

DAMAGED GOODS

HUMAN NATURE AND ORIGINAL SIN*

Christian doctrine traditionally holds that human beings are *damaged goods*. Created with the full measure of goodness appropriate to embodied finite rational creatures, human beings have inflicted enough damage on themselves to have altered their ontological status. This happened in the persons of Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden, when they defied God's explicit command and did eat of the forbidden fruit; for this transgression they were cast out of Paradise. Human beings ever since have borne the guilt of this sin as well as punishment for it, the former relieved, at least in part, by Christ's mission of salvation.¹ The change in our status was fundamental, disastrous, and irreversible (by our unaided powers). We are no longer as we once were – we are not even quite the *kind* of thing we once were.

This, of course, is the Doctrine of Original Sin. It lies at the heart of Western Christianity. Fallen human nature, beset by original sin, is the reason for Christ's atonement and redemption of humanity through divine grace, accomplished by the Incarnation and the Crucifixion; there would be no call for a rescuer were we not in need of rescue. The Doctrine of Original Sin is intricately and inextricably fitted into the web of Christian dogma.

Yet I want to set aside theological issues in favour of what seems to me a more pressing, and baffling, metaphysical difficulty. According to the Doctrine of Original Sin, human nature has been *changed* as a result of the choices and actions of human beings. It is not clear that this claim makes sense. How can something literally change its own nature? What conception of 'nature' is at work, such that human nature is capable of being changed in time? How does a given choice or action 'affect' human nature? On the face of it, these claims are nonsense. For the Aristotelian, the nature itself, "our glassy essence," is fixed and makes us the kind of thing we are; were it literally changed, prelapsarian and postlapsarian 'humans' would belong to different species. For the Platonist, our degree of participation in a Form may wax or wane, but the Form itself cannot change, and *a fortiori* it cannot change as a result of our actions. The available philosophical accounts of natures treat them as abstract entities, as incapable of change in time by the actions of in-

* An earlier version of this paper was presented on 3–4 March 2006 at the University of Colorado at Boulder. All translations are mine.

¹ The Biblical account, found in *Gen.* 3, is given a distinctive Christian twist in *Rom.* 5:12 and *1 Cor.* 15:21–22.

dividuals as $\sqrt{2}$. It isn't that it would be exceptionally difficult or demanding for us to change $\sqrt{2}$; it's that it doesn't even make sense to talk about it.

This formidable metaphysical difficulty is at the heart of the Doctrine of Original Sin, threatening it with incoherence. Mediæval philosophers were therefore driven to heights of speculative ingenuity, devising theories that would allow them to maintain the literal truth of the claim on which the Doctrine of Original Sin rests, namely that human nature changed as a result of human actions. Such theories, like the doctrine itself, begin with Augustine, who devised not one but two approaches to the difficulty – neither of which he found satisfactory (§1). There the matter lay until the eleventh and twelfth centuries, when a different approach was taken by Anselm of Canterbury; some aspects of his solution were philosophically fruitful with regard to 'human nature' and developed by others, notably Odo of Tournai and an otherwise anonymous author known as 'Pseudo-Joscelin' (§2). I'll close with a brief description of its replacement by the consensus on the Doctrine of Original Sin under High Scholasticism.

1. AUGUSTINE

Although Augustine was not the sole author of the Doctrine of Original Sin – bits and pieces of it are found in Tertullian, Cyprian, and above all in his near-contemporaries Ambrose and Ambrosiaster – Augustine was undeniably its principal architect.² Indeed, Augustine coined the term 'original sin', and the formulation of the doctrine was so indebted to him that the Greek East, lacking Augustine in translation as well as in person, does not have the doctrine of original sin at all. Augustine presents an account of original sin as early as his *De libero arbitrio*, developed it further in his commentaries on *Genesis*, and brought it to its final formulation in the many works written in the course of his long battle against Pelagianism.³

The "ancient sin" (*antiquum peccatum*), as Augustine memorably calls it (*mor.* 1.22.40), was undeniably ours alone. Augustine is clear that Adam and Eve were fully possessed of free will in their prelapsarian condition, capable of not sinning. That is, Adam and Eve possessed the ability to not forsake the

² See Beatrice [1978] for Augustine's sources and his use of them. To his analysis I would add two antecedents likely to have influenced Augustine: the classical understanding of ὑβρις and μιάσμα on the one hand, and the neoplatonic view of 'descent into the body' (*enn.* 4.8) on the other.

³ See, for instance, his *De nuptiis et concupiscentia*, *De peccatorum meritis et remissione*, *De gratia Christi et de peccato originali*, *De correptione et gratia*, *Contra Iulianum*, and other polemical writings; discussions of the Doctrine of Original Sin even spill over into the *De ciuitate Dei* and the *Enchiridion*.

good, as well as the grace to persevere in so doing (*corrupt.* 12.33–34). Furthermore, they were endowed with good wills, subject to neither vice nor sin (*ciu.* 14.11). God’s sole command, to not eat the forbidden fruit, was “as easy to observe as it was simple to keep in mind” since there was an abundance of food and no desire contrary to the will (*ciu.* 14.12). The sole purpose of the command was to make Adam and Eve aware of their due obedience, “the mother and the guardian of all other virtues in rational creatures.” The fruit was neither harmful nor evil in itself. The point of God’s command is to obey only because it is commanded (*ciu.* 14.12). As such, the ‘ancient sin’ was all the worse for its disobedience, its heinousness magnified by the unimpeded freedom of the will in Eden (*c. Iul. imp.* 6.22). Augustine catalogues the sins wrapped up in the single act that was “the parent of all sin” (*ench.* 13.4.5):⁴

Pride was present in it, by which humans took delight in being their own masters rather than in God’s power; sacrilege, too, since they did not believe God; murder, since they hurled themselves headlong into death; spiritual fornication, since the integrity of the human mind was corrupted by the serpent’s seduction; theft, since the forbidden food was snatched; greed, since they wanted more than ought to satisfy them – and anything else that can be uncovered in this single offence by careful analysis!

At its root was pride (*superbia*), technically the will’s choice to turn aside from the immutable good (*ciu.* 14.13), which constituted the actual sin – eating the fruit merely completed a transgression already accomplished in the will. The selfsame pride was at work in Adam’s blaming Eve, and Eve’s blaming the serpent; they tried to evade responsibility for their sin rather than humble their pride by seeking forgiveness (*ciu.* 14.14).

The result was catastrophic, although, Augustine admits, it was completely just and appropriate (*ciu.* 14.15). Human nature itself was changed (*commutata*), and not for the better (*nupt. et conc.* 2.34.57):⁵

Accordingly, our nature was at that time changed for the worse by the great sin of the first man. Not only was it made sinful, it also begot sinners. Augustine repeatedly describes human nature as “damaged and deformed”

⁴ “Nam et superbia est illic, qua homo in sua potius esse quam in Dei potestate dilexit; et sacrilegium quia Deo non credidit; et homicidium quoniam se praecipitavit in mortem; et fornicatio spiritalis, quoniam integritas mentis humanae serpentina suasionem corrupta est; et furtum, quia cibus prohibitus usurpatus est; et auaritia, quia plus quam sufficere illi debuit appetiuit, et si quid aliud in hoc uno admissio diligenti consideratione inueniri potest.”

⁵ “Unde illo magno primi hominis peccato, natura ibi nostra in deterius commutata, non solum est facta peccatrix, uerum etiam genuit peccatores.”

(*uitiata et deprauata*) after the Fall.⁶ Since human nature is by definition common to all human beings, the damage it has suffered therefore affects all human beings. Precisely how it does so has yet to be determined. But the damage takes two forms that should be kept separate.

One effect of Adam's choice is that each human being "from the moment of birth catches an ancient death."⁷ Less poetically, each of us is born in a state of sin, in virtue of our human nature. It is not merely an inborn propensity or tendency to sin, though that may be present as well; we are each in an actual state of sin "from the moment of birth." This is a puzzle. The normal way to be in a state of sin is to commit a sin for which one has not been forgiven. It is obscure how a person could be in a state of sin without having *done* anything, and it is particularly obscure in the case of newborns, who are incapable of any act of will. Yet such is the doctrine. (We'll examine Augustine's attempts to solve this puzzle shortly.) Human nature was "made sinful" and thus each human being is tainted with sin, together making up the "condemned lump of the whole human race."⁸ Therefore, human nature is damaged by a culpable moral failing, "permanently suffused with original guilt in everyone" (*originali reatu in omnia permanente confuderat*) as Augustine memorably puts the point (*Simpl.* 1.2.20).

Another effect of Adam's choice, distinct from guilt, is the punishment it calls forth. Augustine identifies three distinct divine penalties inflicted on human nature: ignorance, death, and lust (*concupiscentia*).⁹ The first penalty is that we have become comparatively ignorant of the principles of right and wrong. In our prelapsarian condition it was obvious which courses of action were right and which wrong; in our postlapsarian condition it is not at all clear, and can be figured out only with difficulty. Broadly speaking this is a 'cognitive' disorder to which we are now prey. The second penalty is that human beings are now doomed to die – our *Dasein* is structured by being-towards-death. Before the Fall, Augustine holds, humans were mortal, *i. e.* capable of dying, but were otherwise free from physical disorders; Adam

⁶ Augustine's term '*uitiata*' is etymologically connected with '*uitium*' (vice or defect), and usually has the overtones of moral degradation or corruption.

⁷ "...contagium mortis antiquae prima nativitate contrahere": *ep.* 217 5.16.

⁸ "Totius humani generis massa damnata": *ench.* 8.27. Augustine repeats the phrase with minor variations in many places, for instance *Simpl.* 1.2.16. The 'lump' alludes to *Rom.* 9:21, where Paul describes the human race as a lump of clay that God moulds as He sees fit.

⁹ Augustine's account of the penalties for original sin is already found in *lib. arb.* 3 (where lust is called 'difficulty'), and repeated widely thereafter; see, for instance, *ciu.* 14.15.

and Eve were unaffected by disease (which was absent from Paradise), did not age, and were not destined to die. The third penalty affects the human 'blend' (*contemperatio*) of body and soul. We are now subject to strong and unruly desires that direct us elsewhere than at God, desires at best only partly under our control and often not even that. Augustine's generic term for such desires is 'lust', which encompasses more than mere sexual appetite, though it certainly includes it; it is the sense of 'lust' as it appears in 'blood-lust' or 'lust for power' – a strong, if not irresistible, craving or compulsion. Yet while any gluttonous appetite is an instance of lust, for Augustine sexual appetite is peculiarly well-suited as an example: its depth, passion, and forcefulness are undeniable, and the fact of non-voluntary sexual arousal illustrates in ourselves¹⁰ the same lack of obedience that Adam and Eve showed to God in Eden – tit for tat, so to speak.¹¹ These three penalties exacted by God have left human nature ravaged by lust, wracked by disease and death, unsure of how to live rightly; they collectively make it well-nigh impossible for us to avoid sinning in this life.

In our present condition, then, we are tainted by original guilt and also suffer the penalties of sin. Christ's mission of salvation has laid the groundwork for cancelling our guilt, by washing away all sins in the spiritual rebirth that is baptism, but this has not affected the punishment we must endure. The fall from our pristine condition is far indeed.

There are further unhappy consequences of Adam's choice. These consequences are not an instance of damage inflicted upon human nature, strictly speaking, but instead stem from our changed situation. For example, we no longer have the ability to avoid sin by our unaided powers, and certainly not to persevere in such avoidance; God has 'withdrawn' his prelapsarian standing support for our endeavours, support that made it possible for us to avoid sin, and now His assistance is purely supererogatory, *i. e.* given only as a matter of grace. This is a change in our extrinsic circumstances, having to do with the type of divine assistance extended to the human race, not a change in our intrinsic nature. I shall therefore put it aside for the time being (we'll return to it in §3).

Augustine's account of original guilt and the penalties of sin, recounted

¹⁰ Sexual arousal is not merely a physiological phenomenon, though it may be that in part. Augustine recognizes the emotional and mental components of arousal as integral to human sexuality, even though he wants no part of them.

¹¹ In our prelapsarian condition, our sexual organs were completely under our conscious control, and sexual activity free of *libido*, as Augustine tells us in *ciu.* 14.23–24.

above, spell out the content of the Doctrine of Original Sin.¹² It's time to return to the question with which we began. How is it possible for human nature to be changed by human actions?

As a first step to answering this question, Augustine implicitly endorses the following simplifying assumption:

(S) Whatever is such as to affect everything in a species must be part of the specific nature.

Now (S) says roughly that anything that must hold of all humans is thereby part of human nature. In aristotelian terms, these are *propria*: not part of the essence but characteristic of the subject, on a par with, say, the ability to laugh, present necessarily in all human beings but not part of their essence.¹³ It makes sense to expand 'nature' beyond the essence, as well, for essences are metaphysically thin – too much is not included in the strict definition *rational animal* for it to represent what human beings must be like. The key notion here is inclusive necessity: human nature includes all properties that *must* hold of all humans. This 'must' is the key to the metaphysical puzzle. On the one hand, if we can identify a property that affects all human beings and seems to do so with some kind of necessity, we have a good candidate for a feature that belongs to human nature. On the other hand, the 'must' is not logical; we can at least entertain the possibility that some property would come to be necessary (in some sense) for all humans at some point, and so characterize human nature thereafter – and hence it is possible that human nature could change historically, perhaps even as a result of human choices and actions. Whether human nature is in fact changed this way depends on plausibly identifying some property or set of properties that come to affect all humans at some point, and subsequently, as a result of human choices and actions. According to (S), then, Augustine needs to show that original guilt and the penalties of sin must affect all human beings as a result of Adam's (and Eve's) choices and actions – that is, in consequence of the "ancient sin." If so, he can maintain the literal truth of the Doctrine of Original Sin, that

¹² Augustine's theories of original guilt and of death as a penalty of sin were confirmed at the Council of Carthage (418), at the second Council of Orange (529), and again in the decree on original sin of the Council of Trent (17 June 1546).

¹³ Note that *propria* are not the same as inseparable accidents, which may also be present in each member of a species, nor able to be removed once present, but do not have to be present. The classical example of such an inseparable accident is the blackness found in ravens. It is not a *proprium* since it is found in things other than ravens, and no necessity would be violated in the existence of a non-black raven. The distinction between *propria* and inseparable accidents is subtle but important.

human nature has been damaged and deformed.

Matters are relatively straightforward in the case of Adam and Eve. Having transgressed God's command, each is *eo ipso* guilty; there is no puzzle how their choices and actions result in their guilt – their actions constitute their transgression, and hence their guilt, much as one becomes guilty of lying simply by telling a lie. Furthermore, there is no 'statute of limitations' for Adam and Eve; having sinned, they remain in the state of sin ever after, unless and until forgiven, which is beyond their power to bring about. Likewise, there is no metaphysical puzzle regarding the penalties exacted from Adam and Eve by God. Assuming that the penalties are "completely just and appropriate," as Augustine argues (*ciu.* 14.15), there is a straightforward sense in which Adam and Eve are responsible for their current condition, for they brought it on themselves. If the penalty for theft is a year in prison and I am in fact guilty of theft (however my guilt be determined), then I have brought my jail term on my own head. True, the penalty is exacted by others. It is nevertheless correct to say that my present incarceration is the result of *my* (thieving) choices and actions. Were the penalty instead to have one's hand cut off, I would reasonably be said to inflict this damage on myself, even though someone else would be the causal agent at work; the end result would be a damaged human being, and I might rightly be said to have inflicted the damage on myself. So too for Adam and Eve. The only disanalogy is not one that matters: it is not at all clear *how* we could become subject to ignorance, death, and lust as Augustine claims we are. But we don't have to know how God does it – a good thing since it might not be knowable by us – all we need to know is that God can and does do it, by His omnipotence.

Matters are less straightforward in the case of later generations. My daughter is not guilty of lying simply because I have told a lie; if she is not guilty, it is unfair to punish her for my guilt; nor will she lack a hand simply because mine was cut off. Unless original guilt and the penalties of sin affect all other humans, though, there is no interesting sense in which human nature was damaged by Original Sin.

Augustine separates the cases of punishment and guilt. For punishment he offers what we may call a *genetic inheritance model*, where the penalties of sin are physiologically transmitted from parents to children. Each penalty behaves like a strongly dominant heritable trait; it is relatively easy for such a trait to become uniformly distributed throughout an entire population. Since human generations begin with Adam and Eve, each 'carriers' of the penalties, the entire human race through all its succeeding generations will likewise have these penalties. Nor are they neutral traits, but 'damages' of a recognizable sort. Consider h emophilia, an inherited trait resulting in a 'damaged'

human, that is, someone whose blood fails to clot properly. If hæmophilia were to afflict both sexes equally, were strongly dominant, and were sufficiently widespread in the population, it might happen that succeeding generations would consist exclusively of active hæmophiliacs.¹⁴ It is as though the penalties of sin were inflicted as genetic damage on Adam and Eve, and thereby passed along to the rest of humanity. The ‘necessity’ required for (S) would then be biological, or broadly speaking physical, necessity; all human beings after Adam and Eve would exhibit these traits because of the nature of the trait and the mechanisms of inheritance. Human nature would then have been damaged by the presence of these heritable deleterious properties, unavoidable and objectionable as they are.¹⁵

Is it plausible to think of the penalties of sin as genetically heritable? Augustine thought so. Take ignorance. We know now that intelligence is a weakly inherited trait, so it is easy to imagine some artificial manipulation of intelligence that affects succeeding generations – if intelligence were universally lowered it might never get quite so high again. This is not quite the same as Augustine’s claim that fallen humans are specially ignorant of right and wrong, but it is close enough (and Augustine is vague enough) to make it not unreasonable. It is even easier to make the case for disease and death; we only have to imagine that Adam and Eve had an additional ingredient in their physiologies that made their bodies particularly resilient, tough, and regenerative, so that they would never wear out – whereas we have lost the ability to synthesize this extra ingredient, just as hæmophiliacs have lost the common ability to synthesize blood clotting factors due to genetic abnormalities. Now we are most likely to part company with Augustine over lust. Being prey to strong and unruly desires is not obviously a heritable trait, and it is hard to imagine adult humans without sexuality, ambition, or any other drive.¹⁶ Yet Augustine again finds sexual desire especially revealing on this score, since

¹⁴ We at least have the hope of genetic mutation and adaptive pressure, to say nothing of genetic engineering, to forestall such a future. Augustine had neither, since he found it reasonable to suppose that only God can undo what only God can do.

¹⁵ We may find it particularly difficult to see how a just God could allow such ‘penalties’ to assail later descendants – that is, we may be led to question the morality of inflicting genetic damage on offenders. Augustine’s answer is that God is not vengeful, since these descendants are not themselves innocent, and hence merit punishment in their own right. That depends, however, on his case for original guilt being transmitted, and as we shall see this is by no means obvious (nor did Augustine himself think so). The question is a matter for the morals of the Doctrine of Original Sin rather than for its metaphysics, however, so I will shelve it.

¹⁶ Augustine also finds it hard to imagine, as “full of turmoil” (*discordiosum*) as we are now: *ciu.* 14.10. See also Rist [1994] Appendix 3.

the genetic inheritance model relies on physiological means of transmission – in the case of human beings sexual intercourse – which is inevitably spurred on and accompanied by raw *libido*, even in marriage (*nupt. et conc.* 1.24.27). Something of unbridled passion in the act of sexual intercourse is thereby imparted to the offspring,¹⁷ rendering its own desires, when developed, strong and unruly, thereby passing along the third penalty of sin. Even lust, then, might arguably be thought – at least by Augustine – to conform to the genetic inheritance model. Whatever we may think of his reasons for taking the penalties of sin to be transmissible, there is no question that he thought they were, and so present in all the descendants of Adam and Eve by a kind of necessity. He could therefore conclude by (S) that they are features of human nature: more exactly, that they have *become* features of human nature, to our sorrow. Thus human nature has changed in at least these respects.

Guilt, however, is not readily susceptible to this approach. The sins of the fathers are not those of the sons; moral transgression is neither heritable nor physiologically transmissible. Adam and Eve may have been sinners, and their children may yet sin, but the children of Adam and Eve have not eaten of the forbidden fruit, and so seem innocent of the “ancient sin.” (Furthermore, given their innocence, it seems wrong that they inherit the penalties of sin.) Original guilt must necessarily affect all humans in some other fashion.

Augustine often speaks of original guilt as involving a debt (*debitum*). At first glance this looks promising: debts can be ‘inherited’, so that the heirs and assigns of an estate can be responsible for discharging the contractual obligations left outstanding at the death of the principal. Yet this will not do as an account of original guilt. For debts are charged against an estate, not against the heirs themselves; it is reasonable to pay off contractual obligations before disbursing the estate, so that the heirs receive an appropriately diminished estate, but not reasonable to treat the heirs simply as though they had incurred the debt. They did not. The estate, or perhaps by extension its heirs, may be liable for the debt, but the heirs are not thereby *guilty* of anything.¹⁸ Re-

¹⁷ Augustine holds that prenatal events, and conception most of all, can affect the child in the womb. He argues for this position extensively in his last works against Julian. This view clearly shows the traces of folk-belief, of a piece with such ‘wisdom’ as the idea that the woman’s looking at a picture of a handsome man during sexual intercourse will cause her child to be handsome. Even if we grant Augustine these folk-beliefs, however, his account doesn’t generalize to non-sexual lusts.

¹⁸ Kirwan [1989] 137 makes a similar point. We might also raise questions about the morality of imposing a debt as punishment that the estate or the heir would never be able to pay, to say nothing about whether this was understood to be part of the punishment for violating God’s command.

payment of a debt is not punishment but compensation; that is precisely the point of the distinction between criminal law and civil law.¹⁹ Furthermore, there is no clear sense in which we have an ‘estate’ passed along from Adam, against which any such debt could be charged. Hence the legal analogy with debt cannot serve to explain original guilt. To his credit, Augustine does not spend much time on it, calling on the analogy mostly for rhetorical purposes.

Augustine instead appeals to the distinction between *committing a sin* and *being in a sinful state*, noted above. Committing a sin is a sufficient condition for being in a sinful state; forgiveness is a necessary and sufficient condition of release from a sinful state. (There are complicated questions about how forgiveness is related to punishment.) Furthermore, Augustine insists that free choice of the will is a necessary condition for committing a sin: “There can be no sin that is not voluntary; the ignorant and the learned alike admit this truth” (*uer. rel.* 14.27). He also holds that human infants are in a sinful state in virtue of original guilt prior to any act of will on their part. These last two claims are consistent if we deny that committing a sin is a *necessary* condition for being in a sinful state. This is the tack Augustine takes to explain original guilt.²⁰ Adam and Eve are in a sinful state as a result of committing “the ancient sin” in Eden. Without personally committing that sin, their descendants nevertheless share in their sinful state by having a special relation to Adam and Eve, namely being *identical* with them in some sense.²¹ Just what sense of identity is at stake was a question Augustine never resolved. He offers two approaches.

¹⁹ Note however that ‘punitive damages’, though not a *legal* notion, makes civil compensation much more like criminal punishment. (The practise of imposing fines as criminal punishment also blurs the line.) Yet the main distinction between guilt and liability is clear, and Augustine recognizes it.

²⁰ The obvious though morally distasteful analogy for Augustine should be slavery. Someone who became a slave would normally remain one unless explicitly manumitted by the one to whom he is enslaved; any children of a slave are themselves slaves, and are born that way – there is nothing they need to do to enter the state of slavery. There might be many ways of becoming a slave, including being sentenced to slavery as a form of punishment. The difficult point of analogy to work out is why sinful status should be passed along, the way slave status is.

²¹ Augustine is helped to this view by his faulty text of *Rom.* 5:12, which, like the Vulgate, reads “per unum hominem in hunc mundum peccatum intravit et per peccatum mors et ita in omnes homines mors pertransiit in quo omnes peccaverunt”: Augustine identifies the *in quo* as Adam (*pecc. mer.* 1.10.11), and understands the passage to assert our sinful condition via identity with Adam. Ambrosiaster understood it likewise. But the Greek text reads ἐφ’ ᾧ, introducing an explanatory clause, and cannot bear this interpretation.

First, Augustine suggests that we are “one in Adam” as his descendants: the human race is one by having a single source from which it has sprung. But this notion of identity-in-descent just renames the problem. While it is true that Adam is our common ancestor, that does not explain how we ‘are’ Adam in any sense relevant to original guilt. To this end Augustine proposes that we are somehow literally contained in Adam and therefore are identical with him (*pecc. mer.* 3.7.14):

Everyone sinned in Adam when they still all were that one man in his nature, due to the power residing in him which made him able to produce them.

This is more than the point that Adam’s descendants are descended from Adam, and even more than the claim that Adam has all of his descendants ‘in him’ in potency. Augustine is a realist and a reductionist about modality. He holds that there must be something metaphysically present in Adam from which everything that arises from him is already contained – his version of the Stoic σπερματικοί λόγοι, the theory of *rationes seminales* expounded at length in his literal commentary on *Genesis*. Each human being descended from Adam (which is to say every human being) is thus contained in Adam in a metaphysically robust sense, “in his nature” as Augustine says, so as to be part of the ‘unfolding program’ that is a *ratio seminalis*. All the generations of the human race are metaphysically present in Adam at once, “one in Adam.” Call this the ‘containment theory’.²²

Yet even if we grant Augustine the containment theory and talk of each human being as ‘in’ Adam, we do not yet have the relevant identity needed to explain original guilt. Adam may commit a sin and thus enter a sinful state whilst I am in him, but this does not entail that I enter that sinful state as well, much less that I remain in it when I am born outside of Adam in my proper generation. Adam may be sinful without a part of him being sinful, just as the finger of a liar is not thereby a liar. Augustine recognizes the point, but simply insists that we are identical with Adam in virtue of being contained in him, which sidesteps the difficulty rather than solving it.²³ And without

²² The containment theory is close to the genetic inheritance model, in that Adam’s descendants have a feature in virtue of being descended from Adam, but is based on a different kind of explanation. For the genetic inheritance model, a trait is transmitted from each generation to the next by some physiological means, so that the possession of the trait is explained in pairwise stages along a chain back to Adam. For the containment theory, guilt is passed along to Adam’s descendants in virtue of their being literally ‘in’ Adam when he entered a state of sin.

²³ There is a slightly weaker position available to Augustine. He could maintain not that we are identical with Adam, but that Adam’s sinful state ‘permeates’ all his

an explanation, there is no reason to think that we share Adam's sinful state, and hence no reason to think that human nature was altered in the Fall. No wonder he found this approach unsatisfactory.

The second approach is found only in hints and suggestions in Augustine's works, from *conf.* 10.10.29 onwards, and may be termed the 'double life' theory.²⁴ Apparently we lead not one but two lives, one common and the other individual: we exist and share in a common life in Adam, and we also exist and have a personal life beginning with birth (or strictly speaking ensoulment); we acquire the second, personal, life without losing the first common life. When Adam committed his "ancient sin" we were all alive in him and not yet with our separate (personal) lives: *separatim uiuens* (*ep.* 98.1). Instead, we were one in him and with him, not having personal lives (*propria uita*). Our souls seem to be indistinctly common in the common life, in some sense pre-existent, but not yet "leading their personal lives": *qui suas et proprias uitas agerent* (*ep.* 190). Their individual personality differentiates souls, but not at the expense of unity in Adam as soul or life; individual distinctness is compatible with shared commonness.

This is rather sketchy, and more than a bit spooky. Let's take a leaf from Augustine's book and develop an analogy to make his double-life theory somewhat less unintelligible. Think of '(human) life' as a large undifferentiated mass. Periodically a part of this mass will develop a nodule encrusted with dirt, though after a time the dirt falls off. The nodule is an individual soul, the dirt its body; the nodule is only formed with the dirt – human life only becomes an individual soul with embodiment – though the dirt/body may drop away and still leave the nodule differentiated from the mass. Each nodule is still one with the whole mass, and remains part of the mass even when individualized. Perhaps that is a better model for life and soul than thinking of human souls as completely separate entities.

The ultimate provenance of the double-life theory may be Plato's account of the World-Soul in the *Timaeus*, though Augustine's source is much more likely to be some version of Plotinus's account of the hypostasis Soul in rela-

parts, so that any part of Adam is affected by it. Think of being 'It' in the game of Tag – any part of It's body is such that being touched by that part counts as being tagged by It; the 'Itness' of It is present in all of It's bodily parts. Analogously, Adam's sinfulness is such that it affects all his parts, including our inchoate selves. Aquinas's 'corporate' account, described at the end of this article, has some affinities with this weaker position.

²⁴ I am indebted to Rist [1994] 121–129 for this second approach, which he develops from the pioneering work of Solignac [1956] and O'Connell [1987].

tion to individual souls.²⁵ Talk of ‘Adam’ would go proxy for God’s creation of the relevant hypostasis, in this case Human Life, and can also be taken literally, referring to Adam’s personal life. In Paradise the whole of Human Life would be in Adam,²⁶ so that his personal life literally *was* the common and universal life. When Adam sinned, then, the whole of Human Life was “suffused with original guilt” (*Simpl.* 1.2.20). To the extent that every human being has a common life, each soul will thenceforth be tainted with original guilt.²⁷ Augustine was notoriously undecided about the possible pre-existence of the soul; the double-life theory allows him to eat his cake and have it too by maintaining the existence of Soul but not of personal souls. It also provides an explanation of how original guilt affects humans after Adam’s sin, as required. That’s enough for (S).

The sticking-point on the second approach is the terrible obscurity of the metaphysics that are supposed to support the double-life theory, especially the peculiar relation of the one Human Life to the many individual lives. It is no news that Augustine was influenced by platonism, but he owes us an explanation of the details if they are taken to support as important a doctrine as the Doctrine of Original Sin. Again he seems dissatisfied with this approach, never developing it even to the point sketched here. It is suggestive, but no more; and with the passing of classical antiquity in the Latin West, Augustine’s brand of neoplatonic speculation had little future. It was left to later generations to find an acceptable way of explaining the transmission of original guilt.

2. ANSELM, ODO, AND PSEUDO-JOSCELIN

Augustine’s failure to provide an adequate theory underlying the Doctrine of Original Sin cast a long shadow. It was not until the close of the eleventh century that treatises devoted solely to the question were again written, and then two were produced almost at the same time, *ca.* 1100: the *De conceptu uirginali et de originali peccato* by Anselm of Canterbury, and the *De peccato originali* by Odo of Tournai. They both adopt the framework of the

²⁵ See for instance *enn.* 4.3.27, where the issue comes up in discussing the nature of memory, a topic of great interest to Augustine.

²⁶ Conveniently putting Eve aside. Augustine thinks that we are entitled to do so on the grounds that Eve’s creation from Adam’s rib shows that her life is a shared part of his. Anselm holds likewise (*conc. uirg.* 9).

²⁷ Augustine holds that in general personal sin affects Human Life; why later sins, or the sins of later generations, do not change human nature is that you can only break the window once: *ciu.* 14.12.

problem as laid down by Augustine – they could hardly do otherwise – but with modifications. I’ll focus on Anselm, the better philosopher.

Anselm begins with a metaphysical thesis about the composition of human beings (*conc. uirg. 1*):²⁸

Together in every human being there are (a) the *nature*, by which he is a human being like all others; (b) the *person*, by which he is distinct from others, for instance when one is called ‘this fellow’ or ‘that one’, or by a proper name such as ‘Adam’ or ‘Abel’.

Some properties pertain primarily to the (individual) person and others to the (common) nature; they are personal or ‘nature-al’ (*a. k. a.* ‘original’) properties. The one may affect the other, Anselm notes: *sicut personale transit ad naturam, ita naturale ad personam* (*conc. uirg. 23*). Adam’s human nature required him, the person, to eat, since his nature was created to need to eat. Yet Adam’s choice to eat the forbidden fruit does not stem from his nature; it is instead a personal choice, “although what a person does isn’t accomplished without his nature” (*quod tamen egit persona non fecit sine natura*), to be sure (*conc. uirg. 23*).²⁹ Most sin will be personal, and personal alone; Adam’s sin has the distinctive feature of being a ‘natural’ (‘original’) sin as well – his personal sin affects his nature. Let’s see how this works.

Anselm accepts Augustine’s account of the penalties of sin. However, he offers a different explanation of original guilt. According to Anselm, Adam and Eve were created having ‘perfect justice’ (*conc. uirg. 2*), that is, uprightness of the will preserved for its own sake (*conc. uirg. 3*). As a feature of human nature this is something Adam and Eve *ought* to have. When Adam sinned, he forfeited his uprightness of will, having done what he ought not; his state of sin therefore consists in a dual condition: not having perfect justice on the one hand, and being obliged to have it on the other hand (*conc. uirg. 2*). A sinful state is thus a kind of deficiency, the absence of a positive feature that ought to be present. Hence Adam committed a sin (for which blame and punishment are appropriate) and thereby put himself in a ‘defective’ state, lacking perfect justice. Now here’s the trick. Since Adam lost his original uprightness of will, he didn’t have it to pass along to his descendants; Augustine’s worries about the mechanism for transmission are misguided – the point is that Adam *didn’t*

²⁸ “Licet enim in unoquoque homine simul sint et natura qua est homo, sicut sunt omnes alii, et persona qua discernitur ab aliis, ut cum dicitur ‘iste’ uel ‘ille’, siue proprio nomine, ut Adam aut Abel.” See also *inc. Verb. 11*.

²⁹ Odo of Tournai uses the same terminology of personal and ‘natural’ sin, and asserts that “because the person is not without the nature, the sin of the person is also a sin of the nature” (*sed quia persona non est sine natura, peccatum personae est etiam naturae*): *pecc. or. 2 1085B*.

have what he ought to have had to pass along, and so his descendants all lack the same feature (*conc. uirg.* 23):³⁰

To be sure, what made [infants] not have the justice they ought to is not their personal will, as in the case of Adam, but a deficiency in their nature (*egestas naturalis*) which the nature itself got from Adam. For [human] nature was in Adam and none of it outside him; stripped of the justice it had, it always lacks it (unless it receives [divine] assistance). Accordingly, since the nature subsists in persons and persons do not exist without the nature, the nature makes the persons of infants sinful. Thus in the case of Adam did a person deprive the nature of the good that is justice, and the nature rendered deficient makes all the persons whom it procreates from itself sinners by the same deficiency.

The damage suffered by human nature isn't a positive feature but a deficiency, a lack, much the way an automobile can be damaged by losing a part. Furthermore, Anselm continues, the defective state in which Adam's descendants find themselves is not a matter of their committing a sin to be in that state, as was the case with Adam; hence infants who die before capable of committing sins of their own suffer a milder condemnation than they would otherwise (*conc. uirg.* 23). However, the deficiency for which they are condemned – not having the uprightness of will they ought to have – makes it inevitable that they will in turn commit sins of their own, of which they will be guilty; hence guilt is a necessary feature of postlapsarian human nature and affects each human being personally (*conc. uirg.* 7).

Anselm's account of the inner workings of sin pays the price of giving up something Augustine thought essential to the Doctrine of Original Sin, namely the claim that each human being is "from the moment of birth" literally in a sinful state – guilt in the strong sense. Anselm has replaced Augustinian original guilt with two factors: (a) a deficiency in human nature, the lack of something that should be present, due to Adam's loss of original justice; (b) the assured inevitability of personal sin, due to the deficiency in human nature. Whether (a)–(b) are jointly sufficient for original guilt is by no means clear. Nor is the damage suffered by human nature quite the same.

³⁰ "Nempe quod in illis non est iustitia quam debent habere, non hoc fecit illorum uoluntas personalis, sicut in Adam, sed egestas naturalis, quam ipsa natura accepit ab Adam. In Adam namque, extra quem de illa nihil erat, est nudata iustitia quam habebat, et ea semper nisi adinta caret. Hac ratione quondam natura subsistit in personis et personae non sunt sine natura, facit natura personas infantum peccatrices. Sic spoliauit persona naturam bono iustitiae in Adam, et natura egens facta omnes personas, quas ipsa de se procreat, eadem egestate peccatrices et iniustas facit." Odo of Tournai also describes Adam's sin as a case "of the soul that ought to have justice freely abandoning it" (*pecc. or.* 2).

For Augustine, human nature is itself in a permanent state of sin, whereas for Anselm human nature is deficient and doomed to sin. Anselm insists that the deficiency is a moral failing on the grounds that human nature lacks something it ought to have (*debitum*). But this runs into the objection noted above with respect to inherited liability, namely that debt is not guilt and compensation not punishment.

There is a deeper metaphysical problem with Anselm's account. Even if we grant that (a)–(b) are a satisfactory explanation of original guilt, a point I cheerfully abandon to theologians, Anselm cannot simply dismiss the demand for an explanation of its transmission. Grant that Adam's personal sin caused him to lose φ , so that he did not have φ to pass along. This explains Abel's lack of φ only if Abel could get φ only from Adam. On the other hand, if Adam and Eve had not sinned, their descendants would also have original justice, as they themselves did (*conc. uirg.* 10). The upshot is that Anselm takes the presence or absence of original justice to be a heritable trait.³¹ Otherwise, its presence (or its absence as a deficiency) in Adam's descendants stands in need of explanation, which Anselm does not provide. Human nature is present in every human being, but unless we know more about *how* it is (or comes to be) present in every human being, whether damaged or not, we will not understand why human beings are as they are. And that returns us to the question with which we began. What is human nature such that it can be changed as a result of human choices and actions?

Anselm's official answer to this question is more or less Augustine's answer, explicated by (S): human nature consists in features that affect all human beings, roughly the essence and the *propria*. But there are traces of an alternate answer in Anselm, an answer that tantalizingly hints at a subversive approach to metaphysics. Look again at Anselm's claim that if Adam and Eve had not sinned their descendants would also have original justice. Yet Adam and Eve did sin, and their descendants are afflicted with original guilt and the penalties of sin. What if Eve sinned but Adam did not? Anselm says that only Eve "and not the whole human race" would be lost, for God could create from Adam another woman and they could reproduce sinlessly (*conc. uirg.* 9).³² Put aside

³¹ How could Anselm think that a deficiency is heritable? Perhaps it has to do with the relative strength of the 'affections' of the will, namely the will-to-happiness and the will-to-justice; as physical strength might be passed on from father to son, so too 'moral fiber'.

³² In the spirit of Anselm's reply, we could image Adam and Eve sinlessly having Jack and Jill, and only then committing "the ancient sin": the descendants of Adam and Eve would be afflicted with original sin, the descendants of Jack and Jill sinless. That raises the question of interbreeding; Anselm's remarks about God's having

the doctrinal issue for the moment and focus on Anselm's reasoning. What is true of human nature depends, at least in part, on what is true of the several individual human beings. To put the point suggestively, human nature seems to depend on what is true of human beings *collectively*.

With this thought in mind, consider Anselm's description of original sin (*conc. uirg.* 2):³³

Since the whole of human nature was in them and none of it was outside them, the whole was weakened and corrupted.

Elsewhere, speaking of Adam, Anselm says that "by his defeat the whole of human [nature] (*tota humana*) was corrupted and leavened, so to speak, with sin" (*cur deus homo* 1.23). A similar suggestion is found in Odo of Tournai (*pecc. or.* 3 1088C):³⁴

If Adam sinned, man sinned. For if this man sinned, human nature, which is man, sinned. But at that time the whole of human nature was in him, and nowhere else was there man as species. Thus when the person (namely this man) sinned, the nature as a whole (namely man as common) sinned.

The emphasis in Anselm and in Odo is on human nature as a kind of whole, a whole we identify by enumerating its 'parts', namely Adam and Eve ("none

to create another woman for Adam were Eve alone to sin suggest that original guilt is a strongly dominant trait. Aquinas argues that dominance is a feature of the parent's gender, not the trait in itself, so that if Adam were to sin but not Eve their children would be blighted with original sin, whereas if Eve were to sin but not Adam their children would be free of it (*sum. theol.* 1a.2ae.81.5).

³³ "Et quia tota humana natura in illis erat et extra ipsos de illa nihil erat, tota infirmata et corrupta est." See also *conc. uirg.* 10: "humana natura quae sic erat in Adam tota ut nihil de illa extra illum esset. . ."

³⁴ "Et si peccant Adam, peccauit homo; quia si peccauit ipse homo, peccauit humana natura, quae est homo. Sed humana natura tota tunc erat in ipso, nec usquam erat alibi specialis homo. Cum ergo peccauit persona, scilicet ipse homo, peccauit tota natura, scilicet communis homo." Odo makes the same point at greater length earlier (*pecc. or.* 2 1081D–1082A): "Ecce peccauit utraque persona suggestione serpentis, peccauit, inquam, utraque necdum substantiam suam habentibus alibi quam in se, quae nondum erat alibi quam ibi. Si uero persona peccauit, sine sua substantia non peccauit. Est ergo personae substantia peccato uitiata, et inficit peccatum substantiam, quae nusquam est extra peccatricem personam. Substantia uero una et eadem est utriusque personae communis ipsis et specialis. In peccatricibus ergo personis est infecta peccato natura specialis, quae non est alibi quam in ipsis. In anima Adam ergo peccato tota natura humanae animae; quae communis substantia est, est specialis utriusque. Extra has enim nondum est eam esse. Si enim fuisset in aliis diuisa, pro ipsis solis non inficeretur tota. Quia si peccassent istae, forsitan non peccassent aliae, in quibus esset salua humanae animae natura. Nunc autem ubi poterat anima humana munda esse quae peccatrix erat ubique?"

of it was outside them”). The subversive idea hiding in Anselm’s and Odo’s apparently ordinary remarks is the notion that human nature is the collective whole made up of individual human beings – that we look to individuals to ground claims about the nature. If that is correct, then the nature is in some appropriate sense posterior to the individual, for the nature depends on what individuals are collectively like.

To appreciate the radical character of this idea, take another look at (S), Augustine’s simplifying assumption: anything that must hold of all humans is thereby part of human nature. The ‘must’ in (S) serves to restrict our attention to *propria*, to necessary if not essential features of human nature, where the omnipresence of a feature is a reasonably good guide to its necessity. Yet there is no reason why the interesting features of a given natural kind are restricted to strictly necessary properties. It is an important feature about human beings that most are right-handed, that we usually have ten fingers and ten toes, that we have reached the Moon, and that we don’t live in Antarctica. To take the point a step further: human nature is in a matter of our typical behaviour, activities, surroundings, and so on. We discover what human nature is by looking at human beings collectively, since what we are is a matter of how we all are. Hence we should replace (S) with a thesis that makes this idea explicit:

(S*) Whatever is typical of the members of a species is part of the specific nature.

According to (S*), the specific nature is not a pre-existent abstract entity, but rather something constructed from the individual members of the species in question. This is a conception of ‘nature’ that allows historical change with a vengeance: any relevant shift sufficiently widespread in the species will be a shift in the nature. That is because there is no more to the species than the characteristics of its members.

The conception of ‘specific nature’ sketched here is not at home in metaphysics. Instead, it is closer to the way in which a biologist, not a metaphysician, speaks of genera and species (which is the only usage of ‘genus’ and ‘species’ left standing today). The beaver, the biologist tells us, is a flourishing species; the New World beaver ranges from northern Mexico to the Arctic, living in colonies around streams, rivers, and forest-edged lakes; the beaver builds dome-shaped island lodges of sticks plastered with mud; the beaver has a lifespan of seven to twenty years, and so on. The species exists in and through its current members, which is why it makes sense to talk about a (biological) species becoming extinct. Beavers do not cease to be beavers even if they are taken out of their typical habitats; a beaver airlifted to the Sahara desert would still be a beaver, though perhaps it would not survive for long.

If enough beavers adapt to desert living, though, we might be tempted to say that beavers live in wetlands and in deserts – the nature of the species has changed, through our intervention (airlifting beavers to the Sahara) and biological adaptation. As with beavers and their habitats, so with all species; the nature of a species is determined by the collection of its members. Biology is metaphysics naturalized.

This line of thought is admittedly no more than a tantalizing suggestion in Anselm and Odo, but it emerges full-blown in the next generation. An anonymous author known as ‘Pseudo-Joscelin’, from a remark in John of Salisbury,³⁵ wrote a treatise *De generibus et speciebus* in the first decades of the twelfth century in which he proposes that genera and species are collections of their members. Pseudo-Joscelin argues that the biological conception of genera and species, as outlined above, is the best account of genera and species available, and that it does all the work the metaphysician wanted to do with genera and species – at least, all the work reported in Porphyry and Boethius, the core of metaphysical knowledge at the time. Much of his treatise is given over to exposition and defence of his view (*gen. et spec.* §85):³⁶

Hence I say that the species is not merely the essence man in Socrates or in some other individual man, but rather it is the whole collection produced from them as its material. That is, the species is one thing – a ‘flock’, so to speak – conjoined from the essence man that Socrates sustains, along with each of the other [essences] of this nature. This whole collection, even though it is essentially many, is nevertheless called ‘one species’ and ‘one universal’ and ‘one nature’ by the authorities, just as the populace is called ‘one’ even though it is collected from many persons.

The species is technically the collection of individual specific forms from each member, according to Pseudo-Joscelin; this provides an intensional way to distinguish extensionally identical collections, as might happen if only beavers survived a plague affecting all animals; we could nevertheless distinguish the species *beaver* from the genus *animal* by recourse to their distinct

³⁵ John of Salisbury, *metalog.* 2.17.27: “There is another philosopher who, along with Joscelin the Bishop of Soissons, attributes universality to things collected into one and denies it of singulars.”

³⁶ “Speciem igitur dico esse non illam essentiam hominis solum quae est in Socrate uel quae est in aliquo alio indiuiduorum sed totam illam collectionem ex singulis illis materiis factam, id est unum quasi gregem de essentia hominis Socrates sustinet, et singulis aliis huius naturae coniunctum. Quae tota collectio, quamuis essentialiter multa sit, ab auctoritatibus tamen ‘una species’ ‘unum uniuersale’ ‘una natura’ appellatur, sicut populus (quamuis ex multis personis collectus sit) unus dicitur.”

individualized forms.

Pseudo-Joscelin was taken to task for his views by Peter Abelard, who roundly criticizes the idea, but whose criticism consists largely of pointing out that biological collections do not logically function the way well-behaved integral wholes should. But Pseudo-Joscelin is willing to accept some of the counterintuitive consequences of his view, *e. g.* that the species ‘changes’ when its members change, as part of the biological conception of natures (*gen. et spec.* §113):³⁷

Now pay attention: it’s true that the humanity that existed a thousand years ago, or yesterday, is not what exists today. But it is nevertheless the same as the latter – *i. e.* not of dissimilar creation. For it is not the case that whatever is the same as another is identical to it. . . Socrates too consists in many more atoms as a man than as a boy, and yet he is the same.

The members of the species certainly change, so it is not literally identical over time. Nevertheless, we do identify it as the same species, on the grounds that its members are “not of dissimilar creation”: born in the same way of the same kind of parents, that is, a suggestion reminiscent of the modern biological conception of a species as a group made up of members that can reproduce functional offspring. Once the species is recognized to be both the same and different, and the respects in which each holds true, there is nothing more to add.

Pseudo-Joscelin is clear that the collection of individual that make up a species is not arbitrary. He images the case in which there are only ten human beings, and someone asking whether a subcollection would count as a species (*gen. et spec.* §§122–123):³⁸

Yet if anyone were to object that therefore what is constituted out of five members is a species, for it materially inheres in many, reply as follows: This is irrelevant, for [the subcollection] is not a *nature*, and only natures

³⁷ “Attende! Verum est quidem quod illa humanitas quae ante mille annos fuit uel quae heri, non est illa quae hodie est. Sed tamen est eadem cum illa, id est creationis non dissimilis. Non enim quicquid idem est cum alio idem est illud. . . Socrates quoque ex pluribus atomis constat uir quam puer, et tamen idem est.”

³⁸ “Quod si quis opponat: ‘Ergo constitutum ex quinque essentiis species est, ipsum enim pluribus inhaeret materialiter’, responde modo: Nil ad rem quia non est natura, hic autem tantum agitur de naturis. Si autem quaeras: Quid appellent naturam? Audi: Naturam dico quicquid dissimilis creationis est ab omnibus quae non sunt uel illud uel de illo, siue una essentia sit siue plures, ut Socrates dissimilis creationis ab omnibus quae non sunt Socrates. Similiter et homo species est dissimilis creationis ab omnibus quae non sunt illa species uel aliqua essentia illius speciei, quod non conuenit cuilibet collecto ex aliquot essentiis humanitatis. Nam illud non est dissimilis creationis a reliquis essentiis quae in illa specie sunt.”

are in question here. If you should inquire what a ‘nature’ is, listen: I call a nature whatever is of dissimilar creation from all those that are not either it or belonging to it, whether it be one or several. For example, Socrates is of dissimilar creation from all those who are not Socrates. Likewise, the species man is of dissimilar creation from all things that are not that species or a member of that species. And this is not suitable for any given subcollection of human beings, since it is not of dissimilar creation from the others who are in that species.

A nature consists of everything that shares a common origin, and is set apart by that origin. The collection of members will change over time, and as the characteristics of the members change so too does the nature they defines, though the collection does not define a different nature simply in virtue of having different members.

For Pseudo-Joscelin, as for the modern biologist, the species exists in and through (all) its (current) members. That is what allows us to make claims about the species as a whole in virtue of only some of its members, such as “The human race has reached the Moon.” The species is in a way ‘wholly present’ in any of its members (*gen. et spec.* §93):³⁹

However, I say that humanity does inhere in Socrates – not that the whole is used up in Socrates; rather, only one part of it is informed with Socrateity. This is how I am said to touch a wall. It isn’t that each of my parts is in contact with the wall. Maybe only the tip of my finger does. But by this contact I am said to touch it.

Socrates is both a member of the collection that makes up humanity, and a representative of that species, so that truths about Socrates are also truths about the species to which he belongs (and conversely).

Although couched in the language of metaphysics, Pseudo-Joscelin’s biological conception of natures subverts traditional metaphysics, since it locates the objects of study in collections of individuals out in the world, rather than in essences contemplated from the safe haven of the metaphysician’s armchair. Pseudo-Joscelin makes no mention of the Doctrine of Original Sin in his short treatise, occupied as he is with taking on traditional metaphysics; but the groundwork for his position was laid by Anselm and Odo, in the suggestive hints they offered while wrestling with the equally knotty problem of original guilt.

³⁹ “Inhaerere autem dico humanitatem Socrati, non quod tota consumatur in Socrate sed una tantum eius pars Socrateitate informatur. Sic enim dicor tangere parietem, non quod singulae partes mei parieti haereant sed forsitan sola summitas digiti qua haerente dicor tangere.”

EPILOGUE: AQUINAS AND HIGH SCHOLASTICISM

Attractive as the biological conception of natures may be, at least to our modern sensibilities, it didn't catch on. We hear no more about it after the middle of the twelfth century. Part of the explanation is undoubtedly the tidal wave of Latin translations of Aristotle; when the dust finally settled on the codices, the innovative works of the twelfth century had been eclipsed by the technicalities of Aristotelian philosophy. Yet the philosophers of High Scholasticism were as committed as ever to the Doctrine of Original Sin, as well as to the authority of Augustine. Hence they also faced the challenge of making sense of the idea that human nature was damaged in the course of time, literally changing for the worse in the Fall, roughly along the lines of the genetic inheritance model. Rather than follow up on the biological conception of natures, though, they opted to explain the transmission of original guilt through the traditional metaphysical notion of a single shared human nature. This traditional notion was expanded not through biological considerations, but through a 'corporatist' account of humanity combined with an emphasis on Anselm's account of original sin as a kind of deficiency.

Aquinas will serve as an impeccably orthodox illustration. After endorsing Augustine's view that the guilt of original sin is transmitted from Adam to his descendants "by way of origin," Aquinas presents at length in *sum. theol.* 1a2ae.81.1 his new model for understanding how this happens:⁴⁰

⁴⁰ "Et ideo alia uia procedendum est, dicendo quod omnes homines qui nascuntur ex Adam, possunt considerari ut unus homo, inquantum conueniunt in natura, quam a primo parente accipiunt; secundum quod in ciuilibus omnes qui sunt unius communitatis, reputantur quasi unum corpus, et tota communitas quasi unus homo. Porphyrius etiam dicit quod participatione speciei plures homines sunt unus homo. Sic igitur multi homines ex Adam deriuati, sunt tanquam multa membra unius corporis. Actus autem unius membri corporalis, puta manus, non est uoluntarius uoluntate ipsius manus, sed uoluntate animae, quae primo mouet membra. Unde homicidium quod manus committit, non imputaretur manui ad peccatum, si consideraretur manus secundum se ut diuisa a corpore, sed imputatur ei inquantum est aliquid hominis quod mouetur a primo principio motiuo hominis. Sic igitur inordinatio quae est in isto homine, ex Adam generato, non est uoluntaria uoluntate ipsius sed uoluntate primi parentis, qui mouet motione generationis omnes qui ex eius origine deriuantur, sicut uoluntas animae mouet omnia membra ad actum. Unde peccatum quod sic a primo parente in posteros deriuatur, dicitur originale, sicut peccatum quod ab anima deriuatur ad membra corporis, dicitur actuale. Et sicut peccatum actuale quod per membrum aliquod committitur, non est peccatum illius membri nisi inquantum illud membrum est aliquid ipsius hominis, propter quod uocatur peccatum humanum; ita peccatum originale non est peccatum huius personae, nisi inquantum haec persona recipit naturam a primo parente; unde et

We should take another route [to explain original sin], holding that all men born of Adam can be considered as one man, insofar as they agree in their nature, which they take from the First Parent – just as in the social realm all who belong to one community are held as though one body, and the whole community as though one man. Porphyry also says that many men are one man by participation in the species. This is how many men, descended from Adam, are then as so many members of one body. Now the action of one member of the body, such as the hand, is not voluntary by the hand's own will, but rather by the soul's will which primarily moves the members. Accordingly, a murder that the hand commits is not imputed to the hand as a sin (if the hand were considered in itself as divided from the body), but instead is imputed to it inasmuch as it is something belonging to a man and which is moved by the primary motive principle of the man. Hence this is the way the disorderliness in this man, born of Adam, is not voluntary by his will, but by the will of the First Parent, who moves with the movement of generation all those who originate from him, just as the soul's will moves all the [bodily] members to action. Accordingly, the sin derived from the First Parent in his descendants in this manner is called 'original', the way the sin derived from the soul with respect to the bodily members is called 'actual'. And just as the actual sin committed by a bodily member is the sin of that member only inasmuch as that member is something belonging to this man, and so is called a 'human sin', so too original sin is a sin of this person only inasmuch as this person takes his nature from the First Parent, whereby it is called a "sin of the nature."

Aquinas proposes that we stand in a double relation to Adam. On the one hand, as Adam's descendants we are human, deriving our nature from his. On the other hand, Adam stands to all his descendants, in virtue of the fact that they are his descendants, as their 'corporate head' whose actions call responsibility on all equally. The analogy is with the body politic. Our metaphysically shared human nature qualifies us for membership in the human community, rendering us liable to individual guilt for our collective misdeed (though the action of Adam as our 'leader' so to speak), way in which one might hold each and every German of the time guilty of Hitler's evils. Aquinas sums up his approach pithily: "A man may be under a family disgrace from birth, brought about by the misdeed of some ancestor" (*sum. theol.* 1a.2ae.81.1 *ad* 5).⁴¹ The Fall itself consisted in God's withdrawal

uocatur peccatum naturae."

⁴¹ "Aliquis qui nascitur patitur ignominiam generis ex culpa alicuius progenitorum

of grace from Adam and Eve. The prelapsarian condition was one in which human nature was surrounded by God's grace and thus supernaturally made immortal,⁴² wise, and able to act rightly; the postlapsarian condition one in which justifying grace is absent (*sum. theol.* 1a2ae.109.7 and 3a.87.2 *ad* 3). Citing Anselm, Aquinas holds that the 'formal' element in original sin is the privation of original justice, which itself is a gift of grace (*sum. theol.* 1a2ae.83.2 *ad* 2). Aquinas agrees with Anselm that such a privation is not strictly speaking a case of sin, since no individual act of volition need be present for someone to have original sin. On the 'corporate' analogy, Adam has literally sinned for each one of us. Aquinas maintains that original sin is therefore called 'sin' analogically (*sent.* 2.25.1 art. 2 *ad* 2).

Aquinas's account of original sin, with its synthesis of Augustine and Anselm, clearly abandons the biological conception of natures. Whether it is a better theory is a question that can be put aside here. It is enough for our purposes to note that the tantalizing suggestions found in Anselm and Odo are passed over in favor of the traditional metaphysical understanding of natures. Aquinas is merely representative on this score. To the best of my knowledge, no mediæval philosopher after the middle of the twelfth century takes the biological conception of nature seriously, until the end of the Middle Ages. Mediæval metaphysics can therefore proceed untroubled by the spectre of biology. It is one of the great lost possibilities in the history of metaphysics.

Peter King • University of Toronto

causatam.”

⁴² So *sum. theol.* 1a.91.1. Aquinas does not draw Augustine's distinction between immortality, mortality, and being destined to die. See also *sum. theol.* 1a.97.1 and 1a2ae.85.5.

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>c. Iul. imp.</i>	<i>Contra Iulianum opus imperfectum</i>
<i>ciu.</i>	<i>De ciuitate Dei</i>
<i>conc. uirg.</i>	<i>De conceptu uirginali et peccato originali</i>
<i>conf.</i>	<i>Confessiones</i>
<i>corrept.</i>	<i>De correptione et gratia</i>
<i>ench.</i>	<i>Enchiridion</i>
<i>ep.</i>	<i>Epistolae</i>
<i>gen. et spec.</i>	<i>De generibus et speciebus</i>
<i>gr. et pecc. or.</i>	<i>De gratia Christi et de peccato originali</i>
<i>inc. Verb.</i>	<i>De incarnatione Verbi</i>
<i>lib. arb.</i>	<i>De libero arbitrio</i>
<i>mor.</i>	<i>De moribus ecclesiae catholicae</i>
<i>nupt. et conc.</i>	<i>De nuptiis et concupiscentia</i>
<i>pecc. mer.</i>	<i>De peccatorum meritis et remissione</i>
<i>pecc. or.</i>	<i>De peccato originali</i>
<i>sent.</i>	<i>In Sententiis libri quatuor</i>
<i>Simpl.</i>	<i>Ad Simplicianum</i>
<i>uer. rel.</i>	<i>De uera religione</i>