

ANGELIC SIN IN AUGUSTINE AND ANSELM

Augustine and Anselm form a common tradition in mediæval thought about angelic sin, a tradition rooted in patristic thought and centred on their attempts to give a philosophically coherent account of moral choice. Augustine concentrates on the reasons and causes of angelic sin, especially in reference to free will; Anselm adopts Augustine's analysis and extends it to issues about the rationality of sinful choice. Each takes Lucifer's primal sin to be the paradigm case. Lucifer, undistracted by bodily desires and unencumbered by history, committed the first moral misdeed in an entirely good universe newly created by an entirely good God. The challenge is to give a philosophical account that permits us to understand how the best and brightest of all angels nevertheless made a sinful choice in such uniformly positive circumstances.

1. AUGUSTINE

Augustine holds that all angels have the same nature, one which, like all natures and indeed like everything created by God, is good in itself.¹ Evil enters the world only through free choice, a point Augustine argues for at length in his *De libero arbitrio* and which is reiterated throughout his works.² Lucifer is the first and foremost among all sinners: *primus omnium peccatorum* (*ep.* 105.4.13), the first of the angels to fall (*in Ioh. eu.* 3.7). The sin of his followers, the so-called 'bad angels', are marginally less severe because they were "persuaded" by Lucifer into their apostasy, even though their choice to follow

* All translations are mine. Thanks to Anna Greco for advice and comments. Earlier versions of the section on Anselm were given at Cornell and at UCLA. Standard abbreviations for the works of Augustine are given in the *Augustinus-Lexikon* (see the Bibliography).

¹ See for instance *uer. rel.* 13.26, *Gn. litt.* 3.24.37, *in Ioh. eu.* 42.10, *ciu.* 12.1–2 and 19.13, *c. Iul.* 3.26.63 and 6.20.63.

² See any of Augustine's early anti-Manichæan writings, e.g. *c. Fel.* 2.11, or later writings such as *ciu.* 12.3, *correct.* 10.27, *c. Iul. imp.* 4.95.

Lucifer was completely voluntary.³ Original Sin is an imitation – or better: a recapitulation – of diabolic sin (*pecc. mer.* 1.9.9 and 1.18.18), in which Lucifer exercises his persuasion through the serpent (*in Ioh. eu.* 52.7); human sin can thus be understood through the analysis of angelic sin. But not all angels chose to sin. Some did not follow Lucifer, but chose to remain instead “in the will-to-justice” (*lib. arb.* 3.5.15.55), and these ‘good angels’ were rewarded, by God’s grace, with the steadfast will to love God ever after (*ciu.* 11.13). Some angels, then, did not sin, and their choice must be understood in tandem with the choice of those who did. But since the latter were followers of Lucifer, the philosophical problem reduces to the challenge of understanding Lucifer’s primal sin.

Augustine takes on the challenge at length in *Gn. litt.* 11.13.17–11.25.33 and *ciu.* 12.1–7, which can be supplemented by other discussions and remarks scattered throughout his works. He concentrates on three issues: (1) the precise nature of Lucifer’s primal sin; (2) the extent to which reasons and causes can be given for it; (3) the knowledge that Lucifer might have had regarding it. We’ll take up each in turn.

1.1 PRIDE, ENVY, AND DISOBEDIENCE

The patristic tradition that Augustine inherited did not have a unified view about the nature of Lucifer’s primal sin.⁴ The majority view, including Origen, Chrysostom, Jerome, and Ambrose, held that Lucifer’s sin was pride (*superbia*) – a view that took as its Biblical warrant the verses addressed to Lucifer: “Thou has said in thine heart: I shall ascend into Heaven; I shall exalt my throne above the stars of God. . . I shall be like unto the Most High” (Is. 14:13–14).⁵ The minority view, including Irenaeus, Tertullian, Justin Martyr, and Cyprian, held that Lucifer’s sin was envy (*invidia*), and more specifically envy of humanity for being created in the image of God.⁶

Common to both views is the identification of Lucifer’s sin with an recurrent psychological state: taking pride in himself, or being envious of human-

³ See *lib. arb.* 3.10.29.104. The seats they left vacant in Heaven will eventually be filled by saved human beings: *ench.* 9.29.

⁴ See Green [1949], and especially Adkin [1984], for references to the patristic tradition.

⁵ See Origen, *Homily on Ezekiel* 9.2; Chrysostom, *Homily on Isaiah 6:1* 3.3; Jerome, *ep.* 12.2 and 69.9.6, *in Is.* 2.3.4; Ambrose, *s.* 7.8 and 16.15. Other biblical passages adduced in support were Ez. 28:17 (see Jerome’s commentary) and 1 Tim. 3:6.

⁶ Irenaeus, *adv. haer.* 4.40.3; Tertullian, *adv. Marc.* 2.10; Cyprian, *zel.* 1–4. An earlier tradition, attested in the Book of Enoch, held that the sin of the fallen angels was *lust*: “seeing the daughters of men, that they were fair” (Gen. 6:1–4); Lucifer has no special role here. See Hilary, *in Ps.* 133.6; Ambrose, *uirg.* 1.8.53 and *ap. Dav.* 1.4.

ity. These states involve both affective and cognitive factors: pride and envy are not simple feelings, the way anger or lust can be, since (as Augustine will argue) pride and envy involve comparative evaluations. Nor should they be confused with their corresponding character traits, ‘pridefulness’ (or simply: ‘[being] proud’) and enviousness, which are dispositions rather than occurrent states which they may make manifest.⁷ Furthermore, pride and envy can be motives for action, and thereby must be distinct from the actions they motivate. In the case of Lucifer, his pride or envy led him to openly rebel against God, so that his sin was also often said to be disobedience – a claim that preserves a structural parallel with Original Sin. In short, acts of pride and envy are distinct from their associated character traits on the one hand and the actions to which they give rise on the other, and they are constituted, at least in part, by complex emotions that depend on cognitive valuations.

These distinctions lay the groundwork for Augustine’s attempt to reconcile the divergent views he found in the patristic tradition. His position is clear: Lucifer’s primal sin is pride, which is logically prior to, but an immediate cause of, envy. He offers a compact argument for his position in *Gn. litt.* 11.14.18:⁸

Some people say that the reason [Lucifer] fell from the heavenly realms was that he envied man being made in the image of God. But envy follows upon pride; it does not precede it. Envy is not the cause of occurrent pride, but pride the cause of occurrent envy. And so, since pride is the love of one’s own superiority whereas enviousness is the hatred of someone else’s well-being, it is sufficiently obvious which is born of which: anyone who loves his own superiority will envy either (a) his peers, for they are equal to him; (b) those below him, lest they be equal to him;⁹ (c)

⁷ They need not stem from underlying character traits at all, any more than an individual courageous act has to reflect a courageous disposition. This especially holds for Lucifer, who can hardly be held accountable for his character traits at the instant of his creation.

⁸ “Nonnulli enim dicunt ipsum ei fuisse casum a supernis sedibus, quod inuiderit homini facto ad imaginem Dei. Porro autem inuidia sequitur superbiam, non praecedit; non enim causa superbiendi est inuidia, sed causa inuidendi superbia. Cum igitur superbia sit amor excellentiae propriae, inuidia uero sit odium felicitatis alienae, quid unde nascatur satis in promptu est. Amando enim quisque excellentiam suam uel paribus inuidet quod ei coaequantur, uel inferioribus ne sibi coaequantur, uel superioribus quod eis non coaequantur. Superbiendo igitur inuidus, non inuidendo quisque superbus est.” See also *c. Faust.* 22.17 and *en. Ps.* 139.8.

⁹ Here ‘envy’ isn’t quite flexible enough to catch the sense of the Latin *inuidia*, which means ‘having an invidious attitude’; someone proud will begrudge the possibility that those below him might become his equals someday.

those above him, for he is not equal to them. Hence a person is envious through the occurrence of pride, not proud through the occurrence of envy.

As Augustine memorably puts it, pride is the mother of envy.¹⁰ The comparative evaluation at the heart of pride is a matter of rating oneself more highly than others, or, more exactly, taking delight in oneself in preference to others. “What else is pride but the perverse urge for superiority?” asks Augustine (*ciu.* 14.13).¹¹ Envy is the by-product of such self-love, since the well-being of others makes it difficult to sustain the view that one is superior to them; and this is the source of the negative valuation of others, a form of hatred.¹² The particular case of Lucifer matches this analysis (*Gn. litt.* 11.13.17):¹³

And so it happened that the spirit of this rational creature [Lucifer], taking delight in his own power on account of its superiority, swelled up with pride, through which he fell from the happiness of the spiritual paradise, and became consumed with enviousness.

Lucifer’s invidious preference of himself to all others – including God – is implicit in Augustine’s description of Lucifer’s delight in his power as superior.

Yet there is a difficulty. Augustine has identified Lucifer’s primal sin as an occurrent psychological state, namely his taking pleasure in a comparative evaluation of his own superiority *vis-à-vis* others. But what is morally objectionable in that? Lucifer hasn’t done anything wrong – indeed, Lucifer hasn’t done anything at all. Nor has he made any choices, and *a fortiori* no reprehensible choices. His psychological state might lead to choice and to action, but it has not yet done so, and while it is true that he is in that state voluntarily it is hard to see why thinking of himself as better than others deserves to be punished with eternal damnation, or for that matter to merit punishment at all.

Augustine’s response to this difficulty is to insist that there is an important sense in which Lucifer’s sin (*a*) must involve an act of will, and (*b*) is morally reprehensible in itself.¹⁴

¹⁰ See *uirg.* 31.31, s. 354.5, and s. 399.7.

¹¹ “Quid est autem superbia nisi peruersae celsitudinis appetitus?”

¹² Again, our notion of ‘envy’ doesn’t quite capture the negative valuation at the heart of *invidia*.

¹³ “Atque ita factum esse ut rationalis creaturae spiritus, sua potestate propter excellentiam delectatus, tumesceret superbia, per quam caderet a beatitudine spiritalis paradisi, et inuidia contabesceret.”

¹⁴ It is a fundamental part of judeo-christian moral teaching that some occurrent psychological states are morally blameworthy as such: think of, say, the absolute condemnation of coveting one’s neighbor’s goods. The strategy behind Augus-

With regard to (a): Augustine notes that pride essentially involves an evaluation – specifically, a comparative evaluation of one’s own superiority relative to others. We might be tempted to analyze such an evaluation as being, in essence, a cognitive judgment, something that is primarily a matter of the intellect. However, Augustine thinks that an evaluation is at once a cognitive and an affective stance towards something as a good – more exactly, someone “sets up” a given object as a good for himself or herself by turning to it, the thought of it being accompanied by a *uoluntas* for it.¹⁵ He sketches this process as early as *lib. arb.* 2.9.27.108:¹⁶

There are many different goods from which a person selects what he wants: through seeing and grasping something for his enjoyment, he sets up the highest good for himself rightly and truly.

To grasp something for enjoyment just is to have a *uoluntas* towards it. Note that this need not rise to the level of a conscious choice. It is enough for having a *uoluntas* towards something that one ‘turns’ to it, so to speak, and enjoys it, though one is able to not do so. The key point to keep in mind is that this ‘turning’ is an act of will and, as such, capable of bearing moral weight, as much as though it were an explicit choice.¹⁷

With regard to (b): When Augustine applies the general analysis of having a *uoluntas* to the particular case of pride, at one stroke he shows why Lucifer’s sin is morally objectionable in itself (*lib. arb.* 3.24.72.249–250):¹⁸

tine’s response, as outlined here, is to establish that all such psychological states involve objectionable acts of will.

¹⁵ Or perhaps the thought constitutes the *uoluntas*; Augustine is not clear. Note that in *ciu.* 14.9 he notoriously identifies the four basic Stoic passions, which the Stoics understood as forms of judgment, with distinct types of *uoluntates*.

¹⁶ “Multa sunt bona eaque diuersa, e quibus eligat quisque quod uolet idque uidendo et tenendo ad fruendum summum sibi bonum recte uereque constituat.” The same point is made earlier, when Augustine is describing how objects are neutral in themselves (*lib. arb.* 1.15.33.113): “Cum igitur eisdem rebus alius male alius bene utatur, et is quidem qui male, amore his inhereat atque implicetur – scilicet subditus eis rebus quas ei subditas esse oportebat, et ea bona sibi constituens quibus ordinandis beneque tractandis ipse esse utique deberet bonum.” See also *ciu.* 12.8 for the same point.

¹⁷ Given that one might have turned the will otherwise, it could be argued that the will’s orientation is implicitly a choice, even though it need not be preceded by deliberation nor be the result of a decision. This is a stronger claim than Augustine needs, however, and it is compatible with the claims he does make, so we need not pursue the issue.

¹⁸ “Superbia enim auertit a sapientia... unde autem haec auersio nisi dum ille cui bonum est deus, sibi ipse uult esse bonum suum, sicuti sibi est deus?” Augustine

Pride turns away from wisdom. . . How does this turning away come about, if not that he whose good is God wills to be his own good for himself, as if his own god?

Pride is having a *uoluntas* directed towards oneself. In the case at hand, Lucifer turns his will towards himself and thereby away from God. So it is that prideful self-love is morally objectionable: “self-love to the point of contempt for God” (*ciu.* 14.28), as Augustine puts it. Whereas the good angels turned their wills to God, and so remained with a *uoluntas* towards justice (*lib. arb.* 3.5.15.55; cfr. 3.5.16.59), the bad angels “instead took delight in their own power, as though they were the good for themselves, falling away from the greater blessed good which is common to all” (*ciu.* 12.1);¹⁹ they are made miserable by “this turning away from Him Who is the Highest and turning to themselves who are not the highest; what other name does this vice have but pride?” (*ciu.* 12.6).²⁰ Hence the morally objectionable character of pride stems from apostasy, which is why pride is the first and the worst of all sins – a view Augustine finds support for in Sir. 10:14–15 (RSV 10:12–13): “The beginning of pride is when one departs from (*apostastare*) God, and his heart is drawn away from Him Who made him; for pride is the beginning of all sin.”²¹

Augustine sums up his position in a concise yet elegant formulation that links disobedience with pride (*uer. rel.* 13.26):²²

That angel [Lucifer], delighting in himself rather than in God, was unwilling to be subject to Him and swollen with pride: he abandoned the Highest Essence, and he fell.

All the descriptions are equivalent. Lucifer’s delight in himself rather than in God – which precisely *is* his occurrent state of pride – is also his act of turning

is talking about Original Sin, but his point applies equally well to Lucifer’s primal sin.

¹⁹ “Alii sua potestate potius delectati, uelut bonum suum sibi ipsi essent, a superiore communi omnium beatifico bono ad propria defluerunt. . .”

²⁰ “. . . Quod ab illo qui summe est auersi ad se ipsos conuersi sunt qui non summe sunt; et hoc uitium quid aliud quam superbia nuncupetur?”

²¹ See also *s.* 159B11. Augustine argues in *Gn. litt.* 11.15.19 that Paul’s claim that avarice is the root of all evil (1 Tim. 6:10) is compatible, since ‘avarice’ should be understood here broadly, as the effect of “ruinous self-love” in wanting to make something one’s own (cfr. *s.* 198.11). See also his discussion of this passage in *lib. arb.* 3.17.48.164–166, wherein Augustine concludes that “a wanton will (*uoluntas*) is the cause of all evils.”

²² “Ille autem angelus magis seipsum quam Deum diligendo, subditus ei esse noluit et intumuit per superbiam, et a summa essentia defecit, et lapsus est.”

away from God (to himself); and, plausibly, it is also his being unwilling to serve God, since this is what it is for Lucifer to delight in himself rather than in God. So it is that Augustine can say that Lucifer “became the devil through disobedience and pride” (*in Ioh. eu.* 42.10.5). Not keeping God as one’s good is the fountainhead of all the vices (*en. Ps.* 18.2.15).

1.2 REASONS AND CAUSES

Why did Lucifer turn his will from God? What could explain his pride in his finite and created being when faced with the infinite and uncreated majesty of God? What prospect could Lucifer have to set against the eternity of damnation?

We have already seen that Augustine cannot appeal to character traits to explain Lucifer’s primal sin. No appeal to pre-existent motives satisfies the theological requirement that Lucifer be created good in all respects by a good God. (Nor does any appeal to features for which Lucifer is not himself responsible.) Putting motives aside, then, Augustine’s position can be best stated by appealing to the distinction between reasons and causes: there are no causes that determine the will, but there may be reasons to which one might appeal in understanding the will, though they do not determine its action either. Some work is required to spell out why Augustine adopts this position.

In *lib. arb.* 3.25.75.258, Augustine asks: How did Lucifer come to think “that irreligiousness should be pursued,” the thought²³ “by which he fell from the heights of Heaven”? Lucifer, being a pure spirit, was not affected in his thoughts by having a body, or even by anything physical. Augustine describes Lucifer’s situation – really the situation of any angel – as follows (*lib. arb.* 3.25.76.261–262):²⁴

In contemplating the highest wisdom – which is surely not the mind, for the highest wisdom is unchangeable – the mind (*animus*) looks upon

²³ Augustine initially calls this a ‘judgment’ (*consilium*), his straightforward rendering of the Stoic *κατάληψις*. But he holds no allegiance to Stoic doctrine, for he immediately rephrases his question in a neutral manner: “How did whatever it is that entered his mind come to enter his mind?” (*lib. arb.* 3.25.75.259).

²⁴ “Ut autem in contemplatione summae sapientiae – quae utique animus non est, nam est incommutabilis – etiam se ipsum qui est commutabilis animus intueatur et sibi ipse quodam modo ueniat in mentem, non fit nisi differentia qua non est quod deus et tamen aliquid est quod possit placere post deum. Melior est autem cum obliuiscitur sui prae caritate incommutabilis dei uel se ipsum penitus in illius comparatione contemnit. Si autem tamquam obuius sibi placet sibi ad peruerse imitandum deum ut potestate sua frui uelit, tanto fit minor quanto se cupit esse maiorem.”

itself, which is changeable, and in some way enters into its own mind (*mens*). This happens only in virtue of the difference by which the mind is not what God is, and yet it is something that can please, next to God. However, it is better if it forgets itself before the love of the unchangeable God, or sets itself completely at naught in comparison with Him. If instead [the mind] gets in its own way, so to speak, and it pleases it to imitate God perversely so that it wills to enjoy its own power, it becomes lesser to precisely the extent that it desires itself to be greater.

An angel, then, has two immediate objects before its mind's eye: God and its own mind, which it knows to be different because the former is unchangeable and the latter changeable. Given this contrast, there are only two choices, namely to direct the will to God or to direct it "to enjoy its own power," in which case the mind "gets in its own way" by obstructing the clear view of God, who is its proper object.

Augustine's suggestion that the mind gets in its own way fits well with his view that perverse self-love, preferring oneself to God, is the essence of pride, an identification he immediately goes on to make (*lib. arb.* 3.25.76.263). But more important for our purposes is to note what Augustine does not say here. In his description of the angelic situation, Augustine leaves it entirely open whether the will directs itself to God or to its own power. He is clear that it should do the former, of course. But it is perfectly able to do the latter. Hence the mind is not determined by its nature to orient itself towards God, even whilst having the Beatific Vision. Some angels do not do so, and thereby fall, with Lucifer in the lead.

There is no irresistible final cause, then, of the will's orientation. (If God cannot compel love then nothing less can do so.) In view of the will's freedom, Augustine argues, it has no efficient cause either – no efficient cause that determines it one way rather than another, that is. His interlocutor, Evodius, has been pressing the question why one angel sinned and another did not, despite having the same nature (*lib. arb.* 3.17.47.161–3.17.47.163). Augustine offers a tart reply (3.17.48.164–168):²⁵

The will is the cause of sin, but you are searching for the cause of the will itself. If I were able to find this cause, are you not also going to ask about

²⁵ "Quoniam uoluntas est causa peccati, tu autem causam ipsius uoluntatis inquiris, si hanc inuenire potuero, nonne causam etiam eius causae quae inuenta fuerit quaesiturus es? Et quis quaerendi modus, quis finis percontandi ac disserendi, cum te ultra radicem quaerere nihil oporteat? . . . Sed quae tandem esse poterit ante uoluntatem causa uoluntatis? Aut enim et ipsa uoluntas est et a radice ista uoluntatis non receditur, aut non est uoluntas et peccatum nullum habet." See Harrison [2006] for a careful discussion of these passages.

the cause of this cause that has been found? What will limit our investigation? What will be the end of our discussion and examination? . . .

But what, in the end, could be the cause of the will *before* the will? Either it is the will itself, in which case there is no getting around this root of the will, or it is not the will, in which case it has no sin.

Free will is completely self-determining, or, as Augustine puts the point in *lib. arb.* 1.12.26.86 and 3.3.7.27, “what is so much in the power of the will as the will itself”? On pain of infinite regress, there cannot be any prior cause or ground that determines the will in its free choices. The freedom involved in free choice must therefore be radical freedom, such that nothing whatever can determine its choice. In particular, the will is not bound to do whatever the agent thinks it best to do. For Augustine, the freedom of moral agents is bound up with their ability to be weak-willed or even perverse, doing the wrong thing for no reason at all. Such is the radical freedom of the will.

Augustine reiterates his arguments in *ciu.* 12.6–7, declaring at the outset that “if we seek an efficient cause of the evil *uoluntas* of the bad angels, we shall find none.” When he draws his final conclusion, however, he gives in to the temptations of rhetoric and phrases it in a misleading way: “Hence let no one search for an efficient cause of an evil *uoluntas*, for its cause is not efficient but deficient, since it is not an effect but a defect” (*ciu.* 12.7). The view alludes, sensibly enough, to Augustine’s ontological view that sin is not a genuine thing but rather the absence or privation of something, such as the failure of the will to turn to God. But it is wrong to take his rhetorical rhyme seriously, to think that alongside efficient causes there are also ‘deficient causes’. The deficiencies in question are not prior to, and somehow causal grounds determining, the (evil) will; they are instead features of the (evil) will itself, namely its failure to do something in some fashion.²⁶ The point at issue, though, is whether there are efficient causes that determine the will’s actions. For all the talk of deficiencies, Augustine is clear that there are no such causes.

Now Augustine’s denial that there are determining causes of the will does not entail that the will’s actions are inexplicable or somehow not tied to the agent.²⁷ Augustine clearly allows that there are *reasons* for action that help us to understand it, although they do not determine the action.²⁸ In the case of Lucifer’s primal sin, for instance, Augustine has been careful to insist that the

²⁶ MacDonald [1998] explores the ways in which morally objectionable acts can be the result of such failures.

²⁷ See Babcock [1988], and the criticisms of his position in MacDonald [1998].

²⁸ The terminology of ‘reasons’ here is mine; Augustine has often been misunderstood on these points, I think, because he did not have a regimented vocabulary

reason Lucifer fell was his pride, that is, taking delight in himself rather than in God. But Lucifer equally might not have done so; many angels did not.

Reasons can be given, then, in support of an action, but which do not determine it. Does a reason in support of an action, then, *explain* that action? There is a point here beyond mere terminology, and one of Augustine's examples will clarify it. In *ciu.* 12.6, Augustine puts forward the case of two men "alike in mind and body" who see a woman with a beautiful body; "one is moved to enjoy her illicitly whereas the other remains constant in his chaste will." But how is it that they respond differently? They see the same woman, they are like-minded in all relevant respects, neither is more subject to physical arousal than the other. Augustine concludes: ²⁹

If both of them are tempted equally, and one gives in and consents while the other remains the same as he was, what else is clear but that one was willing to give up his chastity and the other one was unwilling to do so?

We can give reasons why each man acts the way he does. Augustine is careful to spell them out: one man is moved to lust because of the woman's beauty, the other is not because he values his chastity. But – and this is Augustine's point – the behaviour of each is explicable in terms of reasons, but in the end all we can say is that this man took this as the reason for his action, whereas the other man took that as the reason for his action. And that is simply to say that each chose as he did, without any further explanation being possible. In Augustine's view, then, the radical freedom of the will is a double-edged sword. It makes moral agency possible, but it also makes moral choice explicable only up to a point, the point at which a final choice is made.

Why did Lucifer turn his will away from God? There is no cause; he had his reasons, namely his love of himself, but in the end that is just to say that he turned his *uoluntas* to himself rather than God. Primal sin is precisely as explicable as any other action – and precisely as inexplicable, as well.

1.3 FOREKNOWLEDGE

Augustine holds that Lucifer fell in the instant of his creation, at the beginning of time (*Gn. litt.* 11.16.21). He summarizes his view as follows (*Gn. litt.* 11.23.30):³⁰

for discussing the issues. But while my usage is contemporary, the distinction it draws is solidly grounded in Augustine's texts.

²⁹ "Si eadem temptatione ambo temptentur, et unus ei cedat atque consentiat, alter idem qui fuerat perseueret: quid aliud apparet, nisi unum noluisse, alterum uoluisse a castitate deficere?"

³⁰ "Sed factus continuo se a luce ueritatis auertit, superbia tumidus et propriae potestatis delectatione corruptus. Unde beatæ atque angelicæ uitæ dulcedinem non

Yet as soon as [Lucifer] was made he turned away from the light of truth, swollen with pride and corrupted by delight in his own power. Accordingly, he did not taste the sweetness of the happy angelic life. Surely he did not receive it and turn up his nose at it; rather, being unwilling to receive it, he turned his back on it and lost it.

Lucifer could not have shared in angelic happiness for any length of time, not even for a moment, because such happiness requires foreknowledge that Lucifer could not have had, namely foreknowledge regarding his fall. Augustine lays out the criteria for the happiness of an intellectual being in *ciu.* 11.13: (a) uninterrupted enjoyment of God; (b) the assurance, free from any doubt or error, that it will do so forever.³¹ Lucifer cannot satisfy (b), since he will not in fact continue in (a). What, then, is Lucifer's epistemic status when he commits primal sin?

This question leads to a dilemma, one never finally resolved by Augustine. He sets it out in *Gn. litt.* 11.17.22 as follows.³² Either Lucifer knows when he is created that he is going to fall, or not. If he knows that he is going to fall, then, Augustine reasons, he cannot be happy, in light of his knowledge that his present exalted status will come to an end and be replaced by eternal damnation. Therefore, Lucifer must not know that he is going to fall. But now we can legitimately ask: Why not? There are two possibilities. Either none of the angels knew what their future status would be, or some did and others, including Lucifer, did not. Suppose first that none of the angels knew what their future status would be. But then, Augustine claims, none of the angels could actually be happy, since none of them would know that they would not lose their present status for some other condition, perhaps even damnation. Even if *knowing that you are going to fall* is worse than *not knowing that you are not going to fall*, either is enough to spoil the prospect of happiness. Hence we have to turn to the other possibility, namely that some angels (who would turn out to be the good angels) were assured of their future happiness, while others (who

gustavit: quam non utique acceptam fastidiuit, sed nolendo accipere deseruit et amisit.”

³¹ “Quocirca cuius iam non difficulter occurrit utroque coniuncto effici beatitudinem quam recto proposito intellectualis natura desiderat, hoc est, ut et bono incommutabili, quod Deus est, sine ulla molestia perfruatur et in eo se in aeternum esse mansurum nec ulla dubitatione cunctetur nec ullo errore fallatur.” That happiness must contain its own guarantee is a common theme in Augustine.

³² Augustine restates the logic of the dilemma in *Gn. litt.* 11.25.33, sketching it in *ciu.* 11.13 and *corrupt.* 10.27. He recounts the problem for Jerome in *ep.* 73.3.7, declaring that he has no solution (which van Fleteren [1999] mistakenly reads as saying that Lucifer does have foreknowledge of his fall).

would turn out to be the bad angels) did not know about their upcoming fall. But this possibility runs into theological obstacles, since it would mean that some angels have only second-class status in Heaven – among whom would be Lucifer, supposedly the best of them all; worse yet, there is no scriptural support for postulating second-class angels (*Gn. litt.* 11.19.26; *ep.* 73.3.7). As Augustine says in *ciu.* 11.13, it is hard to believe that some angels could be ignorant of their future status.

In *Gn. litt.* 11.19.26, Augustine floats the idea that the dilemma might be avoided by supposing that the moment of choice for the angels was the very instant of their creation, “so that there was no time at which the angels were uncertain of their happiness.” But the dilemma can simply be pushed back to the instant of the creation of angels: were they all ignorant of their future state when created, or were only some of them ignorant and others assured? Augustine acknowledges that the dilemma has not been resolved in *Gn. litt.* 11.25.33, where he confesses he does not know what the correct solution should be. In later discussions he says that the bad angels did not know of their future fall, but he acknowledges the dilemma (*ciu.* 11.13 and *corrept.* 10.27). The best answer that can be given on Augustine’s behalf, I think, is to opt for the view that none of the angels knew of their future status at the instant of their creation, which is the very moment when they could exercise their freedom to turn their wills as they pleased; those who kept their wills directed to God were rewarded with both eternal happiness and knowledge of their eternal happiness, whereas those who did not were damned. (Indeed, this is what Augustine usually says in his later works.) Hence at the moment of their creation and ever after, the good angels are assured of their happiness, and the bad angels were not – as Augustine says, they turned their back on the gift of eternal happiness and so lost it, never having received it.

2. ANSELM

Anselm adopts Augustine’s views about angelic sin, extending them in his remarkable dialogue devoted to the topic: *De casu diaboli*. He formalizes the contrast Augustine draws between the conflicting impulses for seeking one’s own good and for doing what is right into his so-called ‘two-wills’ theory of motivation: every moral agent, Anselm argues, has two fundamental kinds of motives, the will-for-justice (*uoluntas iustitiae*) and the will-for-advantage (*uoluntas commodi*), as he calls them (*diab.* 12–14).³³ Put another way, Anselm

³³ By the time he came to write his *De concordia*, Anselm clarified and refined his theory. In *conc.* 3.11, he draws a distinction between (a) the nature of an instrument; (b) what the instrument is suited for, its ‘dispositions’ [*aptitudines*]; (c) its

maintains that moral agency requires two distinct sources of motivation: the motive to do the right thing, seeing oneself as standing under moral norms; and a different nonmoral motivation that may conflict with the demands of morality. Only when an agent is capable of being motivated to act in ways that conflict with moral norms, and yet equally capable of recognizing his actions as being bound by moral norms, can there be moral agency, a genuine choice between doing the right thing (because it is right) or doing something other than the right thing (for its intrinsic appeal). The glory and the tragedy of rational natures, human and angelic, is that their happiness may diverge from what they ought to do: that is what makes it possible for them to be moral agents, to do the right thing because it is right, but also to do the wrong thing.

Having two distinct sources of motivation is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for an action to be morally praiseworthy or blameworthy. At least two further conditions have to be met: the agent must not be (*a*) ignorant, at least not culpably ignorant; (*b*) irrational. In the former case, the lack of knowledge serves to excuse the agent, who then deserves instruction rather than punishment. In the latter case, treatment rather than punishment is the appropriate response.

Anselm takes up (*b*) for extended analysis in the remainder of the dialogue. Augustine had side-stepped the issue of Lucifer's rationality, and, although he touched upon Lucifer's epistemic status in discussing foreknowledge, he did not explore it. Anselm intends to show that Lucifer was fully qualified as a moral agent, and therefore could be held responsible for his primal sin, and justly punished for it. This is Anselm's main innovation over Augustine, and it is quite an original accomplishment, among other things anticipating contemporary decision theory.

Like any other moral agent, Lucifer is motivated by his will-to-justice and his will-to-advantage, which are at work in the case of primal sin, which Anselm treats at length in *diab.* 21–25 (with a brief coda in §27). To simplify the exposition, I'll speak as though the choice Lucifer faces is whether to “exalt his throne” above God's (as suggested in Is. 14:13). Anselm puts forward four theses about Lucifer's epistemic status:

[L1] Lucifer did not know what he would decide when faced with his

actual deployed use. Anselm argues that the faculty of the will, the (psychological) ‘instrument’ of choice, is a single unitary item which is clearly the power behind its occurrent volitions or ‘uses’. The two types of motivation canvassed in the *De casu diaboli* are here aligned with the unitary psychological faculty of the will as its ‘affections’: permanent dispositions to respond positively to their proper objects, namely *justice* (or *uprightness*) and *advantage*, which exhaust all motives for action.

choice (namely whether to exalt his throne above God's).

[L₂] Lucifer knew that he ought not exalt his throne above God's.

[L₃] Lucifer knew that he would deserve punishment for exalting his throne, or, more exactly, for willing that his throne be exalted above God's.

[L₄] Lucifer did not know that he would be punished if he were to will that his throne be exalted above God's.

He argues for [L₁] in §21, [L₂] and [L₃] in §22, and [L₄] in §23. Each deserves comment.

With regard to [L₁]: Anselm in fact argues in §21 for a stronger thesis, namely that Lucifer could not have had any grounds for suspicion (*qualibet suspicione*) what he would do when faced with his choice, much less have had foreknowledge of his choice. We'll return to Anselm's stronger thesis when we consider [L₄]; his case against foreknowledge is straightforward: if Lucifer were to know what he is going to do, then it's not at all clear that he faces a genuine choice, or even that he is free. Anselm wants to put these sorts of worries aside so as to concentrate on Lucifer's rationality.

With regard to [L₂]: Anselm argues in §22 that if Lucifer did not know that the action he was contemplating was morally wrong, and so ought not to be done, then Lucifer would be ignorant rather than blameworthy. But the wrongfulness of exalting his throne above God's could not have escaped his notice, since Lucifer "was so rational that nothing got in the way of the use of his reason" (such as having a physical body: §23) and thus "he was not ignorant of what he ought to will or ought not to will."³⁴ Therefore, if Lucifer was indeed ignorant he was culpably so. But there is no reason to think he was ignorant at all.

With regard to [L₃]: Recognizing the wrongfulness of an action, as Anselm observes in §22, is equivalent to recognizing that performing the action deserves punishment – or, put another way, that moral wrongfulness is analytically tied to deserving punishment. (Whether the punishment should be inflicted is a separate question.) Taken together, [L₁]–[L₃] seem to make it impossible that Lucifer, who after supposedly acted on his will-for-advantage, should opt to exalt his throne above God's. Hence the case for Lucifer's rationality in so doing is found in Anselm's analysis and defense of [L₄].

With regard to [L₄]: We have already established that Lucifer knew that he ought not exalt his throne above God's, and that in doing so he would merit punishment. Now [L₄] says that Lucifer does not know that, if he were

³⁴ "Denique quoniam ita rationalis erat, ut nulla re prohiberetur uti ratione, non ignorabat quid deberet aut non deberet uelle." There are interesting questions about moral knowledge and its extent, but Anselm does not take them to be at issue in the case of primal sin.

to exalt his throne above God's, he then *would* receive the punishment that by [L₃] he admittedly deserves. (If he knew that he would be punished for having sinned, then it would clearly be irrational for him to sin.) It is well worth considering Anselm's argument for [L₄] in detail.

Anselm begins by pointing that although Lucifer is aware of [L₃], it does not follow that he knows what God would in fact do:³⁵

Since [Lucifer] was rational, he was indeed able to grasp that he would justly be punished if he were to sin. But since "many of God's judgments are deep" [Ps. 35:7 (RSV 36:6)] and "His ways are past finding out" [Rom. 11:33], he was not able to figure out whether God would do what He could justly do.

Since God's ways are "past finding out" (*inuestigabiles*, literally 'untrackable' or 'not able to be followed'), Lucifer cannot replicate God's reasoning for himself. But why not? After all, Lucifer knows that God is entitled to punish moral transgressions, and presumably he knows that God is just. Yet Lucifer knows something else about God, as Anselm goes on to remark:³⁶

But someone might point out that Lucifer could not in any way believe that God was going to damn His creature on account of that fault, the creature He had made in His great goodness, above all because there had not been any example of paying back an injustice with justice. . .

Anselm's point here is that Lucifer knows not only that God is just, but also that God is merciful. (The word 'mercy' doesn't appear here, but that is clearly what is at stake in the discussion.) Yet given that God is both just and merciful, which of these attributes will guide his response to a wrongdoing?

If Lucifer is rational, then he must think that the likelihood of God showing him mercy are at least as good as the likelihood of God punishing him for his transgression. For, as Anselm remarks, Lucifer did not have any evidence about how God would in fact respond to cases of wrongdoing; "there had not been any example" before. Lucifer is therefore facing a choice under uncertainty, and, in the absence of evidence about how to assign probabilities to the elements of an exhaustive partition of the outcomes, the rational thing to do – or so modern decision theory maintains – is to treat the possible outcomes as equiprobable. Since there are only two outcomes in question here, Lucifer treats God's response as a coin toss: 50% probability of God's being just, and

³⁵ "Quia rationalis erat, potuit intelligere quia iuste si peccaret puniretur; sed quoniam 'iudicia' dei 'abyssus multa' 'et inuestigabiles uiae eius', nequiuit comprehendere an deus faceret quod iuste facere posset."

³⁶ "Sed et si quis dicat quia nullatenus credere potuit deum creaturam suam propter eius culpam damnaturum, quam tanta sua bonitate fecerat – praesertim cum nullum exemplum iustitiae ulciscantis iniustitiam praecessisset. . ."

50% probability of God's being merciful. If anything, Anselm goes on to note, Lucifer might have thought the odds favored his being forgiven, since Lucifer might have reasoned that God had created exactly the correct number of angels to fill the heavenly choir, and casting out angels as punishment would leave empty seats behind; he could not reasonably have foreseen that God would fill the empty seats with saved human beings.³⁷ Nor could Lucifer have reasoned that God would have to punish wrongdoing at some point so as to set an example for others; God might equally well have made it known that He might punish wrongdoing simply by informing the angels (§25). Anselm thus concludes that there would be no irrationality (*inconuenientia*) in Lucifer's reasoning.

But what does irrationality amount to, in the context of reasoning about what course of action to adopt? Anselm immediately tells us in §23:³⁸

Let us return to what we had said [in §21], namely that Lucifer should not have had this knowledge [that God would punish him]. For if he were to have known, then, while willing and possessing his happiness, he would not of his own accord will that whereby he would be unhappy.

Lucifer would be irrational if he believed that as a result of his voluntary action he would be less happy than he is. Anselm takes it as a minimal constraint on rationality, then, that an agent not do anything he believes is likely to make him less happy than he might otherwise be. In other words, an agent has to compare the expected utility of the outcomes³⁹ in order to make a rational choice; it would be irrational to choose any course of action whose expected utility is less than the expected utility of an alternative action.⁴⁰ That this is the correct way to read the passage is borne out by Anselm's second argument in §21 (the reference to which in §23 is secured by Anselm's use of

³⁷ Anselm takes these views about the number of the heavenly host and God's replacement of fallen angels with saved human beings from Augustine, as noted at the start of Section 1 above.

³⁸ "Redeamus ad hoc quod dixeram, illum scilicet hanc non debuisse habere scientiam. Si enim sciisset, non posset uolens et habens beatitudinem sponte uelle unde miser esset."

³⁹ The expected utility e_i of the i -th outcome is the product of its probability p_i and its utility u_i , namely $e_i = p_i \times u_i$. We are only dealing with subjective probabilities here, from Lucifer's point of view.

⁴⁰ This formulation entails that an agent must seek to maximize his expected utility, on pain of irrationality. Anselm's way of putting the point is slightly weaker, since it only holds that it would be irrational to adopt a course of action whose expected utility is worse than not adopting that course of action (*i. e.* of standing pat).

the pluperfect), the conclusion of which Anselm states as follows: ⁴¹

Now since it is clear by the argument given above that the apostate angel could not have foreknown his downfall by the sort of foreknowledge which is consequent upon the necessity of the matter, consider yet a further argument that excludes his having any presentiment of his fall not only by foreknowledge but even by reckoning or by any suspicion.

Lucifer must not only lack foreknowledge of his fall, as Augustine and [L1] declared, he can't know about it through *aestimatio* or *suspicio*. Now *aestimatio* ('reckoning') means an assessment of the value of something, a summing-up of its worth; the sense of Anselm's claim is that Lucifer cannot have calculated that the expected (negative) utility of the outcome in which God exercises His justice, namely his punishment, outweighs the expected utility of the outcome in which God exercises His mercy, no matter by how little (*suspicio*). Hence the gamble that Lucifer takes is rational only if it conforms to this criterion.

Anselm says little about the utility of the outcomes, for the simple reason that he takes it to be obvious: if Hell is the deprivation of the happiness of Heaven, as Augustine maintained, then the disutility of punishment is the negative value of the utility of being in Heaven. (If we add to the utility of being in Heaven the further utility of exalting one's throne above God's, even if only briefly, the scales are tipped in the direction of being in Heaven.) Thus as long as the probability of punishment is no more than the probability of forgiveness, the utilities of the expected outcomes will balance as well. If Lucifer has reason to believe that it is more likely that he would be forgiven rather than punished, by his reasoning from the number of the heavenly host, then the gamble will look better and better to him.

Should Lucifer accept the gamble? There is one more factor that has to be taken into account, namely whether it is better to take the gamble or to stand pat. There is no consensus about when it is rational to accept or decline a gamble, since that depends on attitudes toward risk, and no principle governing the rationality of risk-taking has met with general agreement: maximin, minimax, or the like. We can say, however, that it would be irrational to accept a gamble if its expected utility does not outweigh the utility of standing pat. In the case of primal sin, the question is whether the expected utility of Lucifer's exalting his throne above God's outweighs the assured utility of standing pat. (This is how Anselm formulated the rationality constraint earlier.) It is plausible to think that the delight of having such an exalted throne

⁴¹ "Nunc autem quoniam supra posita ratione patet apostatam angelum non potuisse praescire ruinam suam ea praesentia quam rei sequitur necessitas, accipe adhuc aliam rationem, quae non solum praesentia sed et aestimatione aut qualibet suspitione suum eum praesensisse casum excludit."

would outweigh, perhaps infinitely outweigh, maintaining one's merely subordinate angelic status. So Anselm assumes in the argument with which he concludes §23:⁴²

MASTER: But consider also whether by this very argument Lucifer should have known what you are asking about [namely that he would be punished for sinning]. For if he had known, either (*a*) he would have sinned, or (*b*) not.

STUDENT: Yes.

MASTER: [With regard to (*a*)]: If he had sinned having foreseen so great a punishment, without any need and with nothing forcing him, then so much the more ought he to be punished.

STUDENT: That is so.

MASTER: Therefore, this foreknowledge did not help him.

STUDENT: Truly, foreknowledge of punishment does not help one who is going to sin.

MASTER: [With regard to (*b*)]: Well, if he hadn't sinned, then he hadn't sinned either (*b*-1) due solely to his good will, or (*b*)₂ due to his fear of punishment.

STUDENT: Exactly so.

MASTER: But he showed by his very deed that he would not have avoided sinning due solely to the love of justice.

STUDENT: Certainly.

MASTER: But if he avoided it due to fear, he would not be just.

STUDENT: It's clear that in no way should Lucifer have known that his punishment was going to be visited upon him as a result of his sin.

Does Anselm's argument answer the student's question about [L₄]? Anselm here argues that it does. If Lucifer had known that if he were to sin he would be punished, it would be irrational for him to sin and he would be all the more reprehensible for knowing the consequences; that is the gist of (*a*). More interesting is Anselm's argument regarding (*b*), which is the Lucifer's alternative of standing pat – having assessed the rationality of the gamble, he declines to

⁴² "MAGISTER: Sed et hac ratione considera utrum scire quod quaeris debuerit. Nam si scisset, aut peccasset aut non. -DISCIPULUS: Unum horum esset. -M.: Si praeuisa tanta poena nulla indigentia et nulla re cogente peccasset, tanto magis puniendus esset. -D.: Ita est. -M.: Non ergo haec praescientia illi expediebat. -D.: Vere peccaturo non expediebat praescire poenam. -M.: Quod si non peccasset: aut sola bona non peccasset uoluntate, aut timore poenae. -D.: Nihil aliud dici potest. -M.: Sed quoniam peccatum non cauisset solo amore iustitiae, ipso opere monstrauit. -D.: Non est dubium. -M.: Si uero timore cauisset, non esset iustus. -D.: Palam est nullo modo eum debuisse scire inditam sibi poenam suum securam peccatum.

take it. We know from the actual course of events that Lucifer was not motivated solely by the will-for-justice, and hence, even if he had avoided sinning, he would not have done so due solely to the will-for-justice. However, standing pat because of fear is not being just; doing the ‘right’ thing for the wrong reason is not to do the right thing at all, but to be morally reprehensible – arguably just as much as if one had done the wrong thing anyway. We’ll return to that point in a moment, but note that the student is entitled to draw his conclusion, namely that Lucifer ought not to have known (or been able to calculate) that he would be punished as a result of his sin, only if Lucifer is acting out of his assessment of the expected utilities of the alternatives, including standing pat. We know that in the actual case Lucifer took the gamble (and lost), which would be rational only if the assured utility of standing pat were not to outweigh the expected utility of taking the gamble. If he were not to have taken the gamble, $(b)_2$, his reason is not the admirable moral motive of wanting to do the right thing, but his fear that the gamble is too risky to take (by whatever standards of risk Lucifer adopts) – that the assured utility of standing pat outweighs the expected utility of accepting the gamble, taking its riskiness into account. Even in the counterfactual case in which Lucifer declines the gamble, his behavior would be rational, as we know it must have been in the actual case.

In the actual case, as Anselm notes, we can read off Lucifer’s motive from his actions: primal sin is a case of acting on the will-for-advantage. Lucifer has already done the wrong thing by treating a moral choice as an exercise in calculation. Yet Lucifer’s primal sin is perfectly rational in such terms. This is the point Anselm wants to drive home. Lucifer is not irrational. Rather, he is immoral. His rationality is a prerequisite for his immorality, in that we can legitimately punish him for his actions if they are rational. Mad as his gamble may seem in retrospect, it was not irrational of Lucifer to accept it. It was, however, immoral.

Anselm, therefore, has shown how Lucifer’s primal sin can be rational. Yet since there are two motivational sources for action, the rationality of an action need not coincide with its moral acceptability. In the end, Anselm holds, Augustine’s view about radical freedom is correct; even the rationality of a choice does not determine that it will be made (§27).⁴³

STUDENT: Why did Lucifer will what he ought not?

MASTER: No cause preceded this will, other than that he could so will. . .

⁴³ “D.: Cur uoluit quod non debuit? -M.: Nulla causa praecessit hanc uoluntatem, nisi quia uelle potuit. . . -D.: Cur ergo uoluit? -M.: Non nisi quia uoluit. Nam haec uoluntas nullam aliam habuit causam qua impelleretur aliquatenus aut attraheretur sed ipsa sibi efficiens causa fuit, si dici potest, et effectum.”

STUDENT: Then why did he will it?

MASTER: Merely because he willed it. For this will had no other cause by which it was pushed or pulled. Rather, it was its own efficient cause, so to speak, and its own effect.

There is a limit to our ability to explain free choices; the existence of the will-for-justice alongside the will-for-advantage ensures that we are never determined to act in any particular way, even when it is rational (in the narrow sense appropriate to calculating advantage) to do so. After all, as Anselm argues in §24, the good angels are in precisely the same epistemic situation as Lucifer, and yet they do not sin.

Anselm is clearly at pains to make his account fully compatible with Augustine, cleaning up and extending Augustine's views. Together their work defines a distinct tradition in the treatment of angelic sin, one that would be extremely influential in the later Middle Ages – as Tobias Hoffmann's essay in this volume will attest.

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