An Anselmian-Quiescence Approach to the Problem of Grace and Merit

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In Question 3 of De concordia,¹ his last major treatise, Anselm defends the compatibility of the following theses:

1. As a free gift of grace, God gives to morally upright creatures all of their morally upright volitions (the "Grace Thesis"), and
2. Morally upright rational creatures deserve praise for their morally upright volitions (the "Merit Thesis").²

Anselm's commitment to the Grace Thesis follows from the conviction that God creates everything that has being and goodness, including morally upright volitions.³ Hence, rational agents who have

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¹ Anselm assumes that the reader of De concordia (DC) is familiar with his earlier writings on the will. These include De libertate arbitrii (DLA) and De casu diaboli (DCD). Accordingly, I will make frequent references to these earlier writings as well as to DC. The letters in parentheses following each title are the abbreviations I will use.

² Similar theses can be formulated for upright external actions; however, my focus in this paper is on the will rather than external action.

³ For example, he writes: "For insofar as the will and its turning, or movement, are something, each is a good and is due to God" (DCD 20; 249): Inquantum enim voluntas et conversio sive motus voluntas est aliquid, bonum est et dei est (S 1, 265:25-26). Again: "Thus, then, in the case of all good wills and deeds God causes both what they are essentially and the fact that they are good..." (DC 1.7; 545): Sic itaque facit deus in omnibus voluntatibus et operibus bonis et quod essentialiter sunt et quod bona sunt... (S II, 269:17-18). The translation I give is that of Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson, Complete Philosophical and Theological Treatises of Anselm of Canterbury (Minneapolis: Banning, 2000). There are several English translations of Anselm's treatises on the will. However, in this paper I follow the Banning translation because its more literalistic rendering of the text is best suited to my purposes. The page number(s) following semicolons refer to the Banning translation. The Latin text is from F. S. Schmitt, Sancti Anselmi Opera Omnia (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1946). The reference in parentheses following the first Latin citation in this note indicates Schmitt, volume I, page 265, lines 25-26.
upright volitions must have received them as a gift of grace. In particular, upright volitions are a gift of prevenient grace, the grace that precedes any uprightness in the will of a creature. For Anselm, the semi-Pelagians misconstrue the nature of grace when they claim that rational agents can initiate the grace of God through an upright desire or volition of their own which itself is unaided or uncaused by grace. His commitment to the Responsibility Thesis follows from the conviction that God justly rewards the upright and punishes the wicked; hence, rational creatures must be responsible (deserving of praise or blame) for what they will and do. And if a rational creature is responsible for her volitions, then her volitions must be willed freely; in particular, they must be genuinely her own, genuinely up to the agent herself, genuinely a se (from herself), sponte (of her own accord), or sola propria (of herself only).

Of course, the problem is that the Grace and Merit Theses seem to be mutually exclusive (I will refer to this as the problem of grace and merit). For, if God (or God’s grace) is the causal source of the being and moral goodness of an agent’s morally upright volitions, then it would appear that the agent has her morally upright volitions by necessity and not of her own accord. Consequently, she deserves no praise for those volitions. But if her upright volitions are genuinely her own, then grace—so it would appear—could not have been the causal source of her upright volitions.

In the face of this problem, Anselm assures us that meritorious free will “co-exists” (simul esse) with grace, and that they are non discordant.

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5 In DC 3.1, he argues that God would not urge us to good works unless we had free will. Further, God could not justly reward and punish according to merit if good and evil were not done by free choice. Note that Anselm believes that “ought” implies “can”: moral commands are legitimate imperatives only if people at some time or other are able to obey them.

6 In the first two Questions of DC, Anselm takes on the problem of free will and foreknowledge and the problem of free will and predestination. Like Boethius, Anselm thinks that these problems can be resolved through a proper understanding of God’s atemporal mode of knowing. The problem of grace and free will seems to be more difficult to resolve for Anselm. Its resolution depends on careful analysis of free will and the structure of volition in rational creatures, rather than on an understanding of God’s way of knowing.
in bringing about man’s justification and salvation. But how exactly do grace and merit exist together? Does he successfully prove that there is no discord between the Grace and Merit Theses? In this paper I explain and evaluate the Anselmian approach to the problem of grace and merit. I first focus on some of Anselm’s ideas about the way grace operates in the wills of rational creatures to bring about uprightness of will, and then turn to his account of how upright rational creatures deserve praise for their uprightness of will even though their uprightness is brought about through the operation of grace. I maintain that Anselm’s account of merit should be interpreted in terms of a theory of will that allows for the possibility of quiescence of will. Thus, I develop what I call the “Anselmian-quiescence” approach to the problem of grace and merit. However, as it stands, the Anselmian-quiescence approach is incomplete and hence unsuccessful at reconciling the Grace and Merit Theses. I show what the problem is with the Anselmian-quiescence approach, and suggest what might need to be added to the approach to make it successful at reconciling the two theses.

I. Grace and Uprightness of Will

For Anselm, the will is the seat of moral uprightness. Hence, when used in a moral sense, the terms “upright” and “uprightness” apply primarily to the will. In brief, to will uprightly according to Anselm

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7 See DC 3.1; 550 (S II, 264:11) and DC 3.5; 555 (S II, 270:8). Note that Anselm is particularly interested in showing how grace and meritorious free will work together in bringing about a person’s salvation (see DC 3.2); nevertheless, what he says about the compatibility of grace and merit applies to every upright act of will for which an agent deserves merit (even if it may not pertain to salvation), since every meritorious act of will is brought about by grace.

8 I will use the following phrases or terms interchangeably: “rational creatures,” “rational agents,” and “agents.” These will refer to created beings only, in particular to (1) humans who have reached the age of moral reasoning and willing and whose capacities for doing so are unimpaired, and (2) angels. Though God can be considered an agent, these terms will not be used here with reference to God. Also, note that Anselm seems to limit his discussion of grace and merit to the situation of fallen humans before their individual deaths and, to a lesser extent, to the situation of humans and angels as they exited before their respective falls; he does not seem to be addressing the situation of elect humans and angels who have been confirmed in their uprightness and are no longer able to sin. Just how grace and merit work together in the latter situation is beyond the scope of this paper.
means to will what is right for the sake of uprightness itself. Anselm recognizes that sometimes actions that are normally considered to be morally upright, such as telling the truth or keeping a promise, can arise from a sinful will; they can be done out of selfishness, or for the sake of personal gain to the disregard of others.9 In such cases, the agent performs an upright action without an upright will.

Now suppose that someone has an upright volition, say, an upright volition to repent of a sin, or to keep a promise, or to perform some act of charity. According to Anselm, any such upright volition is caused by grace (the Grace Thesis). But why does he think so? Why does he think that created agents cannot cause upright volitions on their own? Aside from the previously mentioned conviction that only God can cause that which has being and goodness (including the being and moral goodness of upright volitions), Anselm maintains that the Grace Thesis follows from a proper understanding of the will and its freedom.

Anselm argues that the term “will” (voluntas) has three equivocal meanings. First, it can refer to the instrument for willing (instrumentum volendi), that is, the power or ability for willing; second, to the use of that instrument (usus instrumenti), that is, volitions or instances of willing something; and third, to the affections or inclinations of the instrument for willing (affectiones or aptitudines).10 According to Anselm, the instrument for willing is incapable of bringing about its own use. In fact, he says “no instrument suffices by itself to accomplish anything.”11 For example, I may have the instrument for seeing a mountain yet not actually see one because there is no mountain here to see, or because there is no light, or because something blocks my sight.12 Similarly, the instrument for willing cannot generate volitions on its own. In fact, it is incoherent to think otherwise, for “whatever moves itself to willing wills first to move itself [to willing],” and “therefore, that which does not at all will is not at all able to move itself to willing.”13 Thus, Anselm says that an angel created with the ability to will, but who does not yet will

9 See DLA 13; 211 and DC 1.2; 551.
10 See his discussion of the parts of the will in DC 3.11; 565-9.
11 DL 3; 197: Sicut nullum instrumentum solum sibi sufficit ad operandum (S I, 213:1-2).
12 DLA 3; 198.
13 DCD 12; 238: Dic ergo quia quidquid se movet ad volendum, prius vult se ita movere...Quod ergo nihil vult, nulla modo se potest movere ad volendum (S I, 254:28-31).
anything, "is not able to have his first willing from himself." The same holds for any rational creature.

Since the will (hereafter I will refer to the instrument for willing as "the will") cannot move itself to willing (bring about its own use), something outside of it must move it. Certainly, no one can will anything without having a mental apprehension of the object of the will; and further, no one can will anything without recognizing that the object of the will promotes what is to one’s advantage and/or what is morally right. But given this apprehension and this recognition, an agent still could not will the object of the will without also having some drive or impetus that moves the will toward its goal. Therefore, God supplies the will with two affections: the affection for happiness (beatitudinem) or benefit (commoditatem), and the affection for uprightness (rectitudinem).

Anselm maintains that there is a causal connection between the affections and volitions; the will moves by means of, because of, or through its affections. As he explains, "The inclination of the instrument-for-willing is that by which the instrument is so inclined to will some given thing (even when a man is not thinking of that which he wills) that if this thing comes to mind, then the will wills [to have] it either immediately or at the appropriate time." The affection for what is beneficial generates volitions for what is perceived to be conducive to well-being or happiness, and the affection for uprightness generates morally upright volitions. He writes:

Indeed, because of the inclination to will what is beneficial, a man always wills happiness and to be happy. On the other hand, because of the inclination to will uprightness, he wills uprightness and to be upright (i.e., to be just).

14 DCD 12; 238: ...non posit habere voluntatem primam a se (S I, 254:34-5).
15 See DC 3.6: 556 and DC 3.11: 566. Anselm recognizes that an agent can be mistaken in thinking that the object of the will promotes what is to her advantage and/or what is morally right.
16 DC 3.11: 567.
17 DC 3.11: 566: Affectio huius instrumenti est, quia sic afficitur ipsum instrumentum ad volendum aliquid - etiam quando illud quod vult non cogitat -, ut si venit in memoriam, aut statim suo tempore illud velit (S II, 279:17-20).
18 DC 3.11: 567: Per affectionem quidem quae est ad volendum commoditatem, semper vult homo beatitudinem et beatus esse. Per illam vero quae est ad volendum rectitudinem, vult rectitudinem et rectus, id est iustus esse (S II, 281:9-12).
So, without the driving force of the affections, the will is inert, ineffectual in generating volitions of any sort.

Of particular importance here is the fact that the will cannot generate morally upright volitions apart from the affection for uprightness. Consider some of the salient points Anselm makes about the ineffectuality of the will in generating morally upright volitions. First, the will has to be upright before it can will uprightly:

Assuredly, there is no doubt that the will wills rightly only because it is upright. For just as sight is not acute because it sees acutely but sees acutely because it is acute, so the will is not upright because it wills rightly but wills rightly because it is upright. Now, when it wills uprightness-of-will, then without doubt it wills rightly. Therefore, it wills uprightness only because it is upright. But for the will to be upright is the same as for it to have uprightness. Therefore, it is evident that it wills uprightness only because it has uprightness.\(^\text{19}\)

The will is not made upright by producing upright volitions; it cannot even have upright volitions unless it is already upright in the first place. Second, the will cannot give itself the uprightness it needs in order to have upright volitions. Why so? Because the only way an agent’s will could become upright is by willing the uprightness that would make it upright; and, of course, to will the uprightness that would make the will upright is an upright will itself; hence, given the point above that the will must be upright in order to will uprightly, the will would have to be upright before it could will the uprightness of will that would make it upright. Third, “only by the grace of God does a creature have the uprightness which I have called uprightness-of-will.”\(^\text{20}\) In particular, it is prevenient grace that provides uprightness of will: uprightness is not given on the basis of a previously existing will for an upright will that the

\(^{19}\) DC 3.3; 551: Dubium utique non est quia voluntas non vult recte, nisi quia recta est. Sicut namque visus non est acutus, quia videt acute, sed idcirco videt acute, quia est acutus : ita voluntas non est recta, quia vult recte, sed recte vult, quoniam recta est. Cum autem vult hanc rectitudinem, procul dubio recte vult. Non ergo vult rectitudinem, nisi quia recta est. Idem autem est voluntati rectam esse et rectitudinem habere. Palam igitur est quia non vult rectitudinem, nisi quia rectitudinem habet (S II, 265:26-266:4).

\(^{20}\) DC 3.3; 552: ...nulla creatura rectitudinem habet quam dixi voluntatis, nisi per dei gratiam (S II, 266:16-17).
creature has on her own apart from God’s provision, since it is impossible for a creature to have such a will on her own. Finally, the affection for uprightness is the uprightness of will (given by grace) that makes the will and the volitions that flow from it upright. The affection for uprightness is not a mere desire or longing for uprightness. Anselm says that the affection for uprightness is a will in its own right, a will that “modifies” the instrument of the will.\textsuperscript{21} It is the will “for willing uprightness” and such a will “is uprightness.”\textsuperscript{22} One can have the affection for happiness, and not be happy, because one does not possess the happiness toward which the will for happiness aims.\textsuperscript{23} But one cannot have the affection—the will—for uprightness and not have an upright will. Though the contemporary terms “first-order volition” and “second-order volition” are foreign to Anselm, he nevertheless conceives of the affection for uprightness as a second-order volition (or perhaps as a higher-than-second-order volition); it is an effective desire—a volition, a will-for a will that wills uprightly.\textsuperscript{24} Now, a second-order volition for an upright will is both upright itself and effective in bringing about the object of its willing. So, since the affection for uprightness is a second-

\textsuperscript{21} Each of the affections or inclinations is a will: “I predicate ‘to will’ of both the instrument and its inclination; for the instrument is will, and the inclination is will” (DC 3.13; 572): Dico autem et instrumentum et affectionem eius ‘velle’, quia et instrumentum est voluntas, et affectio voluntas... (S II, 287:8-10).

\textsuperscript{22} DC 3.12; 569: ...illa vero quae est ad volendum rectitudinem, rectitudo est (S II, 284:15-16). See also DC 3.13; 570 where he says that will for justice is \textit{ipsa iustitia} (S II, 285:18).

\textsuperscript{23} See DC 3.12 and 13; 569-71. Being disposed to what is beneficial is itself not the beneficial. The affection for the beneficial leads to the willing of what is beneficial, but the willing of what is beneficial is itself not what is beneficial; rather, it is the object of the willing of what is beneficial that is the beneficial.

\textsuperscript{24} See Harry Frankfurt’s classic discussion of first- and second-order desires and volitions in “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person,” \textit{The Journal of Philosophy} 68 (1971): 5-20. According to Frankfurt, volitions are “effective” desires in the sense that they lead an agent to action, or would lead an agent to action if nothing prevents the agent from carrying out those desires. Volitions can be “first-order” or “second-order”: a first-order volition is the will for an external action, while a “second-order” volition is the will for a will. For example, if an agent’s desire to help someone in need is one from which she acts or attempts to act, then it is a first-order volition. But she also might effectively desire (that is, have a will or volition for) the volition to help someone in need; in that case, she has a second-order volition for the first-order volition to help someone in need.
order volition for an upright instrument of the will, that is, for an instrument of the will that yields upright volitions, the presence of the affection for uprightness *makes* the instrument of the will upright, yielding upright volitions. It is reasonable, then, for Anselm to equate the affection for uprightness with uprightness itself. Hence, the affection for uprightness is the gift of prevenient grace through which God brings about morally upright volitions in his creatures.

In Anselm’s account of freedom of will, God’s provision of an upright will enables the will to exercise its freedom. Anselm defines free will as “the ability to keep uprightness of will for the sake of uprightness itself.” Insofar as it is an “ability” to keep or sustain uprightness, free will belongs to all rational creatures regardless of their state (fallen or not fallen). However, the ability is useless apart from grace, for the will cannot keep uprightness of will if it has no uprightness of will to keep. Hence, “grace always assists the natural free choice (which apart from grace is of no avail to salvation) by giving to the will the uprightness which it can keep by free choice.”

Anselm describes a second movement of grace—he calls it “subsequent grace”—that differs conceptually (though not in reality) from the prevenient grace that gives the will the uprightness that free will keeps. He writes:

Assuredly, no one keeps this received uprightness except by willing it. But no one can will it unless he possesses it. And he cannot at all possess it except by means of grace. Therefore, just as no one receives uprightness except by means of grace preceding, so no one keeps uprightness except by means of this same grace following. Assuredly, even though uprightness is kept by free choice, still its being kept must be imputed not so much to free choice as to grace; for free

25 This is my translation of *potestatem servandi rectitudinem voluntatis propter ipsum rectitudinem* (DC 1. 6; S II, 257:26). In DL 13; 211, Anselm gives the taxonomy of this carefully worded definition of free will, showing how the definition, in terms of its genus and differentiae, is neither too broad nor too narrow.
26 For the moment, I am ignoring the “for the sake of uprightness itself” part of the definition.
27 DC 3.3; 552: ...gratia...semper adiuvet liberum arbitrium naturale, quod sine illa nihil valet ad salutem, dando voluntati rectitudinem quam servet per liberum arbitrium (S II, 266:19-23).
choice possesses and keeps uprightness only by means of prevenient and of subsequent grace.\textsuperscript{28}

Subsequent grace is that which causes free will to operate; it is the grace that brings about the “will-to-keep-uprightness,” the volition, or perhaps series of volitions, that keeps received uprightness; it is the grace whereby the agent wills to continue having a morally upright will.\textsuperscript{29} Though Anselm does not say so explicitly, he apparently believes that the affection for uprightness causes the will to keep uprightness. Since the will to keep received uprightness is itself an upright will, and the affection for uprightness is the source of a rational creature’s uprightness of will, we can infer that the affection for uprightness causes the will to keep uprightness even as it causes the uprightness that is kept by that will. So, by generating both the uprightness of will that is kept and the upright will that keeps it, grace enables the creature to exercise free will.\textsuperscript{30}

\textbf{II. Merit and Uprightness of Will}

For Anselm, we are responsible for our volitions and actions only if they are genuinely our own, genuinely up to us. Since he usually uses “\textit{sponte}” to refer to instances in which a volition or action is genuinely one’s own (sometimes he also uses “\textit{a se}” and “\textit{sola propria}”), I will use the terms “spontaneity” and “spontaneous” to designate those instances.\textsuperscript{31} Anselm’s explanation of spontaneity lacks detail. However, he does say

\textsuperscript{28} DC 3.4; 553: Nemo certe servat rectitudinem hanc acceptam, nisi volendo. Velle autem illam aliquis nequit, nisi habendo. Habere vero illam nullatenus valet, nisi per gratiam. Sicut ergo illam nullus accipit nisi gratia praeventiente, ita nullus eam servat nisi eadem gratia subsequente. Nempe quamvis illa servetur per librum arbitrium, non tamen est tantum imputandum libero arbitrio quantum gratiae, cum haec rectitudo servatur; quoniam illam liberum arbitrium non nisi gratiam praeventientem et subsequentem habet et servat (S II, 267:13-19).

\textsuperscript{29} See DC 3.10; 565.

\textsuperscript{30} In causing upright volitions God might use secondary causes, such as the sending of preachers, their preaching, and the hearing and understanding of the word. Nevertheless, unless God directly (\textit{per se}) and efficiently causes uprightness in the will, which he does by providing the affection for uprightness, the seeds cannot bear fruit (see DC 3.6; 557-9).

\textsuperscript{31} Note that here “spontaneity” does not mean choosing or acting on an impulse, without premeditation.
that spontaneous volitions and actions are uncompelled; they are not brought about by antecedent necessity, the sort of necessity that comes before events, causing them to occur as they do and preventing them from failing to occur. 32 Natural events, such as the rising and setting of the sun, or the revolution of the heavens, occur by antecedent necessity. 33 God’s directly causing an event could also have the force of antecedent necessity. Regardless of the source, though, antecedent necessity compels an agent to will and act as he does, thus removing spontaneity and responsibility from agents who are under its influence. 34

I noted that Anselm thinks that there are two movements of grace: prevenient grace that provides the uprightness of will that is kept by free will, and subsequent grace that provides the will to keep uprightness. Since prevenient grace does not give uprightness on the basis of a prior will for uprightness that the creature has on her own, we must conclude that the uprightness prevenient grace gives precludes spontaneity and merit on the part of the creature who receives it. Prior to the fall, the bestowal of original uprightness of will was not up to rational creatures; they had no uprightness of their own until God first gave them an upright will. Therefore, they deserve no credit for their original uprightness. Similarly, after the fall, the gracious restoration of uprightness of will to elect fallen humans was not up to them. 35 Since the will of a fallen creature has no uprightness by which to will an upright will, “the will is unable to recover it unless God gives it again.” 36 Therefore, there can be no

32 See Thomas Williams and Sandra Visser, “Anselm’s Account of Freedom,” Canadian Journal of Philosophy 31 (2001): 221-244. They write that according to Anselm “actions done sponte are contrasted with actions done as a result of necessity” (227, footnote 15).
33 See DC 1.3; 535 and Cur dues homo 2.17; 379-380.
34 Anselm’s notion of antecedent necessity corresponds to the core notion of determinism as Robert Kane defines it in The Significance of Free Will (New York: Oxford UP, 1998): “Any event (including a choice or action) is determined, according to this core notion, just in case there are conditions (such as the decrees of fate, antecedent physical causes plus laws of nature, or foreordaining acts of God) whose joint occurrence is (logically) sufficient for the occurrence of the event. In other words, it must be the case that, if these determining conditions obtain (e.g., physical causes and laws of nature), then the determined event occurs” (8).
35 See DC 3.14; 573 where he says that man cannot acquire or regain uprightness from himself: quia nullo modo potest illam per se adipsici vel recuperare (S II, 287:24-25).
36 DLA 10; 207: ...ita cum deserit acceptam, non potest eam nisi deo reddente recipere (S I, 222:12-13).
harmony of merit and grace in the bestowal of original and restored uprightness of will.

Does the will to keep uprightness, provided by subsequent grace, also preclude spontaneity and merit on the part of the agent who keeps uprightness of will? Anselm argues that it would if it is combined with the inability to sin. For example, if before the fall Satan had known that he would be punished for not keeping uprightness of will, he would have kept uprightness by compulsion rather than in a way that was uncompelled and deserving of merit.\(^{37}\) Speaking of Satan in his pre-fallen condition, when Satan’s will for happiness was tempered by his will for uprightness, he writes:

> Let us return to what I said earlier, viz., that [the angel] ought not to have had this knowledge [that he would be punished if he sinned]. For if he had known, then while possessing and willing happiness he would not have been able freely [sponte] to will what would have caused him to be unhappy. Therefore, he would not have been just when he kept from willing what he ought not to have willed, for he would not have been able to will it.\(^{38}\)

Suppose (contrary to fact, according to Anselm) that prior to the fall Satan had known that he would be punished for sinning. Since punishment is a form of unhappiness, and since he had both the affection for happiness and the affection for uprightness keeping his affection for happiness in check, Satan could not have willed to sin, for to do so would be to will his own unhappiness-something no rational creature can knowingly will. Thus, if Satan had known that he would be punished for sinning, he would have been unable to sin, and his uprightness would have been kept by necessity rather than spontaneously and meritoriously.

On the other hand, if the will to keep uprightness is combined with the ability to sin, then, according to Anselm, an agent can keep uprightness of will spontaneously and meritoriously. He explains:

\(^{37}\) DCD 24; 256.

\(^{38}\) DCD 23; 255 (the insertion [sponte] is mine, not the translators'): Redeamus ad hoc quod dixeram, illum scilicet hanc non debuisse habere scientiam. Si enim scivisset, non posset volens et habens beatitudinem sponte velle unde miser esset. Quare non esset iustus non volendo quod non deberet, quoniam non posset velle (S I, 270:20-23).
We say “to cause” in many modes. For example, we speak of causing something when we cause a thing to be, and also when we are able to cause it not to be but do not cause it not to be. And so, since the evil angel was able both to remove justice from himself and not to remove it from himself, he was able in this manner to give justice to himself—even as the angel who stood steadfast in the truth in which he was created did not (when able to) cause himself not to have justice, and so gave himself justice, and received this entire gift from God. For both angels received from God the possession [of justice] and the ability to keep it and the ability to forsake it. God gave this latter ability so that they would be able in some manner to give justice to themselves. For if they were in no manner able to remove justice from themselves, they would in no manner be able to give justice to themselves. Therefore, he who in this manner gave justice to himself received from God the fact that he gave justice to himself.\textsuperscript{39}

The same is true for humans: Anselm says that God gave justice to man “in such a way that man was able to abandon it, so that if he did not abandon it but kept it perseveringly, he would merit being elevated to fellowship with the angels.”\textsuperscript{40} Likewise, he says a man is responsible for the fact that his deeds are not evil “because although he was able to abandon justice and to do evil deeds, he did not abandon it but kept it by means of free choice—[justice] being given and followed up by grace.”\textsuperscript{41} Hence, the ability to sin is a necessary condition for keeping uprightness spontaneously and meritoriously.

\textsuperscript{39} DCD 18; 247: Pluribus modis dicimus ‘facere’. Dicumus enim ‘facere’ aliquid, cum esse facimus rem, et cum possimus facere ut non sit et non facimus. Hoc itaque modo potuit ipse dare iustitiam sibi, quia potuit sibi auferre eam et potuit non auferre, quomodo ille qui stetit in veritate in qua factus est, non fecit cum potuit ut eam non haberet, et ita ipse sibi eam dedit, et totum hoc a deo accepit. Ab eo enim acceperunt ambo habere et posse tenere et posse deserere. Hoc ultimum ideo duas dedit, ut possent sibi dare aliquo modo iustitiam. Si enim eam nullo modo sibi possent auferre, nullo modo sibi possent dare. Qui ergo hoc modo sibi eam dedit, hoc ipsum a deo accepit ut sibi eam daret (S I, 263:7-16).

\textsuperscript{40} DC 3.13; 571: Sed iustitiam ita, ut illam possent deserere; quatenus cum illum non desereret, sed perseveranter servaret, provehi meretur ad consortium angelorum (S II, 286:14-16).

\textsuperscript{41} DC 3.14; 573: Homo autem habet in bonis quod mala non sunt, quia cum possit deserere iustitiam et mala facere, non deseruit, sed servavit per liberae arbitrium, dante et subsequente gratia (S II, 288:7-9).
Anselm's reasoning here follows this progression: (1) an agent's not sinning when able to sin is spontaneous; (2) an agent's not sinning when able to sin is a cause of the keeping of uprightness; (3) so, by not sinning when able to sin an agent deserves praise for the keeping of uprightness.

An agent's not sinning when able to sin is spontaneous because nothing besides the agent can cause the agent to sin when she is able to sin. He writes:

Now, since it is evident that the justice by which someone is just is uprightness-of-will, which (as I have said) is present in someone only when he wills what God wills for him to will: it is evident that God is not able to remove this uprightness from him against his will; for God cannot will this removal. Moreover, neither can God will for one who possesses uprightness to desert it unwillingly as the result of some compelling force. (Indeed, [were that the case] God would will for him not to will that which He wills for him to will—which is impossible). 42

Neither God nor any external force can cause an agent to sin. Perhaps some force outside the agent (brainwashing, for example) could overpower an agent's ability to distinguish right from wrong, or could override an agent's will, thus causing the agent to will to do something morally wrong—to lie, perhaps, or rob a bank. But in such cases the agent wills unwillingly, that is, against or apart from his own will; thus, though he wills something that is usually considered to be wrong, he does not sin in doing so. In order to sin, the agent must do so by his own will and with the ability to distinguish right from wrong. And when those conditions are met, nothing outside an agent could cause an agent to sin. Since nothing can compel an agent to sin when the agent is able to

42DC 1.6; 542: Se quoniam iustitiam qua iustus est aliquid constat esse rectitudinem voluntatis, quam dixi, quae rectitudo tunc tantum est in aliquo, cum ipse vult quod deus vult eum velle: patet quia deus non potest eandem rectitudinem invito auferre, quoniam non potest hoc velle. Sed neque velle potest, ut eam habens nolens ulla necessitate illam deserat. Quippe vellet illum non velle, quod vult eum velle; quod esse nequit (S II, 256:24-30).
sin, not sinning when able to sin is something that an agent does spontaneously.\textsuperscript{43}

How, then, does not sinning when able to sin function as a cause of the keeping of uprightness? In his taxonomy of causes, developed especially in \textit{Philosophical Fragments}, Anselm distinguishes between causing by doing and causing by not doing. The second sort of cause is the relevant one here. An agent “who is able to cause something not to be and does not is said to cause-to-be.”\textsuperscript{44} Hence, an upright agent with the ability to sin is able to cause uprightness not to be; and so when he does not sin, he thereby causes uprightness to be. Anselm says that an agent abandons uprightness (sins) by “willing something else which he cannot will compatibly [with willing uprightness],” and that when this happens the will to keep uprightness “ceases because another willing expels it.”\textsuperscript{45} If an agent cannot will a benefit in a way that is inconsistent with the will to keep uprightness—as would have been the case for Satan had he known he would be punished for sinning—then the agent cannot be a cause of (and is not in any way responsible for) the will to keep uprightness. But if an agent is able to will a benefit that is inconsistent with the will to keep uprightness—in other words, if he is able to sin—and does not do so, then he is a cause of the will to keep uprightness. He then keeps uprightness meritoriously.

In summary, the substance of Anselm’s harmony of grace and merit is that both God’s grace and the upright agent cause the agent’s uprightness of will. God causes by \textit{doing}. Through the affection for uprightness, he makes the agent’s will morally upright, yielding upright volitions, and he provides the will to keep a morally upright will. So we must attribute the creation and continued existence of upright volitions to God’s grace; he is responsible for the goodness they have \textit{qua} being and \textit{qua} justice. The upright agent, in turn, causes by \textit{not doing}. She keeps uprightness by not willing in a way that is incompatible with the

\textsuperscript{43} When a man deserts the uprightness he possesses, he is drawn away by no “alien” (aliena) force, but “turns himself” (ipsa se convertit) to something he wills more strongly (DLA-7; 205; S I, 220:7-9). So, then, the agent cannot be coerced into sin by antecedent necessity.

\textsuperscript{44} DCD 1; 216. ....sed etiam ille qui potest facere ut non sit aliquid et non facit, dicitur facere esse... (S I, 234:7-8). See also DL 4; 198 and \textit{Philosophical Fragments}, 410.

\textsuperscript{45} DC 3.10; 565: ...nisi aliud volendo quod simul velle nequit, deserere....sed alia voluntate illam, ut dixi, expellente (SII, 278:21-25).
will to keep uprightness when she is able to do so. Since her not sinning is spontaneous rather than by necessity, and since her not sinning functions as a cause of the continuation of the will to keep uprightness, she deserves merit for the uprightness of will grace has given her.46

III. Anselmian-Quiescence

Here I wish to examine more closely the phenomenon of "not sinning when able to sin." What exactly does it mean to not sin when able to sin?

Some might argue that not sinning when able to sin is identical to a choice or volition to keep the uprightness God has provided. (I'll call this the "volition description" of not sinning when able to sin.) The idea here is that an agent's not sinning is indistinguishable from choosing uprightness. Katherin Rogers seems to attribute this view to Anselm when she says that as an indeterminist Anselm held that "for a rational creature to merit praise or blame it must, at some point, have chosen between good and evil."47 She also writes:

[Anselm] argues in De casu diaboli that God gave His rational creatures the option to cling to the good or to abandon it, so that the creature could, by freely holding fast to the good it has been given, contribute to its own creation.48

Rogers insists that her interpretation of Anselm avoids the Pelagian mistake of claiming that creatures can generate good on their own, since "the good creature is not the source of its good" and only chooses to cling to "what God has given."49

46 By now the reader is probably aware of the fact that Anselm's solution to the problem of grace and merit hinges on the solution to another famous problem, the problem of sin. How do we explain the origin of sin? How is it even possible for an upright agent to sin? Why would an agent with an upright will ever choose to sin? Anselm deals extensively with this problem in DCD. Space does not permit me to discuss his views or the views of others on this perplexing issue.


48 Ibid., v. See pp. 97-8 where she says that the good angels "merit the reward of being unable to sin because, in a way, they have given justice to themselves by holding on to it when they could have deserted it." Similarly, on p. 104 she says, "The rational creature is said to 'make itself good' when it clings to the goodness God has given it in circumstances in which it could abandon such goodness. The creature cannot generate goodness, but it can choose to hold onto it, or not."

49 Ibid., 112. She argues similarly on pp. 51, 111, and 189.
But the volition description of not sinning when able to sin—despite Rogers’s insistence to the contrary—does not escape Pelagianism. Since the *choice* to cling or hold fast to the uprightness of will that God has provided is a volition to keep uprightness of will, it follows that it is an upright volition. So in this description the created agent brings into being something good (an upright volition) which did not have being before. Furthermore, by generating an upright volition on its own, the upright agent causes uprightness by *doing* rather than by *not doing*. Thus, if we are seeking a description of the phenomenon of not sinning when able to sin that is consistent with Anselm’s view that only God can cause the being and goodness of upright volitions and his view that upright agents deserve merit for not doing rather than for doing something, we must look for some other description of the phenomenon.

A second description is based on the possibility of the will being in a state of *quiescence* with regard to volitions. In a recent work on Augustine, Eleonore Stump explains quiescence as follows.\(^{50}\) While we typically think of the will as functioning in just two ways, assenting or rejecting, Stump suggests that the will might function in a third way, which she calls “quiescence,” by “simply doing nothing at all,” or by just being turned off. She writes, “[I]n principle, the will can move directly from any of these positions to another. That is, it can move from rejecting to quiescence, from quiescence to assenting, from assenting to rejecting, and so on.”\(^{51}\) Stump gives the following analogy. Suppose someone needs an injection as an antidote to an allergic reaction. However, because of an irrational fear of needles, he refuses the injection he desperately needs. While he may never be able to form a volition of assent to the injection, he still might be able to stop refusing the injection, knowing that if he stops refusing it, the doctor will give him the injection. “In this case,” she writes, “whether or not he receives the injection is in his control, even if it is also true that he cannot bring himself to answer ‘yes’ to the doctor’s request to give him the injection.”\(^{52}\)

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\(^{51}\) Ibid., 140.

\(^{52}\) Ibid., 141.
Suppose we take not sinning when able to sin to be a state of quiescence. (I'll call this the quiescence description.) Then, there is no reason to think that not sinning when able to sin is identical to forming an upright volition. Aside from having sinful volitions or upright volitions, the agent's will might be quiescent, "simply doing nothing at all." Quiescence is not a volition in and of itself, but the absence of a volition; particularly, in this context, it is the absence of a volition to sin when a volition to sin is possible. The alternative to "doing something" (sinning) is not "doing something else" (clinging to uprightness) but "doing nothing at all" (quiescence).

In my judgment, the quiescence description is the one that is best suited to Anselm's views about grace and merit. First, it accords with Anselm's insistence that only God can bring upright volitions into being and that created agents, insofar as they cause by not doing rather than by doing, do not bring into being upright volitions like the volition to cling to uprightness. Since the created agent is doing nothing at all when she does not sin when able to sin, she cannot be credited with having formed an upright volition on her own. Second, the quiescence description allows for the possibility of merit on the part of the created agent for keeping the uprightness of will that God provides. As Stump writes, "[I]f God gives grace only in response to a human willer's failing to refuse grace, then whether God gives grace or not will be up to the human willer alone." To put what Stump says into Anselm's terms, the affection for uprightness effectively produces uprightness of will in a

53 G. Staley Kane correctly stresses the point that the ability to do (or will) or not to do (or not to will) what is unjust is not equivalent to the ability to do or choose between what is just/good and what is unjust/evil. See Anselm's Doctrine of Freedom and the Will, Texts and Studies in Religion 10 (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1981), 166, 170, and 171.

54 G. Kane seems to attribute this sort of position to Anselm (though Kane doesn't use the term "quiescence"). Kane argues that for Anselm self-determination does not take the form of choosing between doing something that is just and doing something that is unjust, but "choosing between doing something unjust and not doing anything at all" (G. Kane, 167).

55 As Stump puts it, when the will is quiescent, "it doesn't refuse grace, but it doesn't accept it either. It is thus possible to hold that a human person has it in her power to refuse grace or to fail to refuse grace without also holding that she has it in her power to form the good act of will which is the assent to grace" (Stump, 140).

56 Stump, 142.
created agent as long as the agent does nothing to prevent it from being effective when, through sinning, he is able to prevent it from being effective. Doing nothing to prevent the affection from being effective is just that—doing nothing. Yet if the effectiveness of the affection depends on the agent’s doing nothing, then its effectiveness is up to the agent. And so the agent is merit worthy not because he has formed an upright volition to keep uprightness, but because he has not, by means of sinning, made the affection for uprightness ineffective when he was able to do so—which, again, is to have done nothing at all.57

IV. The Problem with Anselmian-Quiescence

The Anselmian-quiescence (AQ for short) approach offers an interesting explanation for what it means to not sin when able to sin, and for how agents can be worthy of merit for the upright volitions God creates and gives to them. Generally, I think the approach is on the right track toward a successful harmony of grace and merit. However, as it stands, I do not think the approach successfully demonstrates the compatibility of the grace and merit. Here I develop what I take to be a significant shortcoming in the AQ approach, and offer a suggestion as to how the approach needs to be modified in order for it to be successful.

For brevity, let Q stand for quiescence (the state in which the agent is not sinning when able to sin, “simply doing nothing at all” with respect to sin), U for uprightness of will (the state in which the agent’s will is upright and yielding upright volitions), S for sin (the state in which the agent’s will is not upright and yielding sinful volitions), A for a created agent, and t for a point in time. Note that while Q is conceptually separate and distinguishable from U, they are concurrent states in the sense that whenever there is quiescence there is uprightness of will. For whenever the agent is quiescent with regard to sin, the affection for uprightness is present and effective in bringing about upright volitions. Again, the agent does not generate the existence of these upright volitions, but causes them by not doing something that would, so to speak, cancel them out. So, by being in a state of quiescence with regard to sin, the

57 G. Kane interprets Anselm in a similar way when he says that for Anselm an agent’s merit is based on the fact that the agent can exercise a “veto power” over the uprightness God provides by grace (164).
agent is also in a state of uprightness. Let Q/U then stand for the concurrence of the states of quiescence and uprightness.

In the quiescence description there can be movement between the different positions of the will. As Stump says, the will "can move from rejecting to quiescence, from quiescence to assenting, from assenting to rejecting, and so on."\(^{58}\) The movements and positions of the will relevant to Anselm's harmony of grace and merit are (1) moving from S to Q/U, and (2) remaining in the position of Q/U.\(^{59}\)

Consider (1), the move from S to Q/U. Here the agent who lacks uprightness of will recovers it; she moves from sinful volitions to upright volitions.\(^{60}\) Given Anselm's views about grace, there is no place for merit in this sort of change in one's will. Agents are no more able to abandon sin and return to uprightness of will on their then they are able to give themselves original uprightness. He writes:

> Indeed, just as before having uprightness, no one was able to take without God's giving it, so upon deserting the uprightness which has been received, the will is unable to recover it unless God gives it again.\(^{61}\)

Suppose an agent is in a state of S. In order to move from S to Q/U she must stop sinning; but to stop sinning she must reject sin; to reject sin requires an upright will (given the reasonable assumption that the will to reject sin is an upright will); therefore, she must have an upright will (provided by grace) in order to move from S to Q/U. God must turn the agent from S to U, and only then can she be Q with regard to S.

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\(^{58}\) Stump, 140.

\(^{59}\) Another possibility, that of moving from Q/U to S, is not pertinent to the harmony of grace and free will, because turning from uprightness to sin does not come about by grace, and an agent deserves no praise in turning from uprightness to sin (though he is responsible for it).

\(^{60}\) This movement is analogous to Stump's example of a person with a fear of needles whose will moves from a state in which his will is rejecting a necessary injection to a state in which his will is quiescent with respect to the injection (neither rejecting nor accepting the injection).

\(^{61}\) DLA 10; 207: Quippe sicut nulla voluntas, antequam haberet rectitudinem, potuit eam deo non dante capere: its cum deserit acceptam, non potest eam nisi deo reddente recipere (S I, 222:10-13). See also DLA 12; 209.
Option (2) is really the only one in which grace and merit can work together in the AQ approach. Here the agent already is Q/U and remains there. By remaining quiescent for a period of time in the face of temptation, the agent keeps uprightness of will (whether original or restored uprightness). The affection for uprightness is present and effective in causing the being and goodness of upright volitions, and the quiescent agent causes those upright volitions by not doing, by not sinning.

The main problem with the AQ approach centers on Anselm’s notion of spontaneity. In the AQ approach, A deserves merit for U at t only if A is spontaneously Q at t. But what does it mean for A to be *spontaneously* Q at t? Anselm explains spontaneity only in negative terms: spontaneity means not induced or caused by antecedent necessity. He then argues that since antecedent necessity cannot cause A to sin when she is able to sin, it follows that A’s not sinning when she is able to sin (that is, A’s quiescence) must be up to A (that is, spontaneous). This explanation of spontaneity is correct, as far as it goes: spontaneity and antecedent necessity are mutually exclusive. Anselm is also correct in saying that A does not deserve merit for U at t unless her being Q at t is spontaneous. However, given Anselm’s rather minimal, negative explanation of spontaneity, we are not justified in claiming that A deserves merit for U at t just because A is spontaneously Q at t. Instead, we must claim that A deserves merit for U at t only if A is spontaneously and *meritoriously* Q at t.

What do I mean by “*meritoriously* Q at t”? I mean at least two things: that A is the *ultimate cause* of Q, and that A causes Q for the right reason. Consider each in turn.

First, for A to be meritoriously Q means that A is the ultimate cause of Q, the ultimate cause of her not sinning. As Robert Kane rightly says, “[T]he ultimate responsibility lies where the ultimate cause is—where the buck stops.” 62 Since by definition Q is a state of not sinning when able to sin, a quiescent agent could sin and bring an end to Q. Why then does she not sin when she could sin? Anselm’s definition of spontaneity only tells us that antecedent necessity does not force her to sin. But to say that antecedent necessity does not force her to sin does not tell us why she

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62 R. Kane, 4.
does not sin when she is able to sin. We must add that she does not sin because she causes herself not to sin. And she must be the ultimate cause of her not sinning (that is, of her quiescence) if she is to be ultimately responsible for her not sinning. So, if A is Q, her being Q is spontaneous (in Anselm’s sense) because no antecedent necessity causes her to sin, and meritorious because she is the cause of her not sinning.63

One might object that A’s being the ultimate cause of Q is inconsistent with Anselm’s view that only God can generate being and goodness. After all, if A is the ultimate cause of Q, then there must be something with being and goodness that A generates. But according to Anselm, an effect does not have to have being at all. Certainly, sometimes an effect has being. For example, if we say “the sun shines,” we signify that “the sun is a cause and shining is an effect; and each is something and an existent, because the sun has its own being and causes light to be. Therefore, in this example, the cause is a being, and the effect is a being.”64 But we might also say that “the sun causes night not to be.” In that case, the cause is a being but the effect is a (state of) not-being.65 Anselm could say the same about Q: Q is a state of not-being instead of a being or an existent or a state of affairs. When the sun causes night not to be, the cause is something that exists (the sun) but the effect is not. In the same way, when an agent causes Q, the cause is something that exists (the agent) but the effect (Q) is not. Q is a state of “not-willing-something” that accompanies upliftrightness of will. Thus, by causing Q, the agent does not generate any being and goodness, and the being and goodness that are generated—an upright instrument of the will, upright volitions—are generated by God. Whether or not this is an adequate response to the objection is an issue I won’t pursue further in this paper.

Second, in order for A to be meritoriously Q, A must cause Q for the right reason or from the right motive. Just what that reason or motive is

63 A case could be made that Anselm’s definition of spontaneity already entails the idea that the quiescent agent is the ultimate cause of her quiescence. Perhaps so; at any rate, it is an important point that needs to be emphasized.

64 One might think that if the sun can cause a being, then why not an agent? But the sun does not cause the being of light in the sense of an ultimate cause; both the sun and the light it causes are part of a chain of cause and effect that is governed by antecedent necessity. That chain ultimately goes back to God, the first cause.

65 Philosophical Fragments, p. 411.
for Anselm is clear: the agent must cause Q for the sake of uprightness itself. A’s causing Q is not meritorious if she causes it because of a desire for happiness, for some amoral reason, or for no reason at all. And, in turn, A would not be worthy of merit for U at t if her motive for being Q at t is the desire for happiness or something else besides uprightness itself.

But in what way is uprightness itself a motive or reason for causing Q? Perhaps it is a will for uprightness. Perhaps A causes Q at t because she wills to be upright, and she wills to be upright for the sake of uprightness itself. However, if the agent is quiescent because of a will for uprightness, then we can no longer consistently affirm both the Grace and Merit Theses. The Grace Thesis says that uprightness of will is a gift of grace. It follows that if A’s reason for causing Q is a will (an effective desire) for uprightness that God has given her, then she does not deserve merit for causing Q (and hence does not deserve merit for being U at t); for she is caused to cause Q by a will for uprightness that God has given her. Suppose that, instead of God, the agent is the ultimate cause of the will for uprightness that causes her to be quiescent. In that case, the agent would have brought about the being and goodness of an upright volition; but according to the grace claim, only God causes the being and goodness of upright volitions.66

The only promising option for the AQ approach is to say that God produces in A the desire for uprightness (even the mere desire for uprightness must have come from God); that the desire for uprightness is the reason for A’s causing Q; but that the desire for uprightness does not cause A to cause Q. In this case, the desire for uprightness is simply a desire and not a volition.

But this option makes the AQ approach vulnerable to the sort of criticism frequently leveled at the theory of agent-causation. According to the theory, agents themselves can be the first cause of actions or volitions, and being the first cause is what makes them responsible for those actions and volitions. Carl Ginet explains:

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66 Perhaps we could say that God offers the volition to be Q, and that the agent can then be Q with regard to the volition to be Q. But, of course, that does not work; it just pushes everything back a step.
If we are responsible...then we have a prerogative which some would attribute only to God: each of us, when we act, is a prime mover unmoved. In doing what we do, we cause certain events to happen, and nothing—or no one—causes us to cause those events to happen.\(^{67}\)

In particular, if an agent is to be responsible for what she causes, then her desires could not have caused her to cause what she causes.\(^{68}\) On this view, then, A is Q because of the desire for uprightness God gives her, but the desire does not cause her to cause Q. But here is the key question: “Why did the agent rationally and voluntarily do X here and now rather than doing otherwise?”\(^{69}\) To say that A had a reason—the desire for uprightness—for not sinning, for being Q, and that the desire for uprightness did not cause A to cause Q, means that A could have caused Q for some reason other than the desire for uprightness. For example, she could have caused Q because of the desire for happiness instead of the desire for uprightness. So why, then, did A cause Q because of the desire for uprightness rather than because of some other desire? And for that no rational answer seems possible.\(^{70}\) So, A’s causing Q because of the desire for uprightness seems to be arbitrary: she arbitrarily caused Q because of the desire for uprightness instead of causing it for some other reason. And if A’s causing Q because of the desire for uprightness is arbitrary, then A’s causing Q is not something worthy of merit; and, if she is not meritoriously Q at t, then she not worthy of merit for U at t.

In conclusion, for the AQ approach to succeed at resolving the problem of grace and merit, it has to include an account of meritorious quiescence. An account of meritorious quiescence that does not negate either the Grace Thesis or the Merit Thesis must incorporate at least some of the elements of agent-causation. Assuming that it is plausible to say that when an agent is the ultimate cause of quiescence she does not generate being and goodness, the AQ approach still has to contend with

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\(^{68}\) Ibid., 32.

\(^{69}\) R. Kane, 121. Kane actually uses the letter “A” instead of “X” in this passage; I have substituted the letter “X” to avoid confusion with my own use of the letter “A.”

\(^{70}\) Furthermore, we cannot say that A caused Q because of a desire for uprightness which he had because of some other, prior, desire for uprightness. That just pushes the original problem back a step.
the aforementioned difficulty with agent-causation. I am not claiming here that the difficulty cannot be overcome. But I do contend that without overcoming the objection, the AQ approach has not completed the task of harmonizing grace and merit.

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72 I benefited a great deal from discussions at the following conferences where I presented versions of this paper: the Eastern Regional Meeting of the Society of Christian Philosophers, Messiah College, November 2002; The Second Saint Anselm Conference, St. Anselm College, April 2002; and the Philosophy Department Colloquium, Seton Hall University, May 2002. I especially thank Yvonne Unna for her thoughtful comments on earlier versions of this paper.