quod igitur in membris corporis mortis huius inoboedienter mouetur totumque animum in se deiectum conatur

Augustine makes a subtle distinction between the presence and the guilt (*reatus*) of *concupiscentia*.

Concupiscence (*concupiscentia*), then, remains in the members of the body of this death as the law of sin. It is present in the little ones at birth, though its guilt (*reatus*) is removed when little ones are baptized. It remains for the combat that is life, but it does not punish with damnation those who die before engaging in that combat. It holds unbaptized little ones enmeshed in guilt and draws them to damnation, like children of anger, even if they die as little ones. But in the case of baptized adults who have the use of reason (*ratio*), whenever the mind consents (*consentire*) to that same concupiscence in order to sin, it is due to one's own will.⁸³

On the one hand, *concupiscentia* is certainly recognized as a sin that should be condemned unless its guilt is forgiven by divine grace via the sacrament of baptism. This sin is also clearly distinguished from our personal sins, for the little ones commit no sins by means of their own will before reaching the age of reason. Their inborn ignorance and weakness prevent them from doing so.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, Augustine believes that the infants who die before baptism will be held guilty for this inherited evil, since the human race has entirely sinned in Adam and should be liberated from the necessity of sin and death.⁸⁵

adtrahere et neque cum mens uoluerit exsurgit neque cum mens uoluerit conquiescit, hoc est malum peccati, cum quo nascitur omnis homo.' (For the subtle relationship between *concupiscentia* and sexuality, see my article, 'Did Augustine Lose the Philosophical Battle in the Debate with Julian of Eclanum on *Concupiscentia Carnis* and *Voluntas*?' in *Augustiniana* 57 (2007): 185-208, esp. 188-196.) However, this is not to indicate that Augustine neglects our sin of ignorance in this work. Cf. *ibid.*, I, 36, 67. There, the darkness of ignorance is singled out as a sin of infants.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, II, 4, 4. 'Concupiscentia igitur tamquam lex peccati manens in membris corporis mortis huius cum paruulis nascitur, in paruulis baptizatis a reatu soluitur, ad agonem relinquitur, ante agonem mortuos nulla damnatione persequitur; paruulos non baptizatos reos innectit et tamquam irae filios, etiamsi paruuli moriantur, ad condemnationem trahit. In grandibus autem baptizatis, in quibus iam ratione utentibus quidquid eidem concupiscentiae mens ad peccandum consensit, propriae uoluntatis est;'

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, I, 35, 65. 'An uero et hoc quaesituri et de hoc disputaturi et tempus ad hoc impensuri sumus, ut probemus atque doceamus, quomodo per propriam uoluntatem, sine qua nullum uitae propriae potest esse peccatum, nihil mali commiserint infantes, qui propter hoc uocantur ab omnibus innocentes? Nonne tanta infirmitas animi et corporis, tanta rerum ignorantia, tam nulla omnino praecepti capacitas, nullus uel naturalis uel conscriptae legis sensus aut motus, nullus in alterutram partem rationis usus, hoc multo testatiore silentio quam sermo noster proclamat atque indicat? Valeat aliquid ad se ipsam persuadendam ipsa euidencia; nam nusquam sic non inuenio quod dicam, quam ubi res, de qua dicitur, manifestior est quam omne quod dicitur.'

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 10, 11ff; I, 16, 21ff.

On the other hand, the effect of *concupiscentia* in this text is explicitly associated with the impotence of the will. As mentioned in an earlier analysis of a passage from this work, Augustine identifies *ignorantia* and *infirmetas* as two defects (*uitia*) that hinder the will to pursue the good or to refrain from doing evil.⁸⁶ This *infirmetas* or moral difficulty manifests itself in the illicit inclination (*appetitus*) for self-sufficiency that can result in a definite affection of pride, which is based on the consent of the will:

To be inflated with pride, of course, is due to the human being's own will, not to God's activity, for God neither compels nor helps one towards this. There first arises in the human will (*in uoluntate hominis*) an inclination (*appetitus*) towards its own power so that one becomes disobedient through pride. And if this inclination did not exist, nothing would have been difficult, and one could have refused to be disobedient, when one wanted to. But there resulted from the punishment that was just and deserved such a defect that it was now difficult to be obedient to righteousness.⁸⁷

Though it is difficult to resist the temptation originating from this illicit inclination, Augustine insists that baptized adults consent to it by an illicit turn of the will (*inlicita uoluntatis inclinatio*).⁸⁸ In other words, the will of a baptized adult retains the power to refuse tempting suggestions from *concupiscentia carnis*.

It seems that Augustine here simply makes a certain qualification of his earlier defense of fallen agency in *De libero arbitrio* III. The novel element is baptism, which symbolizes the rebirth of human beings by divine providence. In accordance with his emphasis on the necessity of baptism for infants, Augustine underscores that the baptized are able to fight against, though not eradicate, the inherited evil of *concupiscentia* when they are capable of rational thinking. Hence, the baptized are rightly held guilty for their illicit attraction to desires

⁸⁶ Ibid., II, 17, 26. 'Nolunt homines facere quod iustum est, siue quia latet an iustum sit siue quia non delectat. Tanto enim quidque uehementius uolumus, quanto certius quam bonum sit nouimus eoque delectamur ardentius. Ignorantia igitur et infirmetas uitia sunt, quae impediunt uoluntatem, ne moueatur ad faciendum opus bonum uel ab opere malo abstinendum.'

⁸⁷ Ibid., II, 19, 33. 'Extolli quippe in superbiam propriae uoluntatis est hominum, non operis Dei; neque enim ad hoc eos compellit aut adiuuat Deus. Praecedat ergo in uoluntate hominis appetitus quidam propriae potestatis, ut fiat inoboediens per superbiam. Hic autem adpetitus etiam si non esset, nihil molestum esset, et cum hoc uoluit homo, sine difficultate noluisset; secutum est autem ex debita iusta poena tale uitium, ut iam molestum esset oboedire iustitiae.'

⁸⁸ Ibid., II, 4, 4. 'Si ergo his desideriis concupiscentiae carnis inlicita uoluntatis inclinatione consensimus, ad hoc sanandum dicimus: *dimitte nobis debita nostra*.'

stemming from *concupiscentia carnis*, but not for the presence of *concupiscentia carnis* itself, because the sacrament of baptism has remitted its culpability. In other words, though remaining after baptism, *concupiscentia carnis* is no longer a compulsive condition that necessitates us to sinful actions by seizing the consent of our will.⁸⁹

However, the introduction of baptism only makes things more complicated. First, Augustine implicitly assumes that the ability to fight efficiently with carnal desire only belongs to the baptized. From a theological perspective, it is obviously unacceptable for the old Bishop of Hippo that an unbaptized person could overcome his or her innate weakness of the will without divine providence, especially in the form of baptism. It follows that the guilt of *concupiscentia carnis* forgiven by baptism refers to the necessity of sin in this context.⁹⁰ It means that the unbaptized commit sins of necessity because their minds are reigned by this sinful inclination. If moral responsibility grounds itself **solely** on the power of the will to refrain from illicit temptations, as is presupposed both in *De libero arbitrio* III and *De peccatorum meritis*, then it will be difficult to account for the sinful doings of the unbaptized under the yoke of *concupiscentia carnis*. In this text, Augustine comes to realize the compulsive force of this inherited evil dwelling in our mortal nature but does not yet offer a plausible account of its culpability other than by appealing to our solidarity in Adam.⁹¹ He has not attained a philosophical interpretation of the sins necessitated by the internal conditions of the mind.

In his later response to Pelagius' *De natura*, Augustine does address the problem of our responsibility for evil actions originating from the inborn injury, i.e., the original sin:

'Moreover, how could persons be responsible to God for the guilt of that sin which they do not recognize as their own (*suum*)? For it is not theirs,' he (sc. Pelagius) says, 'if it is necessary. Or, if it is theirs, then

⁸⁹ *pecc. mer.*, II, 28, 45. 'Haec autem lex peccati, quod etiam peccatum appellat Apostolus, cum dicit: *Non ergo regnet peccatum in uestro mortali corpore ad oboediendum desideriis eius*, non sic manet in membris eorum, qui ex aqua et spiritu renati sunt, tamquam non sit eius facta remissio, ubi omnino plena et perfecta fit remissio peccatorum omnibus inimicitiis interfectis, quibus separabamur a Deo, sed manet in uetustate carnis tamquam superatum et peremptum, si non illicitis consensionibus quodam modo reuiuiscat et in regnum proprium dominationemque reuocetur.'

⁹⁰ Augustine uses 'the law of sin' or 'the condemnation of sin' to denote this persistent and dominating evil in our nature. See for instance, *ibid.*, I, 16, 21. 'Ex hac igitur inoboedientia carnis, ex hac lege peccati et mortis quisquis carnaliter generatur, regenerari spiritaliter opus habet, ut non solum ad regnum Dei perducatur, uerum etiam a peccati damnatione liberetur.' See also II, 28, 45, cited above.

⁹¹ Cf. *pecc. mer.*, I, 9, 9-10, 11.

it is voluntary (*uoluntarium*), and if it is voluntary, it can be avoided.⁹² We reply: It is certainly theirs, but the defect (*uitium*) that leads them to commit it has not been completely healed. Its growth has come from an abuse of their healthy state. Now, as a result of this defect, they are in poor shape and commit many sins either out of weakness (*infirmittas*) or out of blindness (*caecitas*). Hence, they should pray that they may be healed and live thereafter in continuous good health. They should not be filled with pride, as though human beings could be healed by the same power by which they become defected (*uitiatus*).⁹²

According to Augustine's report, Pelagius associates our moral responsibility exclusively with the voluntariness of our actions, which grounds itself on our ability to do otherwise. In his reply, Augustine merely claims that we are also rightly held responsible for sins caused by our innate disease of the mind because it is our own defect that should be healed. This inborn defect gets fixed in our mind by the abuse of our rational nature, though this result seems to be inevitable for those people without aid from grace. However, in this text, Augustine does not make much effort to explain why this inherited evil is our own defect and not an excuse for our sins committed of necessity.

In *De perfectione iustitiae hominis* of 415, a polemic work against Caelestius' *Definitiones*, Augustine goes one step farther to identify the presence of *concupiscentia carnis* as a sin, even in righteous people who can withhold their consent from the desires that stem from this innate evil inclination of the soul:

But when they do not allow sin to reign in their mortal bodies so as to obey its desires (*desiderium*) and do not offer their members to sin as weapons of wickedness, there is indeed sin (*peccatum*) in their members, but it does not reign, because its desires are not obeyed.⁹³

This sin maintains its actuality by arousing the desire to commit sinful acts. Augustine emphatically points out that unlike personal

⁹² *nat. et gr.* 30, 34. '...dicit 'deinde quomodo deo pro illius peccati reatu subditus esse poterit, quod suum non esse cognouerit? Suum enim non est', inquit, 'si necessarium est. Aut si suum est, uoluntarium est; et si uoluntarium est, uitari potest.' Nos respondemus: Suum est omnino, sed uitium quo committitur nondum omni ex parte sanatum est; quod quidem ut inolescet, de non recte usa sanitate descendit; ex quo uitio iam male ualens uel infirmitate uel caecitate plura committit pro quo supplicandum est, ut sanetur et deinceps in perpetua sanitate uiuatur, non superbiendum, quasi homo eadem potestate sanetur qua potestate uitatus est.'

⁹³ *perf. iust.* 11, 28. 'Cum uero non sinit regnare peccatum in suo mortali corpore ad oboediendum desideris eius nec exhibet membra sua arma iniquitatis peccato (Rom. 6:12-3), inest quidem peccatum in membris eius, sed non regnat, quia non oboeditur desideris eius.'

sins, our heart or our conscience does not reproach (*reprehendere*) this sin, because it simply dwells in our nature and it is not transformed into an overtly wrong act.⁹⁴ Moreover, it is not in our power to eradicate these desires of sin in this life.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, to name this inborn defect a sin (*peccatum*) implies that the baptized are still held responsible for its persistence, though not in the same way as they are for sins based on the consent and obedience of the will.⁹⁶ Therefore, Augustine needs to clarify not only the sins of the unbaptized under the compulsive reign of *concupiscentia carnis*, but also the culpable actions of Christians that originate in their innate defect. This task is not completed until his polemic works against Julian of Eclanum⁹⁷, when Augustine reaches a more profound understanding of *concupiscentia carnis* and its relationship to the will.⁹⁸

Augustine sets out to clarify the exact meaning of the sin of *concupiscentia carnis* from the very beginning of his controversy with Julian:

Concupiscence itself, after all, is not now a sin in those who have been reborn, provided they do not consent to it for acts that are forbidden

⁹⁴ Ibid., 'Sed iam non ipse operatur illud, sed id quod in illo habitat peccatum. Ideo non eum reprehendit cor eius in omni uita eius...'

⁹⁵ Ibid., 'quod ut omnino ibi non sit (sc. *peccatum in membris*), *adiacet ei uelle, sed perficere bonum non adiacet.*'

⁹⁶ Ibid., 'Ita nec in uita sua, id est in fide sua a corde suo reprehenditur et sine peccato non esse conuincitur.'

⁹⁷ For a general account of the thought of Julian of Eclanum, see Josef Lössl, *Julian von Aeclanum. Studien zu seinem Leben, seinem Werk, seiner Lehre und ihrer Überlieferung* (Leiden/Boston/Köln: Brill) 2001. For Julian's conception of *concupiscentia* and grace, see Mathijs Lamberigts, 'Julian von Aeclanum und seine Sicht der Gnade: Eine Alternative?' in Meyer et al.(eds.), *Gnade – Freiheit – Rechtfertigung: augustinische Topoi und ihre Wirkungsgeschichte: Internationales Kolloquium zum 1650. Geburtstag Augustins vom 25. bis 27. November 2004 im Erbacher Hof zu Mainz*. Stuttgart: Steiner, 2008; id. 'The Philosophical and Theological Background of Julian of Aeclanum's Concept of Concupiscence', in Meyer et al.(eds.), *Die christlich-philosophischen Diskurse der Spätantike: Texte, Personen, Institutionen*. Stuttgart: Steiner, 2008.

⁹⁸ See notes 89-90 for other references of identifying the presence of *concupiscentia carnis* in the baptized as *peccatum* or *peccati lex*. Obviously, this identification comes from the influence of St. Paul's Epistles, especially Rom 5:16-18; 6:12. It deserves notice that Augustine more frequently addresses it as a remaining defect (*uitium*) that does no harm (*non obesse*). See for instance, *gr. et pecc. or.* II, 39, 44. 'Obeset ista carnis concupiscentia, etiam tantummodo quod inesset, nisi peccatorum remissio sic prodesset ut quae in eis est, et nato et renato, nato quidem et inesse et obesse, renato autem inesse quidem, sed non obesse possit... Manet quippe in prole, ita ut ream faciat, originis uitium, etiam si in parente reatus eiusdem uitii remissione ablatus est peccatorum, donec omne uitium, cui consentiendo peccatur, regeneratione nouissima consumatur...' See also *ibid.*, I, 19, 20; II, 33, 38. For earlier references in his debates with the Pelagians, see notes 83, 88.

and the mind, remaining sovereign, does not hand over the members to it to carry out those acts... It is called sin by a figure of speech (*modo quodam loquendi*), because it was produced by sin and leads to sin, if it is victorious.⁹⁹

Concupiscentia carnis is called a sin only in a metaphorical sense because it is both a punishment for one's original sin – the daughter of sin – on the one hand, and a cause of one's further sins – the mother of many sins – on the other hand.¹⁰⁰ It remains as an innate weakness (*nostra infirmitas*), a bad quality (*mala qualitas*), or a disease (*languor*) that should be healed.¹⁰¹ It is not counted as a sin that deserves reproach from the heart as shown earlier.

Nevertheless, *concupiscentia carnis* maintains its actuality (*aliquid agere*) by striking us with evil and turbulent desires (*desideria mala et turpia*), which remind us of the insuperable imperfection of this life.¹⁰² Obviously, the desires stemming from *concupiscentia carnis* are not morally neutral. By definition, they are perverted inclinations that conflict with the spiritual longing of the mind, though not brought into completion by the assent of the will yet.¹⁰³ In his later arguments against Julian, Augustine makes it clear that *concupiscentia carnis* is called a sin precisely for this innate disobedience against the dominion of the mind:

In the same way, *concupiscentia carnis* against which the good spirit has its own desires is a sin (*peccatum*) because it involves disobedience against the rule of the mind. It is a punishment of sin (*poena peccati*), because it is retribution that the disobedient deserve, and it is the

⁹⁹ *nupt. et conc.* I, 23, 25. 'Nam ipsa quidem concupiscentia iam non est peccatum in regeneratis, quando illi ad illicita opera non consentitur, atque ut ea perpetrent a regina mente membra non dantur... Sed quia modo quodam loquendi peccatum uocatur, quod et peccato facta est et peccatum, si uicerit, facit...'

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, I, 24, 27. '...concupiscentia carnis tamquam filia peccati et, quando illi ad turpia consentitur, etiam peccatorum matre multorum...'

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, I, 25, 28. 'Quamuis autem reatu suo iam soluto, manet tamen, donec sanetur omnis infirmitas nostra, proficiente renouatione interioris hominis de die in diem, cum exterior induerit incorruptionem; non enim substantialiter manet, sicut aliquod corpus aut spiritus, sed affectio est quaedam malae qualitatis, sicut languor.'

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, I, 27, 30. 'Agit enim aliquid concupiscentia carnis et quando ei non exhibetur uel cordis adsensus, ubi regnet, uel membra uelut arma quibus inpleatur quod iubet. Agit autem quid nisi ipsa desideria mala et turpia?'

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, I, 29, 32. 'Quando autem sunt (sc. desideria) quidem, sed non eis oboeditur, nec malum perficitur, quia non eis oboeditur, nec bonum, quia sunt, sed fit ex aliqua parte bonum, quia concupiscentiae malae non consentitur, et ex aliqua parte remanet malum, quia uel concupiscitur.' For the definition of *concupiscentia carnis* and the conflict between spirit and carnal concupiscence, see my article on *concupiscentia*, Wu 2007.

cause of sin (*causa peccati*) by reason of the failure of one who consents or the infection of one who is born.¹⁰⁴

However, *concupiscentia carnis* is not an act of the will, but rather the innate infirmity suffered by the will in this life from the beginning. In baptized Christians, especially in those who live a continent life vigorously fighting against this inborn inclination, *concupiscentia carnis* does remain, but without the explicit consent of the will. However, if the presence of *concupiscentia carnis* is not only a punishment for our original sin, but a sin in-and-of itself even after its guilt is forgiven, we should demonstrate that it is not only an evil, but an evil for which we are rightly held responsible, though not necessarily guilty of. Therefore it should be demonstrated how the baptized can be held responsible for such an inherited tendency of the soul that is no longer assented to by the consent of the will and further sinful deeds.

Augustine is quite sensitive to the issue at stake, i.e. what happens to moral responsibility when the consent of the will is absent, for the verb *captiuare* implies the enslaved state of the apostle with respect to innate evil, which is no longer accompanied by his assent.¹⁰⁵ In his interpretation, Augustine underscores that the presence of *concupiscentia carnis* is due to our own defective nature:

That is, he meant that *it holds me captive* by the flesh, not by the mind, by its impulse (*motione*), not by his consent, and thus *it holds me captive*, not because some foreign nature (*natura aliena*) is present in the flesh, but because our own nature is present here.¹⁰⁶

Concupiscentia carnis is ascribed to our own nature just because *caro* is an indispensable part of our nature in this life. However, this fact by itself cannot prove that this natural defect is a sin, for no one would call blindness or deafness a sin.

To illuminate the moral agency in *concupiscentia carnis* itself, Augustine draws attention to the particularity of this disease. As argued earlier, what we have lost due to this disease of the soul is nothing

¹⁰⁴ *c. Iul.* V, 3, 8. 'Ita concupiscentia carnis, aduersus quam bonus concupiscit spiritus, et peccatum est, quia inest illi inobedientia contra dominatum mentis; et poena peccati est, quia reddita est meritis inobedientis; et causa peccati est, defectione consentientis uel contagione nascentis.'

¹⁰⁵ *c. ep. Pel.* I, 10, 20. 'Sed quod dixit *captiuantem me* potest mouere, si nulla consensio est.'

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, '... ut *'captiuantem me'* dixerit *'carne'*, non mente, *'motione'*, non consensione, et ideo *'captiuantem me'*, quia et in ipsa carne non est aliena natura, sed nostra.'

other than the capacity of the will to love the good. Therefore, it is not morally neutral as a bodily disease or defect is. Furthermore, I have revealed elsewhere that the act (*actus*) of *concupiscentia carnis* already involves an implicit approval of the will by stirring turbulent desires (*desideria*).¹⁰⁷ If this were not the case, then the soul would not be affected by this bad quality latent in our nature. For this reason, a virtuous person can refuse temptation by an explicit decision of the will. However, he is not able to eradicate the minimal consent entailed in the actuality of *concupiscentia carnis*. Augustine's interpretation of its presence in dreams of holy people confirms the existence of the will's minimum assent in this life.

What does it (sc. *concupiscentia*) in those whom it forces to be on guard and to fight against itself? And if it should steal from them the slightest consent (*ullus assensus*), even in sleep, they groan when they have awakened and say, *How my soul is filled with illusions* (Ps 38:8). For when dreams deceive the sleeping senses, even chaste souls somehow fall into such shameful consent. If the Most High held such consent against them, who would live in chastity?¹⁰⁸

Obviously, this *assensus* is not based on the decision of the will that would be condemned by God. Rather, it is an involuntary approval of the will in an unconscious state. Likewise, the presence of *concupiscentia* itself already contains such an involuntary assent of the will, for no desire can be aroused without the intention of the will. This involuntary presence of the will indicates that the *concupiscentia* is precisely the infirmity of the will itself. Our heart does not reproach its mere presence because we commit no further sin by consenting to it. However, the saints groan on account of it because it displays the imperfection not of a foreign nature, but of their own nature, not of another psychological faculty, but of the faculty of the will itself. For this reason, Augustine later highlights that original sin and its effect should be censured in all cases, both in the unbaptized and the baptized.¹⁰⁹ In his final interpretation of this innate sin in response to

¹⁰⁷ See my article on *concupiscentia* mentioned earlier in note 42 and 'Rethinking Augustine's Adaptation of 'First Movements' of Affection,' forthcoming.

¹⁰⁸ c. *Iul.* IV, 2, 10. 'Et si quando ab eis ullum uel in somnis furatur assensum, cum euigilauerint, gemere et inter gemitus dicere, *Quomodo impleta est anima mea illusionibus?* Quia cum sopitos deludunt somnia sensus, nescio quomodo etiam castae animae in turpes labuntur assensus.'

¹⁰⁹ Cf. *corr. et gr.* 6, 9, 'Immo uero corripitur et in singulis, quod est omnium. Non enim propterea cuiusquam non est, quod ab ea nullus immunis est. Peccata quidem ista originalia ideo dicuntur aliena, quod ea singuli de parentibus trahunt: sed non sine causa dicuntur et nostra, quia in illo uno omnes, sicut dicit Apostolus, peccauerunt.

Julian, he identifies it as a non-voluntary sin (*peccatum non uoluntarium*).¹¹⁰ It is not a voluntary sin because it can occur without the consent of the will. Nevertheless, it is a sin because it is an evil and the actuality of this evil essentially involves the involuntary assent of the will.

In his controversy with Julian, Augustine also deals with the problem of the responsibility of unbaptized adults for the evil actions they perform out of ignorance and infirmity.

It is not true, then, as some claim that we say and as this fellow (sc. ulian) also dares to write, that we hold that 'all are forced (*cogi*),' as if against their will (*inuiti*), 'into sin by the necessity (*necessitas*) of their flesh.' Rather, if they are already at that age at which they can make the decision (*arbitrium*) of their own mind, they are held in sin by their own will (*sua uoluntate*) and are hurled down from sin to sin by their own will. Nor does the one who persuades and deceives them aim at anything else for them but that they commit sin by their own will, whether out of ignorance of the truth or out of delight in iniquity or out of both of these evils, namely, blindness and weakness. But this will which is free for evil actions (*libera in malis*) because it takes delight in evil is not free for good actions (*in bonis*), because it has not been set free (*liberata*).¹¹¹

Here, Augustine makes it clear that the inherited necessity of sin cannot compel anyone into sin against one's will. As descendants of Adam, we are plunged into necessity (*in necessitatem*). However, this does not signify that our further evildoings under the yoke of this necessity are not acts of will. Obviously, they are not counted as voluntary actions because the faculty of the will is free to do otherwise. Augustine undoubtedly claims that the will that has not been set free, like that of the unbaptized, is not free to accomplish righteous actions by its own efforts. In other words,

Corripiatur ergo origo damnabilis, ut ex dolore correptionis uoluntas regenerationis oriatur.

¹¹⁰ *c. Iul. imp.* IV, 93. 'Cur non attendis esse peccatum etiam non uoluntarium, certe in illo qui dicit, quacumque causa hoc dicat: *Si autem quod nolo ego hoc facio, iam non ego operor illud, sed quod habitat in me peccatum?*'

¹¹¹ *c. ep. Pel.*, I, 3, 7. 'Non itaque, sicut dicunt nos quidam dicere et iste audet insuper scribere, 'omnes in peccatum' uelut inuiti 'carnis suae necessitate coguntur', sed si iam in ea aetate sunt ut propriae mentis utantur arbitrio, et in peccato sua uoluntate retinentur, et a peccato in peccatum sua uoluntate praecipitantur. Neque enim agit in eis etiam qui suadet et decipit, nisi ut peccatum uoluntate committant uel ignorantia ueritatis uel delectatione iniquitatis uel utroque malo et caecitatis et infirmitatis. Sed haec uoluntas, quae libera est in malis, quia delectatur malis, ideo libera in bonis non est, quia liberata non est.'

without extra aid, the will of the unbaptized necessarily consents to the evil desires that stem from its innate defect. This inevitable consent is still identified as a disposition of the will because the will finds delight in blameworthy desires and nothing can compel it to do so.

Here, we encounter again the relationship between necessity and will, and the subtle distinction between necessity and compulsion. Two significant points were reached in earlier arguments. First, Augustine's analysis of *duae uoluntates* has established that the will is essentially independent from any kind of compulsion, whether external or internal. The necessity of *consuetudo* cannot force the will to take on a malicious disposition.¹¹² Second, in his criticism of Julian's definition of *liberum arbitrium* as a two way power free from any kind of necessity, Augustine displays his insights into the presence of necessity in the faculty of will. He lists the necessity of habit, the ignorance of the good, and the necessity of affection, which even Julian himself cannot deny.¹¹³

Now, I advance to Augustine's arguments for the compatibility of *uoluntas* with *necessitas*, which are more solidly elaborated on in his last response to Julian, *Contra Iulianum opus imperfectum*.

First, Augustine points out that we can have a volition towards that which occurs necessarily, such as a will to die. For instance, Paul desires to be dissolved and to be with Christ.¹¹⁴ This is a will of a necessity (*uoluntas necessitatis*).

Second, there is also a necessity of the will (*necessitas uoluntatis*), 'by which it is necessary that we will to live happily'.¹¹⁵ From the fact that beatitude is a predictable object of the will common to all, we cannot infer that we are **compelled** to take it as the ultimate end of our will. It is absurd to say that one intends one's happiness

¹¹² See notes 42, 54-55.

¹¹³ *c. Iul. imp.* I, 105, '...si enim necessitas nulla peccandi est, ut omittam uim mali eius, quod originaliter trahitur, hoc enim nullum esse uos uultis, quid patiebatur, quaeso, qui secundum uestrum sensum tanta mole malae consuetudinis premebatur, ut diceret: *Non quod uolo facio bonum, sed quod nolo malum hoc ago?*'.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, IV, 103, (1) 'Cum enim sit moriendi necessitas, quis neget quod possit esse et uoluntas? Vnde ait apostolus *concupiscentiam* se habere *dissolui et esse cum Christo* (Phil 1:23). Cum ergo uult mori quem necesse est mori, simul sunt necessitas et uoluntas, quod tu (sc. Julianus) fieri posse uana uoluntate, nulla necessitate negaueras.'

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, IV, 93. 'Cur non attendis esse etiam necessitatem, qua necesse est uelimus beate uiuere, et clausis oculis sic alteri alteram opponis, quasi uoluntas necessitatis aut necessitas uoluntatis esse non possit?'

unwillingly, and even more absurd that one can become happy against one's will.¹¹⁶

Moreover, a necessity can be produced by the will without necessity and remain even without the will.¹¹⁷ As demonstrated before, the necessity of habit is an illuminating example of this kind of necessity. Augustine believes that *concupiscentia carnis* also belongs to this category; for it is both a result of original sin committed by the will of the first human beings and a necessity of sin which belongs to no one's will.¹¹⁸ The presence of this necessity evidently deprives a fallen agent of the ability to refrain from sinning by its own efforts. However, the freedom to make a decision independently from any compulsion is never removed from the faculty of the will. Therefore, even under the compulsive force of *concupiscentia carnis*, the will is still free to make its own decisions, though unable to attain a righteous disposition before its original sin has been forgiven. Moreover, Augustine stresses that this necessity of sin can remain in the baptized together with the will towards righteousness, which further confirms that necessity does not destroy the freedom of the will.¹¹⁹

Bearing this delicate relationship between necessity and the will in mind, I return to the problem of responsibility. It is evident now that even the unbaptized are not compelled by their initial conditions to sin, though unable to change their state by themselves. The necessity of sin cannot be identified with the coercion to sin. The latter is self-contradictory. For sin cannot come into being without the will and the faculty of will is unable to coexist with coercion. Therefore, the evil

¹¹⁶ Augustine insists that even when God foreknows that one is to be happy and therefore one is necessarily going to be happy, this necessity does not mean that beatitude is not an object of the will. See *lib. arb.* III, 3, 7. 'Nam et de beatitudine quod dixisti, non abs te ipso beatum fieri, ita dixisti, quasi hoc ego negauerim: sed dico, cum futurus es beatus, non te inuitum, sed uolentem futurum. Cum igitur praescius sit Deus futurae beatitudinis tuae – nec aliter aliquid fieri possit quam ille praesciuit, alioquin nulla praescientia est –, non tamen ex eo cogimur sentire, quod absurdissimum est et longe a ueritate seclusum, non te uolentem beatum futurum.'

¹¹⁷ *c. Iul. imp.* IV, 103, (2). '...et est iam necessitas etiam sine uoluntate, quam fecit uoluntas sine necessitate. Nam et ille qui dicit: *Non quod uolo ago*, certe secundum uos necessitate consuetudinis premitur; hanc autem necessitatem, ne liberum auferatis arbitrium, eum sibi uoluntate fecisse contenditis...'

¹¹⁸ Certainly, as stressed earlier, how this necessity, as punishment inflicted on the first couple, was transmitted to their descendents is not the concern here. What concerns me here is primarily how we can justify culpability for those actions subject to this necessity of sin.

¹¹⁹ *c. Iul. imp.* IV, 103, (4). '...profecto in homine mole consuetudinis presso simul esse possunt et iustitiae uoluntas et peccati necessitas, quoniam *uelle adiacet mihi* professio est uoluntatis, *perficere autem bonum non inuenio* confessio est necessitatis.'

actions of an unbaptized adult are both a necessary result of their *concupiscentia* and voluntary acts based on the decision of the will. In light of this, in both the baptized and the unbaptized, wrongful acts under the necessity of sin cannot be appropriately called 'involuntary sins'. In both cases, they are based on the free decision of the will, which is essentially exempt from any kind of compulsion. They are voluntary sins not in the sense that they are brought into being by choices of the will that could have been otherwise, but in that they result from unforced decisions of the will that are intimate to the state of the self. The only difference brought about by baptism or divine grace is simply that the baptized are endowed with the ability to will the good and to refrain from sinning. They enjoy greater freedom not in the sense that they are able to choose between good and evil but in that they are closer to the attainment of the good by this ability that comes from divine providence.

IV. Conclusion

It is evident now that the involuntary involvement of the will in the actuality of *concupiscentia carnis* helps Augustine clarify our limited responsibility for this innate defect of the will. By appealing to his peculiar conception of the freedom of the will, Augustine also establishes our responsibility for evildoings under the necessity of sin, even though they can be unavoidable in a number of cases. Therefore, even if the infirmity and blindness of the mind are not penal but natural conditions of the human race, we can still establish our moral **responsibility** in this mortal life. The only thing that we cannot attain by purely philosophical arguments is the **culpability** of *concupiscentia carnis* of infants before being forgiven by baptism. We are held responsible for the pure presence of *concupiscentia carnis* in the way that we are responsible for involuntary consent in dreams, but not as we are for deeds based on the explicit consent of the will. To justify our guilt for the inborn weakness of the will, we have to locate Augustine's reflections on *concupiscentia carnis* in its original theological contexts. By recognizing *concupiscentia* as a sin, Augustine shows that we are not only reasonably blamed but justly punished for its involuntary presence in our life, unless our guilt has been forgiven by the prevenient grace. Nonetheless, while this **culpability** is significant for Augustine's theological arguments for the necessity of baptism for infants and the necessity of predestined grace, it is not indispensable for the philosophical account of moral responsibility as reconstructed from his theological arguments.

In sum, a shrewd understanding of *uoluntas* and its freedom allows Augustine to develop a better explication of our responsibility for the innate weakness of our human condition than that of *uoluntarium in causa*.¹²⁰

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