

# BLAME, DAMNATION, AND EVOLVED DISPOSITIONS: A DILEMMA

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## *Abstract*

Natural scientists have offered reasons to think that some vile human acts have evolutionary explanations. Christians would describe some of these acts as sins, and indeed as sins potentially worthy of damnation. However, I argue that, on the supposition that such sins have evolutionary causes, the agents who commit these sins are not justly damnable for the acts in question. This is because the justice of damnation minimally depends on two criteria: 1) that sinful acts are properly voluntary; and 2) that asymmetrical fault between sinners and God holds for said acts. Because, on the assumption that dispositions to sin have evolved, one or both of these criteria cannot be sustained, theologians face a choice. They must either affirm the evolutionary origins of some sinful acts and deny damnation in the relevant cases, or, if they wish to affirm damnation in all relevant cases, they must deny that there are evolved dispositions to sin. Whichever way it is resolved, the dilemma is serious and concrete. Because it is serious, it requires careful attention from all theologians, not only theology-and-science specialists. Because it is concrete, it cannot be dissolved with methodological strategies alone.

## *1 Introduction*

Many animals behave in the way they do by inclination honed through evolutionary forces. Birds sing, spiders spin, salmon return to the streams of their birth from across the sea. Humans, too, are animals whose behavior was honed through the same forces. At least some human behavior has likewise been influenced by evolution. For most of what humans do, this is of little concern. But there is reason to think—at least plausible enough to entertain seriously—that perhaps some humans have been disposed by evolution to acts that the Christian tradition would characterize as sins.

If true, evolved dispositions generate a dilemma for Christian accounts of the justice of damnation.<sup>1</sup> But because the very notion of evolved dispositions *to sin* is highly con-

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<sup>1</sup> The account of damnation I assume closely follows Augustine of Hippo. Because it does, it might be argued that my case depends on that narrow view of damnation as consisting in, among other things, unending conscious torment as penalty, as opposed to, say, a natural consequence approach. This is somewhat mistaken. For while Augustine does conceive of hell as torment, at the same time he *also* regards its ills as natural consequences, and of God's punishment of the damned as *abandoning them to themselves*. For an insightful analysis and a contrasting view, see John Perry, "Putting Hell First: Cruelty, Historicism, and the Missing Moral Theory of Damnation," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 69, no. 1 (2016): 1-19.

troversial, I offer it as a plausible, but undefended, assumption. On the assumption that at least some dispositions to sin have evolutionary origins, it is impossible, I contend, to secure the justice of damnation for the relevant acts. All candidate solutions to this dilemma are, I argue, either insufficient, or inadmissible *ex hypothesi*. I conclude that Christian theologians must *either* commit themselves to the position that there are not, and could not be, in principle, any evolved dispositions to sin, *or* they must reject the possibility of damnation in all the relevant cases.

I make this argument in three main parts. In the first part, I explain what I mean by an evolved disposition to sin, how such dispositions relate to particular voluntary acts—in this case, particular *sins*—and give some reasons we might have for thinking that at least some clear cases of sinful acts have evolutionary origins.

In the second part, I look at the two main problems this assumption introduces for the justice of damnation: *first*, securing the blameworthiness of the human agents in question, and, *second*, guarding God against the same blame in return. Any resolution of the dilemma must address *both* of these distinct criteria simultaneously in order to secure the justice of damnation, or else deny damnation in all the relevant cases.

Last, in part three I look at the most promising accounts of human agency that might be proposed to surmount this dilemma: incompatibilist libertarian and compatibilist accounts of moral responsibility. I argue that all are insufficient to secure the justice of damnation on the assumption of evolved dispositions to sin, though each for different reasons.

I conclude that it is not possible to give a satisfactory account of the justice of damnation for those sins which follow from an evolved disposition. Since the sins in question *might well* justly deserve damnation, this is a problem. Something must give. *Either* theologians must reject evolutionary explanations for sins that they deem damnation-worthy *or* they must maintain the hypothesis but deny that damnation in such cases is just (and therefore conclude that it would be morally impossible for God to damn). The question of *whether* there are, in fact, evolved dispositions to sin is therefore a serious and specific matter deserving the care and attention of theologians which cannot be resolved with mere method-dealing and cannot be relegated to theology-and-science specialists.

## II Evolved Dispositions to Sin

The idea of an evolved disposition to sin might be unclear. In this section I explain what I mean by the phrase, explain how evolved dispositions connect to specific sinful acts (i.e. *sins*), and give reasons for thinking some human behaviors are naturally evolved, which is to say, as having arisen *prior to* the appearance of proper human agency. It should be emphasized at the outset, however, that my argument depends neither on *all* acts being explained by evolved dispositions *nor* on any evolved disposition being a sufficient explanation of *any* particular act.<sup>2</sup>

To illustrate my meaning of the terms that follow, I use a case study from one of the most well-known (and controversial) examples in the scientific literature today: that of chimpanzee violence and its connection to human violence. This case study not only

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<sup>2</sup> For the classic manifesto outlining the more ambitious claim, see Edward O. Wilson, *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980).

provides an example of a possible evolved disposition to act in ways that are incontestably reckoned sins, but it also amounts to evidence for the idea that there *might be*, in fact, such dispositions, that the assumption upon which this argument rests is at least *plausible*.

### 2.1. Dispositions to Act

The idea that agents are disposed to act in certain sorts of ways is an ancient one.<sup>3</sup> And because habit is a species of disposition, the wide range of theologians who appeal to that ancient notion of habit already make use of dispositions to explain acts.<sup>4</sup>

Dispositions explain why things *tend* to happen.<sup>5</sup> For present purposes, “tendencies” or “inclinations” could be substituted as synonyms. Crucially, tendency need not equate to necessity or reduce to bare possibility. Nor do dispositions imply either the denial or affirmation of agency. For instance, if a pot of liquid tends to boil over when heated in a certain way, we can say it is disposed to boil over when so heated. If a given species of porpoise tends to eat squid instead of fish, we can say it is disposed to eat squid. Likewise, if a person tends to act justly, we can say they are disposed to just action.<sup>6</sup>

Dispositions are a tendency to act explained by something *on the part of things*, and this order of explanation and explanatory grounding is important because it distinguishes causation from mere correlation. It is something about *the porpoise* which makes it prefer squid, and something on the part of *the just person* which disposes them to act justly. It is the observation that things appear to act in patterned ways that leads one to propose some cause or causes to explain this pattern. And it is a disposition, the grounding of a tendency *in some thing*, which, in turn, is a cause which explains why things tend to do what they do. This guarantees that *if* a disposition has *any* role in explaining action, it is a necessary condition of that action.

Dispositions play an important (if underappreciated) role in evolutionary theory. Many animal behaviors are explained as following from evolved dispositions. However, there is a spectrum of how determinate and how constant certain tendencies are. For instance, spiders of certain species all build webs of the same design and none of these spiders are taught to do so.<sup>7</sup> That behavior appears strictly instinctual—a strong sort of disposition. But there are weaker examples too. For instance, bowerbirds build nests and then decorate these nests with various objects they hope will appeal to mates.<sup>8</sup> The architecture of these nests is regular among species, but the selection of decorative objects is much more varied. Different individual bowerbirds select and arrange particular objects for decoration differently—though bowerbirds share a taste for bright objects,

<sup>3</sup> See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* II, 4, 8.

<sup>4</sup> See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, Q49, a1.

<sup>5</sup> Dispositional analysis extends far beyond habit and action. For an overview see Sungho Choi and Michael Fara, “Dispositions,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2018), ed. Edward N. Zalta. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/dispositions/>.

<sup>6</sup> In addition, dispositions as a metaphysical category have also recently received new interest beyond ethics as a modal category situated between possibility and necessity. See Rani Lill Anjum and Stephen Mumford, *What Tends to Be: The Philosophy of Dispositional Modality* (London: Routledge, 2018).

<sup>7</sup> For a description that makes explicit appeal to habit, see B. J. Kaston, “The Evolution of Spider Webs,” *American Zoologist* 4, no. 2 (1964): 191-207. For the most up to date work see William Eberhard, *Spider Webs: Behavior, Function, and Evolution* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2020).

<sup>8</sup> For an authoritative work on bowerbirds, see Clifford B. Frith and Dawn W. Frith, *The Bowerbirds* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

objects with rich colors, or the like.<sup>9</sup> Dispositions cover both the strong instincts by which these birds build their bowers *and* the weaker ways in which bowerbirds tend to select certain sorts of objects and not others. Because the explanatory role of dispositions is compatible with a wide spectrum of determinacy, affirming evolved dispositions need not imply genetic determinism or the like.

One of the most important features of Darwin's account of *human* evolution is his claim that at least some properly human acts are likewise explained in part by evolved dispositions, on the same spectrum from strong instincts to more general *sorts* of acts like singing, or practices of body decoration.<sup>10</sup> In fact, evolved dispositions are, according to Darwin, like habits, only different in their origins.<sup>11</sup> That is, Darwin thinks that at least some human acts can be explained by evolved dispositions in much the same way that some human acts can be explained by habitual dispositions: in both cases by something on the part of human being which inclines humans to particular acts under certain circumstances, something that (at least partly) explains *why* they so act when they do, and why they *tend* to do so.<sup>12</sup>

## 2.2. Dispositions to Sin

Sometimes the acts to which we are disposed are instances of what the Christian tradition would regard as *sins*, acts such as murder or adultery. Here the theological use of dispositions semantically overlaps with biology. One of the oldest applications of the notion of dispositions is the application of dispositions as the ground of bad actions: it is the vice of an agent which explains why they *tend* to act viciously.<sup>13</sup>

On many theological accounts, humans are *disposed* to *sins* by virtue of heritable sin.<sup>14</sup> While this disposition as inherited state of sin is a condition such as alienation or estrangement from God, disordered loves, or a bad will,<sup>15</sup> sinful acts, by contrast, are particular deeds, again, like murder or adultery. The evolved tendency to commit *sins* is explained by a *disposition to sin* in much the same way that original sin is supposed to

<sup>9</sup> Some selections are less obviously bright, etc., but perhaps interesting and eye-catching in some other ways, such as the use of intricate lichens. See L. Tibell and C. J. Gibson, "Bower Decoration with *Usnea* Species in the Golden Bower Bird," *Lichenologist* 18, no. 1 (1986): 95-96.

<sup>10</sup> See Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (London: Wordsworth, [1871] 2013), 587-602.

<sup>11</sup> The difference as Darwin sees it is that, although instinct functions in virtually identical ways to habit, habit is acquired and instinct inherited. Both, however, dispose animals to act. Hence, both are species of disposition. Of course, Darwin refuses to speculate about the *way* evolution, especially instinct, inclines us to act. Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species* (London: Macmillan, [1859] 2017), chap. 7, "Instinct," esp. 230-31.

<sup>12</sup> And indeed, Darwin is happy to concede that habits can sometimes themselves *become* heritable instincts. This demonstrates that evolved dispositions as such are not at stake in the nature-culture debates in evolutionary biology since the distant origins of instincts might well be the habits of their remote ancestors. See Darwin, *Origin of Species*, 231.

<sup>13</sup> More technically, in some cases vices are said to explain why agents are disposed *not* to act *virtuously*. See Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, Q71, a1. For present purposes these are equivalent since the lack of this necessary condition is a sufficient condition of a lack.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Augustine, *City of God*, XIII, 3, 14; Ulrich Zwingli, "On Original Sin" in *On Providence and Other Essays*, ed. William John Hinke (Durham, NC: The Labyrinth Press, [1922] 1983), 9.

<sup>15</sup> For a representative selection, see, for example, Augustine, *City of God*, XII.8 and XIV.7; Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety: A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation of the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin*, ed. and trans. Reidar Thomte and Albert B. Anderson (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980); Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation*, vol. 1, *Human Nature* (London: Nisbet, 1941); Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994); Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, *Existence and the Christ* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1957).

dispose us to sins *and* the way an evolved disposition to prefer squid disposes particular species of porpoises to eat squid rather than fish. In all cases, this disposition is something on the part of a thing which inclines it to act in a particular way. Under ripe circumstances, it will tend to so act, and when a thing so acts, the disposition in question is a necessary condition of the relevant act. Yet other causes also inform and circumstances vary. And so, a disposition to sin, like a disposition to eat squid, will not manifest itself in every single action even if the underlying disposition remains. Dispositions alone are very often insufficient to determine acts but are nevertheless necessary to explain acts which follow from them.

This doctrine is modified in an important way when it is supposed that such dispositions have naturally evolved. On traditional theological accounts, the origins of the disposition to sin are rooted in the corruption of human nature in Adam's fall.<sup>16</sup> Crucially, however, this disposition to sin had its origin in a *voluntary*, non-natural act of the first human beings. Although particular sins are explicable by innate dispositions to sin, this disposition itself is supposed to be *in no respect naturally explicable*. Indeed, there is supposed to be nothing less natural than the sin by which humans fell.<sup>17</sup> Accounts of *evolved* dispositions to sin contrast with this account by attributing the origins of such dispositions to natural, pre-voluntary (because pre-human) causes. In the following section I give an example of one such theory both as an illustration of the point, but also as an account which lends some credence to the hypothesis that generates the dilemma at hand: that at least some dispositions to sin have evolutionary origins.

### 2.3. Case Study: Chimpanzee and Human Group Killing

In what follows I present one well-known, but controversial, explanation of some sinful human acts. I intend this to illustrate, in part, what I mean by an evolved disposition as well as to give an example of one plausible theory. The particular theory I present has been heavily criticized and remains in dispute in its own field.<sup>18</sup> But despite the criticism which it has endured, and indeed because it has withstood so much criticism so well, it remains *plausible*—which is all my present case requires.

One possible example of an evolved disposition to sinful acts is evinced in chimpanzee “group killing” and analogue human practices. Humans have widely engaged in group killing across both time and culture (i.e., gang violence, warfare, etc.) and often with an aim to domination, or even extermination. Further, this fighting is often accompanied by sexual domination and exploitation. And I take it that both war for the sake of domination (or worse) and sexual exploitation are clear and undisputed cases of

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<sup>16</sup> This notion is by no means limited to Augustine but is a broadly shared assumption in this general form. See, for instance, Athanasius, *On the Incarnation of the Word*, IV; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, IV, 41.

<sup>17</sup> See Augustine, *City of God*, XII, 3.

<sup>18</sup> For a selection of positions on this topic see Nam C. Kim and Marc Kissel, *Emergent Warfare in Our Evolutionary Past* (London: Routledge, 2018); Martin N. Muller, Sonya M. Kahlenberg, and Richard W. Wrangham, “Male Aggression and Sexual Coercion of Females in Primates” in *Sexual Coercion in Primates and Humans*, eds. Martin N. Muller and Richard W. Wrangham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 3-22; Craig Stanford, *The New Chimpanzee: A Twenty-first Century Portrait of Our Closest Cousin* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018); Robert Sussman and Joshua Marshack, “Are Humans Inherently Killers?,” *Global Nonkilling Working Papers* 1 (2010).

sinful acts (because acts which are evil *in se*<sup>19</sup>), even acts which are possibly worthy of damnation.

Chimpanzees, too, have been known to kill one another, sometimes brutally. And they seem to do so in groups and with an aim to sexual exploitation. An evolved disposition, according to some theorists, *explains* why chimpanzees engage in such widespread acts. Because humans behave in analogous ways, and because we share a relatively recent common ancestor with chimpanzees, if an evolved disposition explains chimpanzee behavior, it also plausibly explains similar behavior in humans.

The persuasiveness of the theory lies in its explanation of *some* human behaviors—group killing ordered to domination and exploitation in particular—as an evolutionarily advantageous sexual selection strategy. Humans and chimpanzees behave in much the same way in this case because they derive much the same benefit: greater proportionate reproductive success.<sup>20</sup> If true, humans' disposition to so behave is an evolutionary inheritance. This account implies that the disposition to act in this way *necessarily* preceded *all voluntary human acts*, for it would have been a disposition inherited prior to the existence of all human beings from our common ancestors with chimpanzees.<sup>21</sup> The closer the parallels in behavior, the more plausible a common inheritance explanation becomes. And our close phylogenetic relation to chimpanzees makes a convergent evolutionary explanation much less plausible.<sup>22</sup> This is how group killing could have evolved into a heritable disposition.

If true, this is a very dark picture and its parallels with human society and history are deeply disturbing. The horror of this account might be reason in itself to doubt it. Could it not be that humans came to behave like this for reasons other than evolutionary reasons? And is it not, therefore, likely that the observations are false, or tainted, or one-sided? Unfortunately, although it continues to be hotly debated and passionately rejected by many,<sup>23</sup> the theory has survived enough criticism to remain live. And suspicions about whether chimpanzee violence is really so common, or whether it is not better explained by things like human pressures, have been at least partly addressed.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, human group killing and related sexual violence remain plausibly explained by heritable dispositions.

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<sup>19</sup> That is to say, acts which are evil regardless of circumstance. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* II.6; Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, Q18, a8; Q73, a7.

<sup>20</sup> Importantly, however, this is not the *only* operative sexual selection strategy among either chimpanzees or humans. For a valuable corrective to overly male-centered approaches to sexual selection, see Sarah Blaffer Hrdy, *Mother Nature: Natural Selection and the Female of the Species* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1999). Importantly, however, even Hrdy argues for evolutionary explanations of behaviors similar to those described by Wrangham. See Sarah Blaffer Hrdy, *The Langurs of Abu: Female and Male Strategies of Reproduction* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, [1977] 1980).

<sup>21</sup> While the dates are frequently revised, even the most conservative estimates show anything like recognizably modern humans separated from our last common ancestor with chimpanzees separated by several million years. This is sufficiently long to guarantee that any common dispositions *must* have evolved pre-*homo sapiens*.

<sup>22</sup> For examples of plausible convergent evolutionary explanations, and more on convergent evolutionary explanations in general, see Simon Conway Morris, *Life's Solution: Inevitable Humans in a Lonely Universe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>23</sup> Of course, primatologists, anthropologists, and others continue to dispute this account. For two different highly critical reactions see Phyllis Dolhinow, "Review of *Demonic Males* by Wrangham and Peterson," *American Anthropologist* 101, no. 2 (June 1999): 445-46; and Jonathan Marks, "Review of *Demonic Males* by Wrangham and Peterson," *Human Biology* 71, no. 1 (February 1999): 143-46.

<sup>24</sup> See Michael L. Wilson, et. al. "Lethal Aggression in *Pan* is Better Explained by Adaptive Strategies than Human Impacts," *Nature* 513 (2014): 414-17.

### III Blame and the Justice of Punishment

The idea that some dispositions naturally evolved raises many grave questions. I will focus on one: the justice of damnation for sins which follow from such dispositions. Since at least some severe human sins are susceptible to evolutionary explanation (such as the sample explanation of the disposition to genocidal killing and sexual domination above), it seems that at least some of the *best* candidates for sins worthy of damnation are incompatible with damnation in principle.

The solution to this problem might seem obvious, namely, that we ought to give an account of blameworthy human action which is compatible with natural dispositions. This alternative will be considered in detail below. But securing the blameworthiness of human action is insufficient. In addition, an equally serious problem remains: not only how to secure human blame, but how to guard God against the same blame in return. If God cannot *also* be insulated from the same blame, securing the blameworthiness of human agents is insufficient to render God's damnation of them just. Insulating God from blame for creaturely sins requires *asymmetrical fault*—that we are blameworthy, but God is not. And it is asymmetrical fault, I will argue, that evolved dispositions most call into question. Before considering the matter of asymmetrical fault, however, I turn to blameworthy action. For both are necessary conditions of just, damnation-worthy blame.

#### 3.1. Criterion One: Voluntary Action

Human practices, including practices of speech, imply important distinctions in act attribution and culpability.<sup>25</sup> It is normally considered unjust to hold people blameworthy for things *they* did not do.<sup>26</sup> When a woman robs a bank, it is not normal to blame the bank's patrons. Alternatively, when a woman arranges to have her friend murdered, she *and* the hitman are liable to blame because the act of murder was, in an important sense, hers as well as the hitman's.

On the other hand, some acts are clearly attributable, but less clearly blameworthy.<sup>27</sup> For instance, a man is driving his car at night. Despite having taken appropriate precautions, he becomes disoriented and drives his car into oncoming traffic, resulting in death or injury to others. No one disputes what occurred, that it was *his* hand that turned the steering wheel which turned *his* car—the car that was the undisputed proximate cause of injury or death. Despite the clarity of events—the fact that he was the sole agent, the severity of harms, and more—such a person might not necessarily be blameworthy for the death or injury he caused.<sup>28</sup>

The reason for this is, of course, that this driver's act was not *voluntary*. It was not something he wanted, explicitly or implicitly. It was not something he could, even in principle, give an answer to if asked, "Why did you do that?"<sup>29</sup> Because it was not a

<sup>25</sup> For the modern classic of action theory in this tradition, see Elizabeth Anscombe, *Intention* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958).

<sup>26</sup> See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, III.1.

<sup>27</sup> This is an example of that whole class of actions which Aristotle calls *non-voluntary* (as distinct from *involuntary*) actions. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, III.1.

<sup>28</sup> For a defense of the "Aristotelean conditions" of blame, see John Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza, S.J., *Responsibility and Control: A Theory of Moral Responsibility* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 12–14.

<sup>29</sup> See Anscombe, *Intention*, 9–13.

voluntary act, although the effect can be attributed to the man as cause, the *act of murder* cannot be.<sup>30</sup>

These are relatively clear cases. Many more are less so. All require complete descriptions of agents and their circumstances to determine praise and blame.<sup>31</sup> Yet within this complexity a principle holds that makes the difference between the blameworthiness of the murderer and the non-blameworthiness of the driver. That principle is that blameworthiness requires *attributability*, and attribution of a particular act requires *voluntariness*.

On the influential account given by Augustine of Hippo, the requirement of voluntariness is supplemented with the claim that any potentially damnation-worthy acts must also be unnatural not only with respect to humans' ends, but also with respect to our origins. "For no one suffers punishment for faults of nature," he claims, "but only for faults of the will."<sup>32</sup> Importantly, this dictum finds its place specifically in Augustine's discussion of the justice of damnation. It is the fault of our voluntary acts, fault which does not originate in creation, which makes us severely blameworthy before God. It is the severity of our acts, their perversity in light of our created ends, which warrants severity of punishment. It is the completeness of both their voluntariness and their perversity which together are supposed to justify God's abandonment of some to everlasting torment.<sup>33</sup> Together they dissolve any responsibility of God for sin, and so for the evil of fault.<sup>34</sup>

Absent the unnaturalness of sin, we can see the dilemma already formed. We are not justly damned for faults of nature, but for vices of the will. But at least some vices of the will are, on the evolutionary account above, faults of nature. Therefore, we are not justly damned for at least those vices of the will which follow from evolved (i.e., natural in origin) dispositions. To resolve the dilemma posed, candidate accounts of damnation-worthy action must secure the asymmetrical, but still attributable, blameworthiness of sinful acts.

### 3.2. Criterion Two: Asymmetrical Fault

Securing the blameworthiness of an act is a necessary condition for damnation to be just. Otherwise the damned would suffer for things which *they* did not do. Yet it is not a sufficient condition. Here I consider an additional requisite, *asymmetrical fault*, in more detail and argue why an account of asymmetrical fault is necessary to secure the justice of damnation.

Asymmetrical fault is, most basically, the notion that God and sinners do not share the same blame for sins. Asymmetrical fault is necessary to secure the justice of damnation because it guards God against loss of moral standing to blame.<sup>35</sup> Absent asymmetrical fault, God's condemnation is not only unjust but, in addition, it is also arguably metaphysically incoherent as God condemns a good thing (God's own act) as bad.

<sup>30</sup> See Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, Q6, a1.

<sup>31</sup> See Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, Q7, a2.

<sup>32</sup> "Non enim quisquam de uitiiis naturalibus, sed de uoluntariis poenas luit." Augustine, *City of God*, XII.3 trans. William Babcock, *The Works of Saint Augustine*, part 1, vol. 7, 40.

<sup>33</sup> For the best explanation of Augustine's logic of damnation and its intrinsic strengths and burdens, see John Bowlin, "Hell and the Dilemmas of Intractable Alienation" in *Augustine's City of God: A Critical Guide*, ed. James Wetzel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 186-204.

<sup>34</sup> See Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, Q49, a1-2.

<sup>35</sup> For more on divine moral standing, see Patrick Todd, "Does God Have Moral Standing to Blame?," *Faith and Philosophy* 35, no. 1 (2018): 33-55.

The recognition of the need for asymmetrical fault is not new. In *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, after granting that God is in some sense causally involved in sin and evil, John Calvin asks, “How then is God to be exempted from the blame to which Satan and his instruments is liable?”<sup>36</sup> If unaddressed, God’s shared blameworthiness would be grounds for doubting the justice of God’s condemnation. It is instructive that Calvin recognizes a potential problem here. And it is equally instructive to note his solution, which differs from Augustine’s above in that it does not depend on a causal break between God and sins.

For his part, Calvin thinks he can secure asymmetrical fault without (necessarily) making appeal to a deficient cause of the origin of sin by appealing instead to distinctions in the intent of God causing sinners to sin, and the intent of sinners sinning.<sup>37</sup> That is, Calvin’s is a strategy for securing God’s asymmetrical fault which depends on appeal to the principle of double effect. God intended  $x$ , while God foresaw and caused  $y$ , but did not properly intend  $y$ . Therefore, God cannot be blamed for  $y$ —and might even be praised for act  $x$ , despite  $x$  entailing  $y$ .<sup>38</sup> If we can distinguish God’s intent from sinners’ intent, Calvin thinks, we have good reason not to ascribe the act of *sinning* to God, only to the sinner. If we admit the principle of double effect in general, and if we think God’s action meets double effect criteria, Calvin’s account seems to provide a way of explaining why sinners are to blame but God is not. Because sinners intend sins but God does not intend them, blame for acts of sin accrues only to sinners. If true, asymmetrical fault is maintained and there is no *prima facie* self-contradiction in God blaming, and therefore damning, for such sins.

Now, some might be suspicious of admitting that strategies like this can ever succeed. If so, the case I have made is strengthened and the dilemma is plain, for then, if God is causally linked to sins, asymmetrical fault cannot be maintained and damnation in such cases cannot be just. But suppose, once again for the sake of argument, that strategies like this can generally succeed in securing asymmetrical fault in appropriate cases. Even if they can, they face additional pressure from sins which follow from evolved dispositions.

To see why, let us examine how double effect accounts of divine action work in more detail. To use a popular example, say Smith murders Jones.<sup>39</sup> Smith’s act is clearly blameworthy. Say also that God both foresees and causes Smith’s murder of Jones. Critics of God’s moral standing to blame Smith for killing Jones hope to show that there is something unjust about God blaming Smith for killing Jones because God also does something blameworthy if God kills Jones through Smith. Blaming someone for the very same act one commits is unjust. Punishing someone for the very same act one commits is perverse. Therefore, to maintain God’s moral standing to blame (along with God’s other moral and metaphysical perfections), proponents of this kind of theological story will claim the following: God did not actually kill Jones by foreseeing and causing

<sup>36</sup> “*Quomodo nuca a culpa eximetur Deus, cuius Sata cum suis organis reus erit?*” Jean Calvin, *De aeterna Dei praedestinatione* (Geneva: Jean Crispin, 1552), 192-93; ET: *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, trans. J. K. S. Reid (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, [1961] 1997), 180.

<sup>37</sup> Calvin, *Concerning Predestination*, 169, 179.

<sup>38</sup> See G. E. M. Anscombe, “Modern Moral Philosophy,” *The Journal of the Royal Institute of Philosophy* 33, no. 124 (1958): 11-12.

<sup>39</sup> See “God wills that Smith decides to murder Jones” in the discussion of sin in Hugh McCann, *Creation and the Sovereignty of God* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2012), 113-32. For an early version of the case, see also James F. Ross, *Philosophical Theology* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969), 263.

Smith to kill Jones. What God did was, rather, to make Smith (who kills Jones) and that is, it is claimed, a *different act* than for God to kill Jones.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, it might even be praiseworthy for God to make Smith (who kills Jones), provided God did so as an unintended entailment of a different worthy end.<sup>41</sup>

In order for this strategy to work, however, the intent of the two acts must truly be different. Making this distinction can be infamously difficult, and appeal to the principle of double effect is notoriously open to abuse.<sup>42</sup> One key test, therefore, of the genuineness of ostensibly different intentions is the means test. This test requires one to give a complete account of the whole of an action from beginning to term (i.e. the end for the sake of which the act is ordered) with an eye to the practical reasoning evinced. For our purposes, the less the sin of the sinner looks like it was ordered to contribute to bringing about the divine ends, the less said sin looks like it is intended by God.<sup>43</sup> The means test can also be negatively stated: if an agent's supposedly unintended double effect turns out to be a means to their intended end, then that effect is not truly unintended. This is because intentions are inclusive of the means. When I intend something, included *in* my intention are all its requisites, everything needed to bring about my intended end. The fit between effects and ends thus provides a crucial clue to whether an effect is intended or unintended. In order to secure an effect as unintended, a minimum threshold criterion for all appeals to the principle of double effect is therefore the *ill fit* between means and ends. That is, appeal to double effect can be made if and only if the double effect in question is not a means to the intended end.

On traditional accounts of the origin of sin, it is possible to defend double effect distinctions between God's intent in making Smith (who kills Jones) and God's intent to kill Jones. It is possible because of the ill fit between humans as God made them and the sin which follows the corruption of created human nature. Humans were made good. Human being, as created, was not at all plausibly ordered to the end of sin. Because it does not look like God ordered human nature as means to sins as end, it is plausible to claim that there is an ill fit between how humans were made and the sins they subsequently commit. And because there is an ill fit between human nature and human sins, it is at least plausible to argue that God does not intend sins. If true, only the act of making Smith (which entails killing Jones), and not the act of killing Jones itself, is ascribable to God. Importantly, like all genuine cases of double effect, this holds even if God not only foresees sin, but causes sin, provided that the ill fit between means and ends is maintained.

On the other hand, if a wrongdoer and their acts are *included in* an intentional action as means to end or part to whole, then appeal to double effect cannot be made.<sup>44</sup> As with the woman who hired a hitman to kill her friend, the act of the woman is only incompletely and improperly described as "*merely* hiring the hitman (who just happens to murder her friend)" because the hiring of the hitman is not the term (i.e. end) of the woman's act. She hired the hitman *in order to* kill her friend. Though the woman did not

<sup>40</sup> See McCann, *Creation and the Sovereignty of God*, 113-32.

<sup>41</sup> See Todd, "Does God Have Moral Standing to Blame?," 48-49.

<sup>42</sup> See G. E. M. Anscombe, "War and Murder," in *Nuclear Weapons: A Catholic Response*, ed. Walter Stein (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1961), 51.

<sup>43</sup> See Candace Vogler, *Reasonably Vicious* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 220-21.

<sup>44</sup> See Anscombe, "War and Murder," 51.

pull the trigger herself, the hitman pulling the trigger nevertheless forms *part of* the woman's intentional action to have her friend killed. And the inclusion of the hitman's killing *in* the woman's own act not only suffices to render the woman herself a criminal, it also suffices to render any blame the woman might cast on the hitman for his killing obscene as she condemns what is in fact *her very own doing*.<sup>45</sup> Likewise, if Smith's act of killing Jones is properly described as a means to some divine end—that is, if it fails the ill fit means test—then *God's* intentional action *includes* Smith's act of killing Jones. Because intentions are inclusive of the means, under that description God does indeed kill Jones.<sup>46</sup> And therefore, in cases where sin, like the hitman's killing, is included *in God's act*, God loses moral standing to blame.

Here evolved dispositions put special pressure on distinctions of intent because the fit between created dispositions to sin and the resultant sins no longer looks ill. Instead, the fitness of evolved dispositions to produce sins looks much more like a means to an end. And that would suggest that God does indeed *intend* the sinner to sin since, as means, God's action in this case (of creating humans naturally disposed to sin) exhibits the same practical reasoning structure of any intentional action.<sup>47</sup> Without ill fit between means and end, one cannot appeal to Calvin-style double effect defenses of divine standing to blame. Instead, one must either give a different account of the divine ends in question, or one must give a different account of the origin of the inclination to sin. But, if true, the hypothesis of evolved dispositions to sin limits the latter strategy. And that is what completes the dilemma.

Is this a problem for all accounts in which God causes sin, even those which omit damnation? Not necessarily. Again, the problem arises as it does from the close fit between (apparent) means and ends. Supposing different ends—for instance, that the divine ends do not include the manifestation of God's justice in punishment—natural dispositions to sin look a lot less like *means to* those ends. And that makes it more plausible to disentangle such natural dispositions from God's purposes, to secure the ill fit between (apparent) means and ends. Likewise, if humans were not made disposed to sin, it would not look like humans were formed in any way *in order to* sin, even if the display of justice in punishment for sin was among God's ultimate ends. Thus it is not necessarily a universal failure of double effect strategies like Calvin's to insulate God from blame, but a specific problem supposing *both* 1) some dispositions to sin have evolved; *and* 2) God not only blames but damns for at least some of the sins which follow from evolved dispositions.

Candidate solutions to this dilemma must not only secure blame, but also secure God's asymmetrical fault. And asymmetrical fault is especially difficult to maintain if dispositions to sin have evolved. If sins are causally connected to God through evolution, Calvin-style double effect defenses of divine standing to blame are rendered implausible by the close fit between sinners created disposed to sin and their resultant acts. Without a credible distinction between God's acts and sinners' acts, damnation for

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<sup>45</sup> Many arguments against God's responsibility for sin miss the mark on this point. It is not necessary to give an account of how a creature's sinful acts indirectly redound to God if the best description of God's act *includes* sinning—which is what sin as means in an intentional act implies. For a recent defense against sin redounding to God on other grounds, see Guillaume Bignon, *Excusing Sinners and Blaming God: A Calvinist Assessment of Determinism, Moral Responsibility, and Divine Involvement in Evil* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2018), 194–210.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. McCann, *Creation*, 116; Todd, "Does God Have Moral Standing to Blame?," 48.

<sup>47</sup> See Vogler, *Reasonably Vicious*, 27.

sins which follow from evolved dispositions is unjust because God condemns God's very own deeds.

#### *IV Human Agency-Based Solutions*

Calvin-style strategies for securing asymmetrical fault are one option found in the history of doctrine. More common, though, is the attempt to secure asymmetrical fault with a causal break between God and sin through an account of human agency. Augustine's account, referred to above, is paradigmatic of this strategy—though it is far from the only example. Human agency-based strategies like his, however, face a double obstacle: securing God against blame while securing the voluntary act of the sinner at the same time. In order to succeed, attempts to avoid the dilemma of evolved dispositions by appeal to accounts of human agency must secure both criteria discussed in the previous section: 1) voluntariness, and 2) asymmetrical fault, simultaneously.

In what follows I entertain potential solutions to the problem posed to the justice of damnation-worthy blame by evolved dispositions to sin along these lines. I argue that none of the candidate solutions can simultaneously sustain both 1) and 2). This creates the dilemma: if none of the best positions can (apparently) sustain the justice of damnation and evolved dispositions to sin, we are forced to choose which of the two—damnation or evolved dispositions—to sustain.

In this section I look closely at three candidate solutions for securing damnation-worthy blame: a libertarian account of moral responsibility, and two kinds of compatibilist accounts: what I call a "standard" compatibilist account, and an "Augustinian" compatibilist account of moral responsibility. I argue that none finally succeed in dissolving the dilemma—though each for different reasons.

#### **4.1. An (Incompatibilist) Libertarian Account**

The first possible solution is an incompatibilist libertarian account of moral responsibility.<sup>48</sup> Such accounts characteristically hold that an agent's blameworthiness requires a kind of freedom which is (minimally) incompatible with certain sorts of determination. This is particularly true if the act in question has determining causes antecedent to the agent's own activity (in the relevant ways).

Consequently, libertarian accounts of freedom are incompatible with the notion of acts which are caused by evolved dispositions to sin. This should not come as a surprise and libertarians would likely be the first to say so. The dilemma on this point is straightforward: the notion of evolved dispositions to damnation-worthy sins is incompatible with moral responsibility for those same acts conceived in libertarian terms. One solution might, of course, be to abandon incompatibilist accounts of freedom. But another solution might be to abandon the notion of evolved dispositions to sin, and this difficult choice is exactly the dilemma I aim to make clear.

Why are even modest libertarian accounts of freedom incompatible with evolved dispositions to sin? To answer this question, we will revisit some important points made above about dispositions to act and compare these with the modest version of libertarianism developed by Robert Kane. No doubt, other accounts have more to add, but Kane's is particularly apt since he advertises his account for, among other reasons, its

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<sup>48</sup> To avoid repetition, I will simply call incompatibilist libertarian accounts "libertarian" and include compatibilist libertarian accounts under "standard" compatibilist accounts.

ability to sustain accounts of free action determined by prior character-forming actions (what Kane calls “self-forming actions”) *together with* other external and natural determinations, like evolutionary ones.<sup>49</sup> Since evolved dispositions are, as Darwin claimed, analogous to habits, the theme of acting from one’s own character makes Kane’s account especially apropos.

Let us revisit the notion of evolved dispositions in question. Such dispositions are proposed to explain specific, widespread, acts. It is because animals *tend* to act in specific ways that dispositions are proposed to explain those acts and their regularity. As explanations, dispositions are sufficient, together with the rest of their determining causes (like other judgments, circumstances, etc.), to account for *why* an animal acts *when they so act*. Importantly, humans sometimes sin in ways that are not explicable in terms of evolved dispositions. The kinds of cases where evolved dispositions might be a determining cause are therefore limited and specific. And cases of evolved dispositions to *sin* are equally so: in case a person sins (i.e., acts in a determinate way), and if there is reason to believe that they so acted because of an evolved disposition, the disposition in question (together with the agent’s circumstances, etc.) constitutes part of the *explanation* for acting in the particular way they did by informing the act (i.e. by causing it, motivating it, etc.).

This characterization of evolved dispositions makes clear that such dispositions are not *globally* incompatible with modest libertarian accounts like Kane’s. Many acts are not necessarily evolutionarily informed. Therefore, it is possible to have some, even many, free acts (in this sense) and subscribe to a modest libertarianism together with evolved dispositions. However, not all *particular* acts are compatible, namely those acts which are explained by evolved dispositions. To see this, however, we need to know more about the variety of libertarianism that Kane has in mind.

Key to Kane’s account in particular, and libertarian accounts more broadly, is the condition that in order to secure moral responsibility, agents must be *ultimately responsible*.<sup>50</sup> That means that agents must be the explanatory terminus of their acts in the relevant sense or senses, not that they must be ultimately responsible for *everything* about their character or actions. Nevertheless, according to Kane, without *ultimate* responsibility we cannot be morally responsible. And without moral responsibility, our acts cannot be blameworthy and therefore (presumably) are not worthy of damnation.

For his part, Kane does not think ultimate responsibility is principally found in an indeterminate moment just prior to the act in question, but often through distantly prior undetermined *self-forming actions* in which a person acquires the character that later disposes them to particular acts. In this way, agents are ultimately responsible even for subsequent acts *determined* by the agent’s character (under particular circumstances) because the agent was ultimately responsible for the formation of their own character (in the relevant sense or senses) in the first place. And this, Kane thinks, is necessary to secure moral responsibility. Crucially, however, while self-forming actions can be distantly prior to the act in question, they cannot be prior to the *agent* whose act it is because one of the principal roles of self-forming actions is to be “regress stopping.”

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<sup>49</sup> See Robert Kane, *The Significance of Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1996] 1998). For an updated an accessible account of the same, see Robert Kane, “Libertarianism” in *Four Views on Free Will* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 5–43.

<sup>50</sup> See Kane, *Significance*, 60–78.

Which is to say, self-forming actions are meant to stop the causal story in such a way that responsibility for subsequent acts lands *solely with the self-forming agent*.<sup>51</sup>

This is the point at which evolved dispositions conflict with even modest libertarian accounts. For, in case an act is, even in part, explained by an evolved disposition, the self-formation of the agent is not sufficient to explain the act in question. Instead, at least one cause of the act in question is prior to *all* voluntary human action—even prior to *homo sapiens*—and thus prior to all self-forming actions of the agent *in principle*. Acts which follow from evolved dispositions cannot be *completely* grounded in the self-forming actions of the agent in question. If so, the ultimate responsibility criterion goes unsatisfied.<sup>52</sup> And since the cause of the act is prior to *any* self-forming actions, evolved dispositions look non- or in-voluntary, thus jeopardizing even basic attributability. Because ultimate responsibility and attributability are necessary conditions of moral responsibility, and moral responsibility is necessary for damnation-worthy blame, even a modest libertarian account of freedom and responsibility is incompatible with the damnation of sinners for acts explained by evolved dispositions.

Few libertarians would be surprised by this conclusion. In fact, most would probably reckon it to be obvious. But my aims here are to show that the dilemma at hand is genuine, that the hypothesis of evolved dispositions to sin is *in fact* incompatible with damnation on libertarian accounts of moral responsibility, including those like Kane's that make relatively modest demands in terms of ultimate responsibility. Libertarians would, in short, be right to recognize a dilemma on their stated grounds.

#### 4.2. Standard and Augustinian Compatibilist Accounts

It is at this point that others might offer the therapy of a compatibilist account to assuage libertarian anxieties. Because I will be entertaining an "Augustinian" compatibilist account as well, I call the first sort of compatibilist account I examine a "standard" compatibilist account to distinguish between the two.

By a standard compatibilist account of morally responsible action I mean an account where our determination to particular acts is compatible with the voluntariness of those acts, and therefore an account in which any evolved disposition to sin is potentially compatible with the blameworthiness of actions caused or motivated by such dispositions. For our present purposes, the exact way this compatibility is spelled out is immaterial. Many accounts would do. But to distinguish standard and Augustinian compatibilist accounts, I will call those compatibilist accounts "standard" which hold that both *ownership* and at least some species of *control* are both necessary conditions of moral responsibility.<sup>53</sup>

Assuming evolved dispositions do in fact explain at least some sins, a standard compatibilist account possesses obvious advantages in securing blame. In the first place, such an account can, if true, hold together the evolutionary origin of an agent's dispositions to sin with attributability and voluntariness. Evolved dispositions might, for instance, incline an agent to certain reasons for acting. Attributability is thus secured without particular issue (assuming we think determinacy and responsibility are compatible more generally) since the disposition in question is *in*, or *belongs to*, the agent.

<sup>51</sup> See Kane, *Significance*, 75.

<sup>52</sup> As Kane explains: "To be ultimately responsible for an action, an agent must be responsible for anything that is a sufficient cause or motive of the action's occurring" (Kane, "Libertarianism," 14).

<sup>53</sup> See, for example, Fischer and Ravizza, *Responsibility*. Importantly, not *all* kinds of control need to be sustained to meet these criteria. *Ibid.*, 28-55.

Moreover, it is possible to think about evolved dispositions, like any other disposition, as inclining agents to certain reasons or motives for acting. If so, that inclination is arguably compatible with, say, an agent apprehending the ends for which they act as ends; and once those reasons are *theirs*, so, it might be claimed, is the ensuing act.<sup>54</sup> Thus attributability and voluntariness are securable in at least one way.

However, it might be objected that the (hypothetical) evolutionary origins of the dispositions to sin in question are exactly the sort of in- or non-voluntary informing cause which violates the control criterion. If the control criterion goes unsatisfied, voluntariness, and therefore attributability, is not secured. Do evolved dispositions to sin undermine the justice of damnation in this respect then? They do not necessarily. A number of defences of the compatibility of evolutionary causes and control might be given.

But even if we thought evolved dispositions did undermine control, there is an additional account of moral responsibility to consider, a close cousin to the standard compatibilist position, and one which might seem a natural choice given its namesake: what Jesse Couenhoven has called “Augustinian compatibilism.”<sup>55</sup> On Couenhoven’s reading, Augustine has much more modest requirements for blameworthiness than those I have been assuming thus far. Couenhoven argues that on this view the kind of responsibility which warrants blame is not necessarily connected to freedom at all, rather “the basis of responsibility [is] not control, but ownership.”<sup>56</sup> That is, what matters at bottom in issues of blameworthiness is simply that an agent’s basic desire(s), desires that inform action, can be ascribed to *them* as its/their owner.<sup>57</sup> This stands in contrast to the standard compatibilist account above where blameworthiness requires both ownership *and* control, and where voluntariness is a necessary condition of control (and also arguably of ownership).

The unique advantage of Augustinian compatibilism for present purposes is that it gives its subscribers an easy reply to the critic who poses a similar objection as that posed to our standard compatibilist above, namely, how can sinners be justly blamed for that state of inclination to sin into which they were born, and therefore how can they be justly damned for the acts which follow from such a disposition? An Augustinian compatibilist can, without special pleading, simply deny the major premise. We can in fact be so-blamed in the case of sin, one could reply, because we can be so-blamed generally. And the reason we can be *justly* blamed in all such cases is that responsibility only requires ownership. If I am born with a vicious will, I am justly blamed for its use only in case that it is *mine*. Since we all agree that my bad will is mine (however I inherited it), I am justly blamed for any sins which follow from it. Indeed, on an Augustinian compatibilist account, no evolutionary story could ever, in principle, pose a dilemma for ordinary moral responsibility. No matter how we come to viciously will—whether by an evolutionary inheritance or Adam’s fall from paradise—once it is *our* will, we are justly blamed for it.

The reader will notice, however, that both standard and Augustinian compatibilisms, even should we agree upon their success, do nothing to secure asymmetrical fault. This is a criterion compatibilism *by itself* does not satisfy. For while a compatibilist might, in

<sup>54</sup> See Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, Q6, a1.

<sup>55</sup> See Jesse Couenhoven, *Stricken by Sin, Cured by Christ: Agency, Necessity, and Culpability in Augustinian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>56</sup> Couenhoven, *Stricken by Sin*, 12.

<sup>57</sup> For a similar view, see Robert Merrihew Adams, “Involuntary Sins,” *The Philosophical Review* 94, no. 1 (1985): 3-31.

theory, show that *we* are justly blamed for acts which are determined by evolutionarily inherited dispositions, they have not, along the way, insulated God from blame—as a libertarian account does.

Recall that Augustine's rule (above) appears in a context of judgment and damnation as he reflects not only upon the origins of sin in the first humans, but also the effects of that sin in all others. What all this means is that an account of inherited natures disposing us to sinful and voluntary acts is already included in Augustine's account of things. That makes Augustine's account of sin and the compatibilist's account of voluntary action a happy fit—but only post-fall. That is, Augustine can give an account of heritable sin which is compatible with the justice of damnation, but only supposing a *corrupted* human nature. The problem in the case of evolved dispositions is that they are natural (in the sense of being original) rather than due to the fall of Adam.

Instead, what Augustine needs in order to secure the justice of damnation is a break between creation and sin, such that nature as God created it does not in any way explain fallen human nature, but also such that sinful acts remain blameworthy. The compatibilist can help with the second aim—securing blame for acts which follow from heritable dispositions to sin. But the compatibilist cannot help with the first aim—exempting God from involvement in the origins of sin. Indeed, it is to solve this first problem that one might turn to a libertarian account of freedom in which it is theoretically easier to secure a perverse will.<sup>58</sup> A successful strategy needs elements of both accounts, and it is not obvious that both can be had at once.

The basic issue, then, with a standard compatibilist solution to the dilemma is that no matter how much everyday blame we secure for human wrongdoing, and no matter how compatible the heritability of that wrongdoing is with its blameworthiness, the issue of *divine* justice is left unaddressed—on the supposition that dispositions to sin are evolved, not the result of a corruption of human nature. If the natures we inherit were not deformed by an act of the will, whatever disposition to sin we have is ultimately inherited from a nature *as it was created*. In other words, the standard compatibilist is particularly well-equipped to secure the voluntariness and thus attributability of sins but is ill-equipped (in contrast to the libertarian) to secure asymmetrical fault through a causal break.

Therefore, even if the compatibilist argues successfully, as they might, that an act can be *both* a result of natural disposition *and* voluntarily vicious, compatibilism alone fails to insulate God from blame for sin and therefore fails to secure asymmetrical fault, which remains requisite for the justice of damnation. The compatibility of nature and fault which the compatibilist can secure is only half adequate on the assumption of evolved dispositions to sin. And should a compatibilist appeal to a Calvin-style double-effect strategy to extricate themselves from the dilemma, they simply run into the very same problems securing ill fit already outlined above.

Thus, no human agency-based solution—incompatibilist libertarian or any species of compatibilism—suffices to secure both 1) voluntariness and 2) asymmetrical fault simultaneously. And therefore, no human agency-based strategy can secure the justice of damnation for sins which follow from evolved dispositions.

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<sup>58</sup> For a helpful explanation of this strategy, see Adam M. Willows, "Augustine, the Origin of Evil, and the Mystery of Free Will," *Religious Studies* 50 (2013): 255–69.

### V Conclusion

Evolved dispositions to sin generate a dilemma with regard to the justice of damnation. It is not possible to hold to *both* evolved dispositions to sin *and* to damnation for those acts which follow from such dispositions simultaneously. We are thus forced to choose between the two. Christian theologians must *either* commit themselves to the position that there are not, *and could not be, in principle*, any evolved dispositions to sin, *or* they must reject the possibility of damnation in all of the relevant cases. Since some of the plausible examples of evolved dispositions are also paradigmatic of damnation-worthy sins, this dilemma is not easily ignored.

This dilemma follows from two different, but simultaneous, pressures: one, to secure human blameworthiness; and two, to secure asymmetrical fault for damnation-worthy acts. I argued that, on the hypothesis that at least some sins follow from evolved dispositions, we are either not liable to damnation for said sins, or God is not just. Since God is just, we must either deny damnation for said acts, or deny that there are *any* evolved dispositions to sin. Of course, all that is needed to resolve this dilemma is this last move: the denial of the hypothesis. And many, perhaps most, would find that the most appealing resolution, over and against the claims of some primatologists (among others). This is understandable, but I would caution that the hasty dismissal of similar external pressures has often brought more harm than good to theology.

Denial or acceptance one way or the other is not, however, my principal interest. Instead I hope to draw our attention to the *fact* of this dilemma. For it seems that many theologians are casually reassured that their views are either adequately informed by, or at least compatible with, plausible natural scientific claims *in general*. As a result, many theologians take little interest in considering *particular* scientific claims and their coherence with particular theological claims. However, this *specific* claim about evolved dispositions to sin poses a specific dilemma.

This dilemma is *concrete*. As a concrete dilemma, it cannot be adequately addressed by only a *general* approach to theology and natural science. In light of this dilemma, no theologian can remain indifferent to the specific question of whether there are, in fact, evolved dispositions to sin, nor can they remain indifferent to the particular solution or solutions proposed on the assumption that there are. No amount of abstract method-dealing will dispel the problem. For at no point was the dilemma one between science *in general* or theology (let alone "religion") *in general*. Instead, at each stage it involved animals, dispositions, acts, sin, blame, justice, damnation, and God. If theologians offer resolutions to this dilemma, as I hope they do, it will be a reply *in particular*, a concrete reply to a concrete problem. However, not all concrete solutions will dissolve the problem equally well. Concreteness is a necessary, but still not a sufficient condition. We must, in all cases, contend over particulars. And to note that is simply to avert abstract method-dealing on the back end as well.

In this light, perhaps the cleanest solution is to concede that one cannot be justly damned for acts which follow from such dispositions. However, this move suggests—though does not necessitate—an extension. That is, supposing we find it plausible that there are at least *some* evolved dispositions to sin, is it possible, even likely, that there are *more* dispositions of evolved origin? Perhaps *all* of our acts have a basis in evolved dispositions? If so, the candidate acts for which we are liable to damnation-worthy blame shrink. At the extreme, none remain. But this extreme is at least possible. Therefore,

theologians are advised to consider the possibility that none of our acts make us *justly* liable to damnation.

Is my point then to merely argue for universal salvation? No—though that would be a minimum implication, assuming this extreme. But, as a general solution, universal salvation is not yet specific enough. The true heart of the matter is not *whether* all are saved and any are lost, but rather *why* they are so, that is, on what basis. For, even assuming universal salvation, it is normally understood that we are *forgiven* our sins. The very concept of forgiveness implies a remission of just blame. But the dilemma we explored threatens to render ostensibly damnation-worthy blame for (at least some) sinful acts *unjust*. Therefore, the real trade in admitting evolved dispositions to sin is not in making damnation less likely, or even in making universal salvation necessary, but in making traditional conceptions of divine forgiveness unintelligible.