

# NATURE, WILL, AND THE FALL IN AUGUSTINE AND MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR

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## Abstract

This paper compares the understanding of nature, will, and the Fall in Augustine and Maximus the Confessor, and finds their accounts to be identical on most points of substance, if not always in the terminology used to express these points. On several points, they agree with each other *against* both Eastern and Western accounts as traditionally conceived. Given that these figures are often regarded as paradigmatic for Western and Eastern traditions of Christianity, respectively, this points to a need for a more nuanced account of the unity and divergences within and between Eastern and Western Christian traditions than that given to present.

## Keywords

Augustine; Maximus the Confessor; human nature; will; The Fall; Original Sin; guilt.

## 1 Introduction

This paper provides a comprehensive comparison of Augustine and Maximus the Confessor on the Fall of mankind and its consequence, Original Sin, focusing on the ways their analyses of the Fall illuminate their thinking about the nature of the will.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Augustine's works are cited by book, in Roman numerals, and paragraph, in Arabic numerals. Translations from Latin texts, unless stated otherwise, are my own, and are based on either Migne's *Patrologia Latina* or the *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* where available. References to Maximus' *Ambigua* [Amb.], *Opuscula Theologica et Polemica* [OTP], and *Disputatio cum Pyrrho* [DP] follow the pagination of Migne's *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 91. References to Maximus' *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* [QT] are according to the page numbering of the *Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca*, vols. 7 & 22.

Translations for Maximus are taken from the following works: Paul M. Blowers and Robert Louis Wilken, (eds. and trans.), *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ: selected writings from St. Maximus the Confessor*, Crestwood, NY, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003 [BW]; Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, New York, Routledge, 1996 [Louth]. Where no English source is listed, Greek translations are my own.

Existing comparisons of these figures have been pursued from the standpoint of a dichotomy between Western and Eastern interpretations of the Fall generally,<sup>2</sup> projected *in ovo* onto the theology of Augustine and Maximus. According to a consensus developing among scholars of both Eastern and Western Christianity, Augustine's central contribution to the Western understanding of Original Sin was the notion of inherited guilt;<sup>3</sup> and in rejecting the concept of inherited guilt, the Eastern tradition rejected Augustine's doctrine of Original Sin.<sup>4</sup> "[T]he Eastern Church did not support the doctrine"<sup>5</sup> of Original Sin and Maximus in particular "does not share Augustine's doctrine of Original Sin."<sup>6</sup> Maximus' theology, though in some respects closer to Augustine's than that of many other Greek fathers,<sup>7</sup> remains within an essentially Eastern purview.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>2</sup> "Augustine introduced a false moralistic philosophical approach [to the Fall] which [...] was not accepted by the patristic tradition of the East." John Romanides, "Original Sin According to St. Paul" *St. Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly* 4 (1955), 5-28, 7; cf. Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, Baltimore, Penguin, 1964, 229.

<sup>3</sup> Jesse Couenhoven, "St. Augustine's Doctrine of Original Sin" *Augustinian Studies* 36 (2005), 359-396, 369-72; Jean-Claude Larchet, *Maxime le Confesseur, médiateur entre l'Orient et l'Occident*, Paris, Les Éditions du Cerf, 1998, 79.

<sup>4</sup> See John Boojamra, "Original Sin According to St. Maximus the Confessor" *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 20 (1976), 19-30, 25: "We can, in general, conclude that for Maximus, and indeed for all the Greek Fathers, the Original Sin as a process extended in time is not defined by the Augustinian transmission of a real culpability through sexual generation" (emphasis mine); cf. Daniel Haynes, "The Transgression of Adam and Christ the New Adam: St. Augustine and St. Maximus the Confessor on the Doctrine of Original Sin" *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 55 (2011), 293-317, 293-95.

<sup>5</sup> Couenhoven (2005), 388.

<sup>6</sup> Ian A. McFarland, "'Willing is not Choosing': Some Anthropological Implications of Diothelite Christology," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 9 (2007), 3-23. 3.

<sup>7</sup> McFarland calls Maximus' diothelite Christology "a contribution to the Augustinian tradition." And for Larchet, "La conception de saint Maxime présente sans aucun doute, plus que celle de tout autre Père grec, des similitudes troublantes avec la conception occidentale d'origine augustinienne." (1998, 120). Ian A McFarland, "Naturally and by Grace: Maximus the Confessor on the operation of the will" *The Scottish Journal of Theology* 58 (2005), 410-433, 430.

<sup>8</sup> There is circumstantial evidence suggesting Maximus may have been influenced by Augustine's works, directly or indirectly. See J. M. Garrigues, *Maxime le Confesseur. La charité, avenir divin de l'homme*, Paris, Beauchesne, 1976, 60; G. C. Berthold, "Did Maximus the Confessor Know Augustine?" *Studia Patristica* 17 (1982), 14-17; Larchet (1998), 122, fn. 181: "...les conciles locaux africains qui, encouragés par Maxime, ont condamné l'*Ekthèse* en 645, citent Augustin dans leurs actes (voir Mansi X, 937-940), de même que le cite les Actes du synode du Latran (649) auquel Maxime a activement participé..."

The difficulty with the above account, even in its often attenuated form, is that it leaves Maximus much more “Eastern” and Augustine much more “Western” than either father really was. In particular, we shall see i) that Maximus accepts many elements in his understanding of the Fall which we would today think of as Western; and ii) that the notion of inherited guilt, though regarded as Augustine’s central contribution to the Western understanding of our Adamic inheritance, simply isn’t in Augustine at all. This leaves Augustine and Maximus far closer to each other than their standard portraits suggest.

For an adequate account of the Fall, it is necessary to first understand its *terminus a quo*. Hence, I begin with Maximus and Augustine’s remarks concerning human nature: first in itself, and then as it pertains to human willing. Next, I explain the Fall of Adam, as regards first, its causes, and second, its consequence i.e. Original Sin. Here, I first show, negatively, that inherited guilt is not part of Augustine’s account, and locate the source of this belief in a mistranslation of the terms *reus* and *reatus*. Second, I turn to the positive content of the doctrine of Original Sin in Augustine and Maximus: focusing first on the effects of Original Sin on the human faculties; and second on its effects on the condition of human nature as such, with particular attention paid to the relation between sin and death.

## 2 Augustine and Maximus on Human Nature

### 2.1 Disambiguating ‘Nature’ in Augustine and Maximus

Given that much of the present-day antipathy to Augustine’s account of Original Sin seems to be motivated by the worry that such an account destroys the goodness of nature,<sup>9</sup> it shall be helpful to begin by disambiguating Augustine and Maximus’ different uses of the word ‘nature’ (*natura*, φύσις).

The primary meaning of ‘nature’ in Augustine is ‘that which a particular substance was created to instantiate: its type’. Augustine’s thinking about nature is governed by the idea that every nature is *good*.<sup>10</sup> This idea is expressed in his repeated statements to the effect that “blame belongs to no one unless their nature is praised.”<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> See Ian A. McFarland, “Fallen or Unfallen? Christ’s Human Nature and the Ontology of Human Sinfulness,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 10 (2008), 399–415, 402; cf. Haynes (2011), 295.

<sup>10</sup> *C.Iul.* I. 37.

<sup>11</sup> *Lib.arb.* III. 38; cf. *Civ.Dei* XI. 15, 17.

This axiological understanding of nature leaves open the possibility that an individual may fail to fully instantiate its type, and thus grants two analogical applications of the term: secondarily, ‘nature’ may refer to the bearer of the nature proper; thirdly, it may refer to the condition of the thing that nature belongs to. The second use is at work when Augustine states “God made all natures, not only those that would stand firm in justice, but also those that would sin.”<sup>12</sup> Augustine contrasts the third meaning – which he justifies by appeal to its employment in the Pauline corpus<sup>13</sup> – with the first when he writes, “the nature of man, indeed, was originally created faultless and without any defect; but in fact *this* nature in which each one is born of Adam now has need of a doctor, for it is not healthy.”<sup>14</sup>

Maximus exhibits the same freedom of expression with regard to the term ‘nature’ (φύσις) writing, for example, that in Adam, “our nature unnaturally fell at the instant it was created.”<sup>15</sup> And again, though he says the human will is “to follow nature and not in any way to be at variance with the *logos* of nature,”<sup>16</sup> he also tells us the devil “divided nature at the level of mode of existence.”<sup>17</sup> He insists, telling us that Adam “put off immortality,”<sup>18</sup> that the corruption of the body is not natural, and then speaks of generated bodies “naturally suffering corruption.”<sup>19</sup>

In short, natures may be bad because they fail to instantiate their nature, and against their nature are naturally inclined to sin. While the fluidity of Augustine and Maximus’ terminology can be difficult to deal with at first, a little attention to context is usually able to determine each author’s meaning more precisely.

## 2.2 Prelapsarian nature

There are two important differences between Augustine and Maximus’ accounts of prelapsarian nature. First, Maximus, following Gregory of Nyssa,<sup>20</sup> assumes sexual difference only exists in anticipation of the

<sup>12</sup> *Lib. arb.* III. 32; cf. *Lib. arb.* III.36; *C. Iul.* I. 40.

<sup>13</sup> *Lib. arb.* III.54; cf. Eph 2:3

<sup>14</sup> *Nat. et gr.* 3; cf. *Nat. et gr.* 57; 62-63.

<sup>15</sup> *Amb.* 42 = PG 91:1321B = BW 85.

<sup>16</sup> Letter 2 = PG 91: 396C = Louth 86.

<sup>17</sup> Letter 2 = PG 91: 396D-397A = Louth 87.

<sup>18</sup> *QAT* 42 = CCSG 7: 285 = BW 119. Cf. *Amb.* 8 = PG 91: 1104A = BW 76. Augustine likewise assumes Adam would not have died had he not sinned. *gr. et pecc. or.* II. 12; *gest. Pel.* 23-24, 57, 65.

<sup>19</sup> *Amb.* 10. 28 = PG 91:1156D = Louth 126.

<sup>20</sup> *Hom. Opif.* 16.3-7 = PG 44: 180B-181A.

Fall.<sup>21</sup> Augustine, by contrast, affirms that Adam and Eve would have been sexually differentiated even if the Fall were never to happen, and even might have had children.<sup>22</sup> Second, Augustine more clearly envisions Adam and Eve's life in paradise as something extended in time.<sup>23</sup> Maximus, by contrast, is much less clear about this.<sup>24</sup>

### 2.3 *The nature of the will*

Much of the secondary literature on Augustine's understanding of the will has focused on whether and to what degree Augustine should be classified as a libertarian or a compatibilist.<sup>25</sup> This question about the extent of the powers of the Augustinian will, however, obscures the more basic question of what the will *is*. For both Augustine and Maximus, free will is not so much an ability to choose between opposites as it is a right orientation of the self, with respect to God and the rest of creation. In other words, the type of freedom envisioned by both thinkers is not reciprocally, but *directly* correlated with the presence of a higher principle at work in the self. This concern not to disconnect freedom from moral liberation and spiritual openness shines through, for instance, in Maximus' claim that Christ "is alone truly free and sinless,"<sup>26</sup> and in Augustine's writing that "there is

<sup>21</sup> *Amb.* 8 = PG 91: 1104B; *Amb.* 41 in PG 91:1305C = Louth, 157; cf. Louth, 27, 73; Boojamra (1976), 28.

<sup>22</sup> *Gr.et pecc.or.* II. 40.

<sup>23</sup> See esp. his discussion of the Fall in *GnLit* XI, passim. Cf. J. Patout Burns, "Augustine on the Origin and Progress of Evil" *Journal of Religious Ethics* 16 (1988), 9-27, 19-21.

<sup>24</sup> In several places, Maximus states Adam fell "at the instant he was created" (*Amb.* 42 = PG 91: 1321B = BW 85; *QAT* 61 = CCSG 22:85, 8-16 = BW 131). Though Augustine denies this in the case of human beings, he accepts it in the case of the angels. *GnLit* XI. 25-30; cf. Jesse Couenhoven, "Augustine's rejection of the free-will defence: an overview of the late Augustine's theodicy," *Religious Studies* 43 (2007), 279-298, 282.

<sup>25</sup> Baker and Rogers read Augustine as a compatibilist. Wetzel holds Augustine was a libertarian early on, and later became a compatibilist. Stump takes Augustine to defend libertarianism even in his later works. For Greer the will is libertarian prior to, but not after the Fall. For Couenhoven, not even Adam's pre-fallen will can be regarded as libertarian (2007, 289-90). Lynne Rudder Baker, "Why Christians should not be libertarians: an Augustinian Challenge," *Faith and Philosophy* 20 (2003), 360-78. Rowan A. Greer, "Augustine's Transformation of the Free Will Defence," *Faith and Philosophy* 13 (1996), 471-86. Katherin A. Rogers, "Augustine's Compatibilism," *Religious Studies* 40 (2004), 415-435. Eleonore Stump, "Augustine on free will," in Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzman (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, Cambridge University Press, 2001, 124-147. James Wetzel, *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, 8.

<sup>26</sup> *Amb.* 42 = PG 91:1348C = BW 94.

always a free will in us, but not always a good one. Either it is free from justice, when it serves sin, and then it is evil; or it is free from sin, when it serves justice, and then it is good.”<sup>27</sup>

So above for both Augustine and Maximus, ‘will’ refers not so much to an activity as an orientation.<sup>28</sup> A further difference from more familiar accounts is that for neither father is willing identified with free choice: hence, Augustine uses the complex phrase ‘free choice of the will’ (*liberum arbitrium voluntatis*) to both couple and distinguish will and choice; and Maximus characterizes the will not by its contrast, but its connection with nature. “For Maximus the primary manifestation of the natural will is in our natural appetites.”<sup>29</sup> Maximus writes that by the will,

We naturally desire being, life, movement, understanding, speech, perception, nourishment, sleep, refreshment, as well as not to suffer pain or to die – quite simply to possess fully everything that sustains nature and to lack whatever harms it.<sup>30</sup>

This connection between will and nature seems to have been a common element of thinking about the will in late antiquity,<sup>31</sup> and is part of why Augustine’s understanding of the fallen will was occasionally regarded as destroying the goodness of that nature of which the will is an expression.<sup>32</sup>

### 3 The Fall and the Origin of Evil

In both Augustine and Maximus, one finds three basic explanations of the Fall: the *free will*, *disorder*, and *privation* accounts. As their names suggest, the free will account locates the immediate cause of the Fall

<sup>27</sup> *Gr.et lib.arb.* 31.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Couenhoven (2007), 284.

<sup>29</sup> Ian A. McFarland, *In Adam’s Fall: A Meditation on the Christian Doctrine of Original Sin*, Malden, Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, 94; cf. *DP* = PG 91: 293B; *OTP* 7 = PG 91: 77B.

<sup>30</sup> *OTP* 16 = PG 91: 196A. In McFarland (2010), 93-94.

<sup>31</sup> Sarah Byers, for instance, straightforwardly identifies Augustine’s *voluntas* with Stoic *hormē*, while Gerd Van Riel finds an Aristotelian basis for Augustine’s treatment of the will, mediated through Neoplatonism. Sarah Byers, “The Meaning of *Voluntas* in Augustine,” *Augustinian Studies* 37 (2006), 171-89. Gerd Van Riel, “Augustine’s Will, an Aristotelian Notion? On the Antecedents of Augustine’s Doctrine of the Will,” *Augustinian Studies* 38 (2007), 255-279.

<sup>32</sup> See Julian’s critique at *C.Iul.* III. 13. It is also partly why not even Augustine’s Pelagian opponents, who were in some respects quite close to a libertarian account of the will (Cf. *C.Iul.* V. 56), can be fully regarded as proponents of the view.

in free will, the privation account locates its nature in a turn towards non-being, and the disorder account focuses on the hierarchical disruption co-constitutive of this turning. Aspects of these accounts can often be found in the same work or even the same passage, so we should be hesitant to regard them as competing with each other.

### 3.1 *The free will account*

Not only in his earliest,<sup>33</sup> but also in his middle<sup>34</sup> and later works, Augustine holds the immediate cause of the Fall was Adam's free choice. Even in his *Contra Iulianum*, one of his latest works, Augustine writes that "there is no other origin of any sin besides a bad will,"<sup>35</sup> and includes Adam's bad will as an especially important case. Hence, developmental hypotheses according to which Augustine rejected a free will explanation of the Fall should themselves be rejected.<sup>36</sup>

Maximus likewise writes that "Having first been corrupted from its natural *logos*, Adam's choice (προαίρεσις) corrupted [human] nature, forfeiting the grace of impassibility,"<sup>37</sup> and describes Adam in his sin as "clinging willingly with both hands to the rubbish of matter."<sup>38</sup> Adam "created willful sin through his disobedience,"<sup>39</sup> and the "curse God the Father sent forth upon the face of the earth" depicted by the prophet Zechariah is provoked "by the disobedience of Adam."<sup>40</sup>

For neither father, however, is this the only account that can be given. Rather, the causality described above is what we might call proximate or immediate, rather than remote. For Maximus, the free will defense is frequently coupled with a more Platonic, intellectualist approach to the Fall;<sup>41</sup> and from early on Augustine regards this explanation as incomplete on its own, since it fails to explain the genesis of the perverse desire motivating Adam's choice.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>33</sup> *Lib. arb.* I. 35.

<sup>34</sup> *Nat. et gr.* 3.

<sup>35</sup> *C. Iul.* III. 11.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Couenhoven (2007).

<sup>37</sup> *QT* 42 = CCSG 7: 285 = BW 119 (alt).

<sup>38</sup> *Amb* 10. 28 = PG 91: 1156C = Louth, 126 (alt.).

<sup>39</sup> *QT* 42 = CCSG 7: 287 = BW 121 (alt).

<sup>40</sup> *QT* 62 = CCSG 22: 123.

<sup>41</sup> E.g. *Amb.* 10. 28 = PG 91: 1156C-D = Louth, 126.

<sup>42</sup> *Lib. arb.* I. 30.

### 3.2 *The disorder account*

Augustine's second explanation of the genesis of evil is in terms of a theory of a hierarchy of goods. For Augustine, creation entails that the various created entities stand in hierarchical relation of qualitative goodness both to God and to each other. God is the highest good, while other beings are higher or lower goods in accordance with their likeness to the highest good. For instance, those beings that have life are ontologically better than those that merely exist, and those that have understanding are better than those that have life without understanding.<sup>43</sup> This hierarchy obliges human beings to order their loves in accordance with it; for instance, one ought to love virtue more than either corporeal goods or one's own will.<sup>44</sup> Since the first man failed to do this, his disruption of the divinely-ordered hierarchy by rebellion against God was avenged by a second hierarchical disruption: the rebellion of his own flesh against his will.<sup>45</sup>

Maximus says less about the character of the Fall than Augustine. This is partly because Maximus' corpus simply isn't as voluminous as Augustine's, and partly because his focus in discussing the Fall usually lies elsewhere than in a discussion of its causes. Maximus typically discusses the Fall within the context of discussing Adam as a type of Christ.<sup>46</sup> This context lends itself to discussions of the consequences of the Fall, but less to discussions of its character and motivations. Nevertheless, we can see that while holding the immediate cause of the Fall was Adam's free choice, Maximus, like Augustine, characterizes the Fall as a turning from higher to lower goods.<sup>47</sup> One who had "the ability to direct the steps of his soul unswervingly toward God voluntarily exchanged what is better, his true being, for what is worse, non-being."<sup>48</sup> And along similar lines, Christ's will is contrasted with Adam's on account of its *inconvertibility*.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>43</sup> *Lib.arb.* II. 7.

<sup>44</sup> *Lib.arb.* II. 50, 53.

<sup>45</sup> *C.Iul.* V. 8; *nupt.et conc.* I. 7.

<sup>46</sup> See *Amb.* 31; 42; *QT* 21, 42, 61, passim.

<sup>47</sup> Hence Maximus writes, "Our forefather Adam, however, used his freedom to turn toward what was worse and to direct his desire away from what had been permitted to what was forbidden (*Amb.* 7 = PG 91:1092C = BW p. 66). Cf. *QT* 42 = CCEL 7: 285-87 = BW 120; *Lib.arb.* II. 53.

<sup>48</sup> *Amb.* 7. 2 = PG 91: 1085A = BW 61.

<sup>49</sup> *QT* 42 = CCEL 7:287 = BW 120-21.



### 3.3 *The privation account*

Our third explanation places the free will account within the wider matrix of privation theory, which regards evil as a failure of an entity to maintain that goodness appropriate to its nature. This kind of account is already broadly present in Plotinus, and already coupled with a free-will account in Porphyry.<sup>50</sup>

#### 3.3.1 The No-Explanation account

The first part of this explanation is what T. D. J. Chappell calls this the No-Explanation account,<sup>51</sup> and it is in connection with this approach that the Fall is most aptly characterized as such, i.e. as a falling away. J. Burns writes:

Augustine explained that this sinful operation of the will is not the turning of a natural power to an object which is itself harmful to the spirit. Sin is rather a defective operation, a failure to maintain that fullness of love inspired by the presence of the Spirit given in creation. The operation is evil because it is defective, because it fails to maintain a given level of perfection. Insofar as it is defective, it has no cause.<sup>52</sup>

Strictly speaking, Adam's Fall has no cause, because as an evil, it has no positive being. It is in connection with this explanation that Augustine characterizes Adam's will as a *deficient* cause of the Fall:

Therefore let no one seek for an efficient cause of the evil will. In this case there is no cause which is efficient – only a cause which is deficient; for the Fall is not an effect, but a defect. For to begin to have an evil will is this: to defect from him who supremely Is to that which is lesser.<sup>53</sup>

Maximus likewise denies that evil has any positive presence,<sup>54</sup> and states something that, on analysis, may be similar to the above passage from Augustine. He writes:

<sup>50</sup> W. Rordorf, "Saint Augustin et la Tradition Philosophique Antifataliste: A Propos de *De Civ. Dei* 5.1-11." *Vigiliae Christianae* 28 (1974), 190-202, 199.

<sup>51</sup> T. D. J. Chappell, "Explaining the Inexplicable: Augustine on the Fall" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 62 (1994), 869-884, 869-72.

<sup>52</sup> Burns (1988), 15.

<sup>53</sup> *Civ. Dei* XII. 7. Tr. Taken from McCracken & Green (London: Loeb Classical Library, 1957-1972). Cf. *Lib. arb.* II. 54.

<sup>54</sup> *QT* 64 = CCSG 22: 239 = BW 170-71.

For every pain, having a preceding actual pleasure as cause of its becoming, is, quite naturally on account of its cause, a penalty exacted from all who share in [human] nature. Indeed, pain entirely naturally accompanies that pleasure which is against nature, in all those whose generation the law of pleasure,<sup>55</sup> without cause, precedes. I call that pleasure from the [original] transgression (*παραβάσεως*) “uncaused” (*ἀναίτιον*), insofar as it quite obviously did not follow upon an antecedent pain.<sup>56</sup>

Here, Maximus is discussing the dialectic of pain and pleasure as a consequence of the Fall, and contrasts postlapsarian sensual pleasure with the first pleasure: every postlapsarian pleasure has a preceding pain as its cause; the first pleasure had no such preceding pain as its cause. Given that the kind of cause under discussion is distinct from and precedes its effect, we can conclude that if Maximus is making use of the standard Aristotelian four-cause schema, then he is speaking about efficient causality,<sup>57</sup> and hence is saying the first pleasure had no efficient cause. It is ambiguous whether ‘pleasure from the transgression’ refers to the sensory pleasure consequent upon eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, or to the anticipatory delight wherein Eve and Adam “saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes.”<sup>58</sup> If the latter, then Maximus would be stating that the anticipatory delight in the transgression – i.e. the evil inclination or will towards pleasure – is without cause. If the former, the passage may be viewed as part of Maximus’ tendency to skirt the issue of the motivations leading to Adam’s disobedience: Maximus repeatedly states Adam fell “at the instant he was created,”<sup>59</sup> while this doesn’t commit Maximus to the no-explanation account, it does provide him with a way to avoid giving any ultimate explanation of the Fall. The former explanation seems more likely, though a fuller

<sup>55</sup> The “law of pleasure” is the uniquely postlapsarian natural order of generation and corruption, wherein substantial generation is brought about by sexual intercourse, and augmentation by food intake. ‘Law’ here (*νόμος*) refers not so much to a propositional mandate as to the real, ruling idea behind such mandates.

<sup>56</sup> *QT* 61 = CCSG 22: 85-87 = BW 132 (alt.).

<sup>57</sup> Maximus may be using ‘cause’ in a non-Aristotelian way, though this seems unlikely. Final causes are ends, and so temporally posterior to their effects; formal and material causes are intrinsic, and therefore not distinct from their effects. Efficient causes are both extrinsic and prior to their effects.

<sup>58</sup> Gen 3: 6 (RSV). Maximus never explicitly discusses Eve’s sin in contradistinction from Adam’s. This is partly because Eve doesn’t play a direct role in the Adam/Christ typology Maximus seeks to exploit in most of his discussions of the Fall. But it may also be because he sees no relevant difference in the character of each’s sin, and hence no need to address Eve’s separately.

<sup>59</sup> *Amb.* 42 = PG 91: 1321B = BW 85; *QT* 61 = CCSG 22: 85 = BW 131.

answer to this question would seem to depend on whether Maximus' use of 'transgression' might refer not to the act of eating, but to the interior disobedience preceding and leading to it.<sup>60</sup>

### 3.3.1.1 A note on the meaning and plausibility of the no-explanation account

When the no-explanation account is considered as an explanation of evil in its own right, it is frequently regarded as a failure.<sup>61</sup> This is, in part, because it is regarded as providing an answer to a misleading question: that of what *the* cause of the Fall is. But neither Augustine nor Maximus view privation accounts as competitors to free-will accounts:<sup>62</sup> each account answers to a different sense of 'cause'.

Even when taken as an account of efficient causation, the no-explanation account is still liable to be misunderstood to the degree that the ancient perceptions of efficient causation differ from those of the present. In the contemporary understanding, efficient causation is assimilated to a kind of making. Making, in turn, is assimilated to an act of pure creation.<sup>63</sup> Understood this way, the no-explanation account is clearly wanting, since the Fall can clearly be regarded as something produced. But for Augustine as well as Maximus, efficient causation is best conceived as an implementation of *final* causes, which retain priority over their efficient counterparts. In both Augustine and Maximus, the act of bringing about is paradigmatically conceived as subordinated to a prior discovery or recognition: when humans act as efficient causes, they enact that which is first given in intellectual contemplation. Inasmuch as the free choice enacted in the Fall is pre-conditioned not by insight, but by blindness, it makes perfect sense that there would be no efficient cause of the Fall. Privations, – i.e. beings whose being consists entirely in the conspicuous absence of their contraries – cannot be effected.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Note though that even when we do find appeals to spontaneity of a sort, as we do here, it does not enter Maximus' mind to attach this spontaneity to *choice*: Maximus takes for granted that choice is always consequent upon the motivating factors involved in experiences of pleasure and pain, and sooner attaches spontaneity to the pleasure itself.

<sup>61</sup> Greer (1996); Rogers (2004).

<sup>62</sup> As they are viewed in, e.g., Rordorf (1974).

<sup>63</sup> This is why libertarianism appears to be the default understanding of the will today, even when it is rejected. Interestingly, this recognition leaves modern accounts of human willing far more theologized than their ancient counterparts.

<sup>64</sup> This is why it was altogether common to find free-will descriptions of the Fall not contrasted, but paired with descriptions of the Fall as a failure of insight. Cf.

## 3.3.2 The nothingness account

The second part of this explanation explains not the actuality of the Fall, but its possibility, as grounded in creation *ex nihilo*. Augustine applies this explanation both to the Fall of humans and to that of the angels,<sup>65</sup> and Louth finds such an account already in Saint Athanasius.<sup>66</sup> Here is Augustine's version of it:

'Nothing' is not any sort of thing at all and has no force or power. When we say that sin is possible (not necessary) because the creature is made from nothing, all we mean is this: things are either from God or from nothing. [...] Created things are not from God in the sense of sharing the divine substance. Nor are created things made from some pre-existing substance. If creatures were from God as the Son and the Spirit are, they would be God and so evil would not be a possibility for them. This is why we say that it is creation from nothing which makes evil possible.<sup>67</sup>

Thus, the *possibility* of the Fall is grounded in the fact that "created beings are made from nothing, and thus [...] have the ontological possibility of falling away from the good".<sup>68</sup>

Nothing indicates that Maximus accepts this account of the possibility of the Fall, and some aspects of his thinking would seem to militate against it. While Maximus links sin to generation, he distinguishes between generation, on the one hand, and creation as such, on the other.<sup>69</sup> Sin is only connected to the former of these; and even here, it is not generation that introduces sin, but sin that introduces generation and corruption.<sup>70</sup>

Maximus has the opportunity to advance something like the nothingness account in his refutation of Origenism in *Amb.* 7, where he attacks the idea that beings came to be created by a kind of

Gregory of Nyssa, *or. cat.* 5 = PG 45: 20-26.

<sup>65</sup> *Civ. Dei* XII. 6.

<sup>66</sup> Louth 64.

<sup>67</sup> *C. Iul. imp.* V. 37-38. Translation taken from Rogers (2004), 428-29. Cf. *C. Iul.* I. 36-38; *Civ. Dei* XII. 1, 6; XIV. 13; Couenhoven (2005), 365-66.

<sup>68</sup> Couenhoven (2007), 286-87.

<sup>69</sup> A scholium on *QT* 21 summarizes this distinction nicely. "[Maximus] calls the original formation of man by God his origin (γένεσις), and the succession of the race by mutual [sexual] relations, which was subsequently imposed by divine judgment as a consequence of man's transgression, his procreation (γέννησις)." *QT* 21 = CCSG 7: 133 = BW 109 n. 2. The earliest scholia on the Greek text, including this one, are already found in Eriugena's Latin translation, and so must antedate it. The editors of the *QT* suggest the scholia may come from Maximus himself. CCSG 7: XII-XIII.

<sup>70</sup> *QT* 42 = CCSG 7: 287 = BW 121.

‘slipping away’ from God, thus moving from rest to being, perfection to imperfection. Maximus replies:

Nothing that came into being is perfect in itself and complete. [...] Nor is anything that has come into being free of passions. Only what is unique, infinite and uncircumscribed is free of passions [...] No created thing then is at rest until it has attained the first and only cause, [...] or has possessed the ultimately desirable.<sup>71</sup>

Here, Maximus links imperfection and passibility to creation itself, without linking the possibility of *sin* to creation. For Maximus, to be a created being is to be in movement from non-being towards being, until one’s final rest in God is reached. But this movement is something distinct from, and doesn’t entail the possibility of sin. Maximus writes:

The passibility spoken of in this connection does not refer to change or corruption of one’s power; passibility here indicates that which exists by nature in beings. For everything that comes into existence is subject to movement, since it is not self-moved or self-powered.<sup>72</sup>

So the possibility spoken of is not anything purely negative and consequent upon the Fall, but rather part of created being as such.

### 3.4 Summary

Augustine offers three different accounts of the Fall. Augustine neither advocates these accounts successively nor views them as competitors: rather, each account explains a different aspect of the Fall. The free-will account locates the proximate cause of the Fall in Adam’s will. The nothingness account denies that the will (or anything else) can be thought of as the *efficient* cause of the Fall. Further, the movement of the will in the Fall is relatively described as a movement from higher to lower goods, and more absolutely as a movement towards non-being. It is because the will, in choosing sin, is directed toward a privation that Augustine calls it a *deficient* cause. Lastly, Augustine grounds the possibility of the Fall in creation *ex nihilo*. While it may be possible to offer provisional explanations for evil acts,<sup>73</sup> to ask for any sort of ultimate ground for Adam’s fall is to backslide into Manichaeism.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>71</sup> *Amb.* 7. 1 = PG 91: 1072C-D = BW 49.

<sup>72</sup> *Amb.* 7. 1 = PG 91: 1073B = BW 50.

<sup>73</sup> *Conf.* II. 17.

<sup>74</sup> *C.Iul.* I. 36-43.

Maximus, like Augustine, pairs privation and free-will accounts freely. We find him describing the Fall in terms of Adam's choice, then characterizing this choice as a turn away from being towards non-being: the Fall is conditioned by a lack of insight. As in Augustine, Adam's choice is not characterized as spontaneous or uncaused; though for Maximus, the pleasure associated with the choice *is* so regarded. Maximus' claim that Adam fell immediately upon being created, while not an endorsement of the no-explanation account, does allow him to avoid giving an explanation of Fall's antecedent conditions. Though there is ample room for Maximus to ground the possibility of the Fall in creation from nothing, he avoids doing so; rather, he grounds the experience of sin in generation and corruption, but distinguishes sexual generation, which is consequent upon the Fall and would not exist without it, from creation as such. The practical effect of this is that inasmuch as Maximus doesn't address the causes of the situation leading up to Adam's choice, the other elements of his account appear rather neatly subordinated to his free-will account – even if this account, given its close connection with the privation and hierarchical accounts in Maximus, is quite different from more recent free will accounts.

## 4 Original Sin

Having set out Maximus and Augustine's views on the Fall, let's move to their discussion of Original Sin. Here, we have two tasks, one negative, the other positive: the first, to show that the consequences of Original Sin on Augustine's account don't include the one he is most frequently associated with – inherited guilt; the second, to lay out the consequences of Adam's sin on Augustine and Maximus' respective accounts.

### 4.1 The ambiguity of 'sin' in Augustine and Maximus

Augustine employs the same fluidity with his use of the word 'sin' (*peccatum*), that we found earlier in his use of 'nature'. He explains the relation between his different uses of the term in the third book of his *De Libero Arbitrio*:

Just as we call a tongue (*linguam*) not only the member that we move in our mouths when we speak, but also that which follows the motion of this member—that is, the form and rhythm of the words, in accordance with which motion one is called the Greek tongue, another the

Latin—so not only do we call ‘sin’ (*peccatum*) that which is properly called sin (that is, an offense committed by free will and with knowledge), but also that which surely needs must follow from it as its punishment.<sup>75</sup>

We find a similar double meaning in Maximus. Regarding the incarnation, Maximus writes:

Two sins were brought about in the first father by his transgression of God’s commandment: the one, culpable; the other, inculpable, having the culpable one as its cause; the one, of a will willingly putting aside the good; the other, of a nature through the will, unwillingly putting aside immortality.<sup>76</sup>

For the present, it suffices to see that both Augustine and Maximus use ‘sin’ (*peccatum*, ἁμαρτία) to refer both to the offense itself as well as to its consequences. Consequently, the term “Original Sin” on its own need not directly implicate Adam’s descendants in his act.

#### 4.2 The meaning of *reus* and *reatus*

Augustine’s main contribution to the doctrine of Original Sin, and the main aspect differentiating his doctrine from its Eastern counterparts, is thought to be the notion of inherited guilt. Couenhoven calls inherited sin the “conceptual core” of Augustine’s doctrine,<sup>77</sup> and sees common guilt as one of its two main forms.<sup>78</sup>

##### 4.2.1 *Reatus* in Tertullian and a variant of Romans 3:19

Part of the reason for this reading comes from Augustine’s use of the terms ‘*reus*’ and ‘*reatus*’, commonly translated as ‘guilty’ and ‘guilt’, respectively. But the meaning of these Latin terms is considerably weaker than ‘guilt’. For instance, in his *Apology*, Tertullian writes, “Now, therefore, if the hatred is of the name [of Christian], of what [matter] is an indictment (*reatus*) of names, of what [concern] this accusation of words?”<sup>79</sup> In this passage, the impropriety of a translation of ‘guilt’ is more clearly brought out by Tertullian’s decision to

<sup>75</sup> *Lib. arb.* III. 54.

<sup>76</sup> *QT* 42 = CCSG 7: 285 = BW 119 (alt.).

<sup>77</sup> Couenhoven (2005), 360.

<sup>78</sup> Couenhoven (2005), 386. The other is “a constitutional fault composed of ignorance and carnal concupiscence” (ibid.).

<sup>79</sup> *Apol.*, par. 3 = PL 1: 562B.

juxtapose it rhetorically to the word ‘accusation’ (*accusatio*), which here acts as a synonym.

Another indirect witness comes from Augustine’s *Contra Duas Epistolas Pelagianorum*. After a lengthy passage arguing that Saint Ambrose taught the doctrine of Original Sin, Augustine closes by saying Ambrose was agreeing with Saint Paul, quoting Romans 3: 19. “Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may be held accountable to God.”<sup>80</sup> Paul’s word for “to be held accountable” is ὑπόδικος. The Vulgate translates this with *subditus*: “placed under, subjected,”<sup>81</sup> but Augustine’s text has *reatus*. This may have been a textual variant in Augustine’s time, or Augustine may have been recalling the passage from memory. If the former, then we have strong evidence that the sense of *reatus* was taken to capture that of the Greek ὑπόδικος. If the latter, we can assume Augustine thought the difference between *subditus* and *reatus* negligible enough that they could be used interchangeably in the context of Paul’s quote.

#### 4.2.2 Augustine

Augustine avoids plainly stating that Adam’s descendants inherit his *guilt*; instead, he frequently resorts to circumlocutions in order to avoid this imputation. Infants inherit the “sickness” of the Original Sin;<sup>82</sup> they are “poisoned by the bite of the serpent”;<sup>83</sup> they are “born with the contagion of sin”<sup>84</sup> even though they themselves are free from personal sins,<sup>85</sup> and are not even capable of committing personal sins.<sup>86</sup> Augustine’s use of *reatus* is in accord with this pattern. Take the following passage as an example:

Indeed this law of sin, which is in the members of this body of death, is both remitted by spiritual regeneration, and remains in mortal flesh. It is remitted, because its charge (*reatus eius*) is acquitted by the sacrament by which the faithful are reborn; yet it remains because it effects the desires against which even the faithful strive.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>80</sup> Rom. 3: 19 (RSV). Quoted in *c. ep. Pel.* IV. 30.

<sup>81</sup> The same word is used to describe the child Jesus’ obedience to his parents in the Vulgate of Luke 2: 51.

<sup>82</sup> *Pecc.mer.* I. 24.

<sup>83</sup> *Pecc.mer.* I. 61.

<sup>84</sup> *Gr.et pecc.or.* II. 42.

<sup>85</sup> *Pecc.mer.* I.22, I.65; Cf. Couenhoven (2005), 362.

<sup>86</sup> *Gr.et pecc.or.* II. 42.

<sup>87</sup> *C.Iul.* II. 5.



Translating *reatus* here as ‘guilt’ would disconnect it from the verb of which it is the subject, namely ‘is acquitted’ (*solutus est*), and thereby upset the courtroom-esque picture Augustine is painting. While a defendant may be acquitted of the *suspicion* of guilt, he is not acquitted of *guilt*; likewise, while *sin* may incur guilt for the sinner, the *law of sin* is not a cause of guilt, but rather the condition for the possibility of such. The law of sin is spatially represented as being in the flesh, but as in Saint Paul,<sup>88</sup> it is also personified as one whose charge – in the triple sense of accusation, custody, and jurisdiction – is acquitted. Evil actions result not merely in a certain moral status, but in a behold-*enness* to sin, recognizably instantiated in, for instance, bad habit.<sup>89</sup> “As if an evil action makes anything besides a nature indebted (*naturam ream*).”<sup>90</sup> The reality referred to here by Augustine’s use of ‘*reatus*’ is more relational than contemporary usage of ‘guilt’ would be liable to indicate.

This same relational character is indicated when Augustine, explicating Saint Paul, writes:

‘For the law of the spirit of life,’ he says, ‘freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.’ How did it free? Only because it loosed its hold (*eius reatum...dissolvit*) by the remission of all sins, so that while it still remains and is diminished more and more day to day, yet it is not reckoned to sin (*in peccatum tamen non imputetur*).<sup>91</sup>

What is at stake here is not sin’s residual presence in guilt, but its ruling power as a *telos* for the unredeemed man: sin lays claim to him, like a master owns a slave.<sup>92</sup> As before, we find here a kind of indebtedness, but still one tied too much to a cosmic order to signify the notion involved in personal guilt. Furthermore, guilt doesn’t seem to be the kind of thing that can be diminished over time, though diminution is ascribed to *reatus* here. Elsewhere, we find Augustine describing his opponents’ puzzlement over “why the death of the body remains when the *reatus* of sin is loosed by grace,”<sup>93</sup> This puzzlement makes little sense if *reatus* is read as ‘guilt’, if only because its

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Rom. 6: 15-23; 7: 1-6.

<sup>89</sup> The *reus peccati* is not, however, to be identified with bad habit. See *C.Iul. imp.* I. 67-72; Cf. James Wetzel, “The Recovery of Free Agency in the Theology of St. Augustine,” *Harvard Theological Review* 80 (1987), 101-25, 119-120.

<sup>90</sup> *C.Iul.* III. 13.

<sup>91</sup> *nupt.et conc.* I. 36.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. *C.Iul.* II. 33; III. 13, 58; VI. 5.

<sup>93</sup> *Nat. et gr.* 25.

frequent pairing with the verb ‘to loose’ (*solvere*) and its variants would render the combined meaning infelicitous.<sup>94</sup>

#### 4.2.3 Eriugena’s translations of Maximus

This relational meaning of *reatus*, with connotations of indebtedness, indictment, and even ownership, continues to be its standard meaning in Eriugena’s translations of Maximus four centuries later. Maximus speaks of the unredeemed as “not freed, in his fear of death, from slavery to pleasure (τῆς καθ’ ἡδονὴν ἐνοχῆς).”<sup>95</sup> Eriugena translates τῆς καθ’ ἡδονὴν ἐνοχῆς with *reatu voluptatis*, with *reatus* used to capture this slavery. The notion of guilt is clearly not at issue in the text. The same is true in *Ad Thalassium* 61, where Maximus, says Christ “brought an end to both extremes [...] of the mode of human generation inherited from Adam<sup>96</sup> [...]; and he set all who are mystically reborn by his spirit free from liability to those extremes (τῆς ἐπ’ αὐτοῖς ἐνοχῆς ἐλευθέρους κατέστησεν, *reatu qui in ipsis est liberis constituit*).”<sup>97</sup> As in the previous quote, *reatu* captures ἐνοχῆς, rendered by Blowers and Wilken into English as ‘liability’. This harmonizes with the previous rendering of ‘slavery’: man is liable to the extremes of pleasure and pain because indebted to them, because he is under their power. All these senses are captured by *reatus* in Eriugena’s translation.

While Augustine does think of Original Sin in terms of an inheritance, it is not an inheritance of guilt. This view is based on a translation of *reatus* as ‘guilt’, one that fails to withstand scrutiny not only in Augustine’s case, but also in that of earlier Latin fathers and even Eriugena’s later translations of Maximus. This removes the main aspect whereby Augustine’s account of Original Sin is differentiated from Eastern accounts generally and Maximus’ in particular.

#### 4.3 The effects of Adam’s sin on the human condition

As noted above, the proper sense of ‘sin’, for Augustine as for Maximus, is that of a consciously committed evil act. Nevertheless, the term ‘sin’ can also be used to refer to the consequences of that act.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. *Corrept.* 29; *nupt.et conc.* I. 36-37.

<sup>95</sup> *QT* 21 = CCSG 7: 131 = BW 112 (alt.)

<sup>96</sup> I.e. of pleasure and pain, as respectively embodied in sexual generation and corruption, the beginning and end of human life.

<sup>97</sup> *QT* 61 = CCSG 22: 91 = BW 136 (alt.).

The consequences of the sin of Adam fall into two principal categories—death<sup>98</sup> and deficiency<sup>99</sup>—which themselves may be subdivided further into temporal and eternal death, on the one hand, and ignorance and difficulty, on the other. Like many Eastern fathers, Maximus does not appear to use the term ‘Original Sin’, though this does not prevent the substance of the doctrine from being present in his writings.<sup>100</sup>

#### 4.3.1 Ignorance and difficulty

For Augustine the main consequence of Adam’s transgression is the advent of ignorance and difficulty in the life of mankind.<sup>101</sup> Augustine’s focus on ignorance and difficulty as the lot of earthly existence does not appear to be a uniquely Christian one, but is partially drawn from pagan sources, particularly Cicero and Vergil.<sup>102</sup> These defects do not merely lead to sins of omission, but also bring about a defective *orientation* of the will, leaving the human person dominated by base desires of the flesh, referred to as ‘*cupiditas*’ and ‘*libido*’.<sup>103</sup> That this state, rather than death, is the primary meaning of ‘Original Sin’ can be ascertained by the fact that while Augustine holds Christ was without *libido*,<sup>104</sup> free from ignorance and difficulty,<sup>105</sup> and therefore was without Original Sin,<sup>106</sup> he certainly confesses that Christ died.

Besides Original Sin, Augustine calls this inherited condition a “punitive nature (*natura poenalis*),”<sup>107</sup> a “hereditary evil (*haereditarium malum*),”<sup>108</sup> “hereditary indebtedness (*reatu haereditario*),”<sup>109</sup> “original evil (*originali malo*),”<sup>110</sup> “sin of origin (*peccato originis*),”<sup>111</sup> and “the original infection from the first sin (*primi peccati originale*

<sup>98</sup> *Lib. arb.* III. 28, 57; *Civ. Dei* XIII. 1-4; *pecc. mer.* I. 8; *Amb.* 10. 28 = PG 91:1156D = Louth 126

<sup>99</sup> *Lib. arb.* III. 52-53; *Amb.* 42 = PG 91:1321B = BW 85.

<sup>100</sup> The closest he comes is in his use of the phrase γενικὴ ἁμαρτία at *QT* 21 = CCSG 7: 127.

<sup>101</sup> *Lib. arb.* III. 52-58; *pecc. mer.* I. 68.

<sup>102</sup> See Jean Doignon. « Souvenirs Cicéroniens (Hortensius, Consolation) et Virgiliens Dans l’Exposé d’Augustin sur l’État Humain d’« Ignorance et de Difficulté » ». *Vigiliae Christianae* 47 (1993), 131-139.

<sup>103</sup> *Lib. arb.* I. 10.

<sup>104</sup> *Lib. arb.* III. 31.

<sup>105</sup> *Pecc. mer.* II. 48.

<sup>106</sup> *Pecc. mer.* II. 51.

<sup>107</sup> *Nat. et gr.* 3.

<sup>108</sup> *Gr. et lib. arb.* 45.

<sup>109</sup> *Corrept.* 29.

<sup>110</sup> *C. Jul.* I. 13.

<sup>111</sup> *C. Jul.* II. 33.

*contagium*).<sup>112</sup> This sin, so called because the consequence of Adam's sin, is contracted, not brought about by imitation.<sup>113</sup> And though contracted rather than committed, the sin can really be said to belong to Adam's descendants. Augustine explains:

The sins of the parents are in a certain respect called foreign, and again in a certain respect found to be our own: foreign, obviously by the possession of the action; but ours, by the infection of the line of descent.<sup>114</sup>

Hence, though Augustine does talk about participation in Adam, this participation is not so strong as to suggest the sin of Adam *properly* belongs to Adam's descendants.

Maximus' claims about the effects of sin on human faculties line up closely with those of Augustine. He writes that on account of Adam's sin, "the capacity to render to God what is due to God alone, to love him with all of our mind, was destroyed";<sup>115</sup> that "the earth cursed in Adam's works is the flesh of Adam";<sup>116</sup> and again that "there is no human being who is sinless, since everyone is naturally subject to the law of sexual procreation that was introduced [...] in consequence of his sin."<sup>117</sup> In a lengthier passage commenting on Ezekiel, Maximus writes:

[Christ] came to trample the wickedness into which, through deceit, our nature unnaturally fell at the instant it was created, thus depleting its whole potential. He came to bind to himself the faculty of desire [...], that it might take on a procreative disposition fixed and unalterable in the good; he came [...] to cleanse it of the taints of ignorance by washing it in the ocean of knowledge bestowed by grace; he came [...] to render its natural operation steadfast by the Spirit in the good for which it was created, and thereby to cleanse it of the decay of the passions [...] and to bring it fully to completion by securing it in [...] the principles of created beings.<sup>118</sup>

From the above passages, we can discern several points of contact between Augustine and Maximus on Original Sin. First, Maximus affirms Adam's sin did not merely bring death into the world, but had a deleterious effect on natural human capacities as well. Second, he

<sup>112</sup> *C.Iul.* III. 11.

<sup>113</sup> *nupt.et conc.* II. 45; *C.Iul.* VI. 75.

<sup>114</sup> *C.Iul.* VI. 28.

<sup>115</sup> *Amb.* 7 = PG 91:1092D = BW 67.

<sup>116</sup> *QT* 5 = CCSG 7: 65.

<sup>117</sup> *QT* 21 = CCSG 7:127 = BW 110.

<sup>118</sup> *Amb.* 42 = PG 91:1321B = BW 85.

affirms with Augustine that the transmission of Original Sin is biological, and not merely social or environmental.<sup>119</sup> Third, the effects of Original Sin are the “taints of ignorance” and the “decay of the passions”, which seem to closely track the Augustinian categories of ignorance and difficulty. Fourth, everybody is a sinner by virtue of the passions incumbent upon their subjection “to the law of sexual procreation.”

Unlike Augustine, however, Maximus regards mutability as such, having its source in sexual generation, as the proximate source of the difficulties of postlapsarian man. It is not merely, as for Augustine, that sin has worked its way into an otherwise innocent faculty for sexual generation: it is rather that sin is inextricably bound up with the entire cosmic order of pain and pleasure, generation and corruption. It is this order itself, identified by Maximus as “the law of sin, not created by God in paradise,”<sup>120</sup> that is to be condemned. In his most straightforward exposition of Adam’s fall and its consequences, he writes:

In the beginning sin seduced Adam and persuaded him to transgress God’s commandment, whereby sin gave rise to pleasure, and, by means of this pleasure, nailed itself in Adam to the very depths (τῷ πυθμένι) of our nature, thus condemning our whole nature to death, and via humanity, pressing the nature of (all) created beings toward mortal extinction (πρὸς ἀπογένεσιν).<sup>121</sup>

For Maximus, this cycle of pleasure and pain is this law of sin. It is fixed in the very constitution of fallen man, and it is because this law is so fixed that human beings must return to nothing.<sup>122</sup> The resulting picture is clearly more harmonious than the one we find in Augustine. This harmony, however, would seem to come at the expense of its *prima facie* credibility. But given Maximus’ views about the ignorance present in man’s fallen state, it should not be entirely surprising that his account would be something of a stumbling block.

<sup>119</sup> Indeed, insofar as he holds that there was no sexual differentiation before the Fall (Louth, 73) and will be no sexual differentiation in Paradise (*Amb.* 41 in PG 91:1305C = Louth, 157), his ‘pessimism’ with regard to sex is somewhat more extreme than that of Augustine. Cf. *Gr.et pecc.or.* II. 40.

<sup>120</sup> *QT* 49 = CCSG 7: 377.

<sup>121</sup> *QT* 61 = CCSG 22: 95 = BW 137.

<sup>122</sup> This is Eriugena’s gloss on the meaning of the Greek (ἀπογένεσιν) in the above passage.

### 4.3.2 *The relation between sin and death*

The idea that death, rather than sin, is the primary consequence of the Fall has been advocated by a number of more recent theologians, and represented as the historical teaching of the Eastern fathers as a corporate body on the subject.<sup>123</sup> In this model, sin is represented as an existential condition grounded in external circumstances rather than a biological condition determined by intrinsic constitution. From a strictly theoretical perspective, what is strange about this model is that it seems to presuppose a picture of death disconnected from its biological and material characteristics. For this reason, we don't find such a picture in either Augustine or Maximus. There are, however, real differences in how the relation between sin and death is conceived by these two theologians.

Augustine holds the penalty for the first sin was not merely bodily death, but also death of the soul, i.e. eternal damnation.<sup>124</sup> Therefore, while Augustine believes unbaptized infants are condemned "by a most mild condemnation,"<sup>125</sup> this is not so much because infants are personally guilty of Adam's sin as because they are under the dominion of death<sup>126</sup> – which, for Augustine, refers to eternal death just as much as the death of the body.<sup>127</sup> The above point may seem minor (the end result, for Augustine, is much the same); but it shows that far from being opposed to the idea that *death*, not guilt, is the consequence of sin,<sup>128</sup> Augustine's analysis presupposes it.

However, Augustine is equally clear that death is neither the exclusive nor the primary consequence of Adam's Fall. He writes:

<sup>123</sup> Cf. Romanides (1955); Boojamra (1976), 27; Haynes (2011), 294; John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: historical trends & doctrinal themes*, New York, Fordham University Press, 1979, 144-145; and the following gloss on Romans 5:12, from the *Orthodox Study Bible*: "For Adam and Eve, *sin* came first, and this led to *death*. This death then *spread to all men*. The rest of humanity inherits death, and then in our mortal state, we all sin. Thus, all mankind suffers the consequences of Adam's "original sin." However, the Orthodox Church rejects any teaching that would assign guilt to all mankind for Adam's sin. We indeed suffer the consequences of others' sins, but we carry guilt only for our own sins." Saint Athanasius Academy of Orthodox Theology, *The Orthodox Study Bible*, Nashville, Thomas Nelson, 2008.

<sup>124</sup> *Civ. Dei* XIII. 12.

<sup>125</sup> *Pecc. mer.* I. 21.

<sup>126</sup> *Pecc. mer.* I. 13; cf. Rom 5:14.

<sup>127</sup> Famously, Von Balthasar thinks Maximus disagrees on this latter point, covertly advocating an apokatastasist account of the end times, i.e. one where all souls are ultimately redeemed. See Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Kosmische Liturgie: Maximus der Bekenner*, Einsiedeln, Johannesverlag, 1961, 356-59.

<sup>128</sup> cf. Meyendorff, 144-145.

But what do the Pelagians mean when they say “only death passed to us through Adam?” For if we die because he died, – he died, though, because he sinned – they say that the penalty was passed on without the fault, and that innocent little ones are punished by an unjust punishment, death being handed down without what merits death. But the catholic faith knows of only one – the mediator of God and man, the man Christ Jesus – who without sin, deigned to undergo the punishment for sin. For just as he alone became the Son of man that we might become sons of God through him, so he alone took on the penalty for us without evils merited that we might achieve favor through him without goods merited. Just as there was not any good owed to us, so neither any evil to him.<sup>129</sup>

Here, Augustine argues that if death alone is our Adamic inheritance, then we must deny that Christ alone is sinless among human beings. Further, he argues, this would entail the very kind of situation Augustine himself is frequently charged with postulating in his own thinking about Original Sin: one where the punishment of the guilty one is unjustly meted out to innocent parties.<sup>130</sup>

Augustine goes on to argue against death’s priority in the next paragraph:

Where the apostle says “sin entered into the world through one man, and through sin, death, and so passed over to all men” There [the Pelagians] want it to be understood not that sin passed over, but death. What, then, is what follows: “in which all sinned”? For either the apostle says all have sinned in that one man [...] or in that sin, or at least in death. [...] But I don’t clearly see how this [i.e. “in death”] can be understood. For “in sin all men die,” not in death all are sinners. Indeed, “the sting of death is sin” – that is, the sting, by whose sting death is brought about, not the sting by which death stings – just as poison, if it is drunk, is called ‘the cup of death’, because by that cup death is brought about, not because the cup is made by death or given by death.<sup>131</sup>

This is one of the few passages where Augustine expresses puzzlement at a scriptural interpretation. Regardless, it is clear that Augustine rejects the notion that death has any sort of causal or explanatory role in accounting for the sins of fallen humanity.

<sup>129</sup> *c.ep.Pel.* IV. 6. Cf. *Amb.* 42 = PG 91: 1316C-1317B = BW 80-81; *QT* 42 = CCSG 7: 285-287 = BW 119-121.

<sup>130</sup> Alternatively, if mortality were regarded as the proper referent of ‘Original Sin’, it would entail that Christ, having been mortal, would have thereby been born in Original Sin.

<sup>131</sup> *C.ep.Pel.* IV. 7.

Like Augustine, Maximus holds “The punishment [for Adam’s sin] was death,”<sup>132</sup> though without regarding it as what is primary in our Adamic inheritance. This comes out clearly in his discussion of how Christ is said to have become sin, even though he was sinless:

Therefore the Lord did not *know* ‘my sin’ (αμαρτια), that is, the mutability of my free choice. [...] Rather, he *became* the ‘sin that I caused’; in other words, he assumed the corruption of human nature that was a consequence of the mutability of my free choice.<sup>133</sup>

Here, ‘the sin I caused’ is human mortality, which exists because of the mutability of human freedom towards sin.<sup>134</sup> Maximus insists, like Augustine, on the reality of the death of Christ, but denies that Christ’s choice was ‘mutable’ i.e. that Christ was subject to what Augustine refers to as ‘concupiscence’; though he is subject to the “liability to the passions”, since he took on “the original condition of Adam as he was in the very beginning.”<sup>135</sup> For Maximus, Christ was subject to desires such as hunger and thirst,<sup>136</sup> but he was not subject to the disordered passions associated with the fallen state of post-Adamic humanity.<sup>137</sup>

Maximus’ position on the relative priority of death or sin is best discerned by comparing his use of Romans 5 with that of Augustine above. Where for Augustine, Adam’s sin causes death, on the one hand, and a fallen inclination toward sin, on the other, Maximus sees these conditions as essentially two sides of the same coin that is corruptibility. “Just as through one man, who turned voluntarily from the good, human nature was changed from incorruption to corruption to the detriment of all humanity [...], just as in Adam, with his own act of freely choosing evil, the common glory of human nature,

<sup>132</sup> *Amb.* 7 = PG 91:1092D = BW 67.

<sup>133</sup> *QT* 42 = CCSG 7:287 = BW 120.

<sup>134</sup> Note how Maximus’ use of the first person in the passage seems to imply a participation in Adam’s sin, just as in Augustine’s appropriation of Ambrosiaster’s language of all sinning in Adam ‘as though in a lump.’ Cf. *C.ep.Pel.* IV. 7; *C.Iul.* VI. 75.

<sup>135</sup> *QT* 21 = CCSG 7:129 = BW 111.

<sup>136</sup> *Op.* 6 = PG 91: 65A-68D = BW 173-176; Cf. Marcel Doucet, F. I. C., « La Volonté Humaine du Christ, Spécialement en Son Agonie. Maxime le Confesseur, Interprète de l’Écriture » *Science et Esprit* 37 (1985), 123-159.

<sup>137</sup> See his claim that though human birth was “punitively instituted after the Fall,” (*Amb.* 42 = PG 91:1317A = BW 81). This claim serves as a necessary prerequisite for the very problem discussed at the beginning of *Amb.* 42: how Christ could have been born naturally without being born sinful. Maximus’ solution here is directly in accordance with Augustine’s remarks on the same subject at *Nat. et gr.* 71.



incorruption, was expelled [...],”<sup>138</sup> so through Christ’s willful obedience was immortality restored.

Through Adam, who by his disobedience gave rise to both the law of birth through pleasure and the death of our nature which was its condemnation, all of his posterity who come into existence according to this law of birth through pleasure are necessarily subject – even if unwilling – to the death that is functionally linked with this birth and serves to condemn our nature.<sup>139</sup>

In short, the mortality imposed on Adam and Eve for their transgression was not one instituted by God at will, but rather was a necessary consequence of the *nature* of that transgression: since the transgression introduced pleasure and generation into the cosmic order, it thereby introduced their opposites, pain and death, as well. It is human subjection to passibility, the source of sensual pleasure and pain, and hence of attachment to them, that is the tree from which the fruit of death is reaped.

## 5 Conclusion

By comparing what are arguably two of the most significant figures of the Eastern and Western Patristic traditions, this study aimed to displace common dichotomies about the relationship between East and West in favor of a more nuanced appreciation of the unity and diversity present within the Christianity of the first millennium. I hope to have shown through this study of Maximus and Augustine that such dichotomies stem not from the thinkers themselves so much as from oversimplified readings of their insights that, in this case, replace Maximus and Augustine with semi-Pelagian and semi-Calvinist caricatures of themselves.

While there are differences between Maximus and Augustine’s respective accounts of the Fall and Original Sin, the two accounts are closer to each other than usually suggested, and the differences between them are not where they are usually supposed to be. Both thinkers use their respective terms for nature and sin freely; both advance a broadly compatibilist account of human willing; both give credence to an understanding of the human condition that appears pessimistic at first, but undergirds an account of human freedom able to

<sup>138</sup> QT 42 = CCSG 7: 285-87 = BW 120 (alt.).

<sup>139</sup> QT 61 = CCSG 22: 97 = BW 139 (alt.).

recognize that the conditions for exercising it depend on both intrinsic and extrinsic factors; both locate the immediate cause of the Fall in Adam's will and the nature of the Fall in a disruption of divinely-ordered hierarchy, while refusing to provide an ultimate explanation for its actual occurrence; both use privation and free-will accounts of the Fall not as competitors, but as complements to each other; both think Adam's sin brought about a weakening of the natural capacities of postlapsarian man; both identify the effects of the Fall with death, on the one hand, and ignorance and weakness, on the other; both think Original Sin is transmitted via sexual procreation; neither holds that guilt is inherited in Original Sin.

However, where Augustine's account of the Fall aims to expose the conditions that led to it, Maximus' does not; where Augustine takes creation *ex nihilo* to suffice for the possibility of sin, Maximus regards only generation as such; where Augustine thinks only the character of sexual procreation is a consequence of the Fall, Maximus holds its very presence to be so; where Augustine sees death as a punitive measure instituted by God for Adam and Eve eating a particular fruit and thereby transgressing a command, Maximus sees death as a constitutive consequence of the kind of pleasure associated with eating as an activity that contributes to bodily augmentation, and hence to generation.

In short, rather than disagreeing along linguistic or cultural lines, Maximus the Confessor and Augustine substantially agree on their understanding of Original Sin, the Fall, and Human Nature, and do so in a way that challenges both the content and the historiography used to justify more common Eastern and Western accounts of the Fall, Original Sin, and human freedom; and the unity and diversity of their thinking through their Christian inheritance provides a model for the heirs of that tradition, to return *ad fontes* in order to renew it.

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