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Augustine on Will and Sin^[1]

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Abstract: As the first philosopher to address free will, Augustine's discussion of the will is closely related to the question "whence comes evil" (unde malum). In the *De libero arbitrio*, Augustine responds to this problem by introducing will (voluntas)/free decision (liberum arbitrium). This article will first distinguish between the will and free decision. In the second section, we will reconstruct Augustine's argument for the self-determination of the will; sin will be defined as departure from God. Finally, this article will point out that post-lapsarian human beings, who suffer from ignorance (ignorantia) and difficulty (difficultas), still have the ability to make decisions freely and still have moral responsibility.

Key Words: Augustine, will, free decision, sin

I . Introduction

It has been shown that Augustine is the first philosopher of the will.^[2] The reason Augustine could raise this philosophical concept is related to his inquiry into evil. This article explores how Augustine presents the notion of will in *De libero arbitrio* to solve the problem raised by Evodius, i. e. , whence comes evil (unde malum)? This question had been raised in ancient philosophy and was named as the "theodicy question" in the context of Christianity and it played a very important role throughout Augustine's writings. It is known that Augustine was a Manichaist when he was young. According to Manichaeism, the principle of darkness is the source of evil. Under the influence of Skepticism, he doubted the doctrine of Manichaeism. After his conversion to Christianity in 386, Augustine finished several works objecting to Manichaeism and confirmed his Christian belief based

[1] Yuan GAO, "Augustine's Conception of Sexuality and Marriage: A Defense against Alignment of Human Merits on Contingence", *International Journal of Sino-Western Studies*, vol. 12, 73-79. (<https://www.sinowesternstudies.com/back-issues/vol-12-2017/>)

[2] For recent accounts of Augustine's theory of will, see Albrecht Dihle, *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity*, (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1982), 144; Christoph Horn, "Augustinus und die Entstehung des philosophischen Willensbegriffs," *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung*, H. 1/2 (1996), 113-132; Charles Kahn, "Discovering the will: from Aristotle to Augustine," in JM Dillon & AA Long eds., *The Question of Eclecticism. Studies in Later Greek Philosophy*, (Berkeley/Los Angeles/Oxford: University of California Press, 1988), 234-259; Michael Frede, *A Free Will: Origins of the Notion in Ancient Thought*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 31-48.

on Neoplatonism. Augustine's anti-Manichean works include *De duabus animabus*, *Contra Fortunatum*, and *De libero arbitrio* and so on.

Even though Augustine never systematically discussed the problem of evil (*malum*), as Leibniz did, he divided evil into three categories: the natural, the metaphysical and the ethical. According to Augustine, the metaphysical evil is the deprivation of good (*privatio boni*). Ethical evil is named as sin (*peccatum*) and this kind of evil has two varieties, namely voluntary sin and punishment of sin.^[3] By introducing the notion of will, Augustine provided a solution to this old philosophical and theological question.

The notion of will (*voluntas*) is scattered throughout Augustine's earlier works. In *De libero arbitrio*, Augustine articulates his efforts to construct this concept in a philosophical way. When it comes to this work, we must mention Augustine's comments in *Retractationes*, "after I was ordained a priest at Hippo Regius, I completed, in Africa, the second and third of these books, insofar as I could at the same time."^[4] The first book was finished in 388, the last two books were finished after 392. Peter Brown argues that Augustine still presented a stoic understanding on the will in the first book, although he emphasized the weakness of humanity and the necessity of sin in the third book.^[5] Following this traditional interpretation, Robert O' Conner separately discusses the Stoicism in *De libero arbitrio* I.^[6] However, Simon Harrison opposes the traditional reading and defends the continuity of this entire work.^[7] Related to this discussion, the published works have also concentrated on the discussion of the distinction between voluntary sin and involuntary sin.^[8]

My concern in this article is with how Augustine established the concept of will while responding to the question of evil and whether his account can also help identify the responsibility of fallen people. In the first section, I will briefly deal with two different conceptions of will. In the second section, I will describe how Augustine constructs the notion of will and connects it with sin. Finally, I will discuss "involuntary sin". I will conclude that Augustine has a consistent understanding of will throughout this work.

II. Two conceptions of will

As Vernon Bourke shows in his fundamental research, there are different meanings of the

[3] *Contra Fortunatum* 15 "hoc est solum quod dicitur malum, voluntarium nostrum peccatum. Est et aliud genus mali, quod est poena peccati."

[4] *Retractationes* I, 8 "Quorum secundum et tertium in Africa, iam Hippone Regio presbyter ordinatus, sicut tunc potui, terminavi."

[5] Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: a biography*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 149

[6] Robert J. O' Connell, "De libero arbitrio I, Stocism Revisited," *Augustinian Studies*, Vol. 1 (1970), 49-68.

[7] Simon Harrison, *Augustine's way into the will: the theological and philosophical significance of De libero arbitrio*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). Hua Wei has also defended a consistent thesis. See, 花威 Hua Wei, 《意志的创造与堕落——奥古斯丁〈论自由决断〉的内在统一》[The Creation and Fall of Voluntas: Rethinking the Continuity of Augustine's *De libero arbitrio*], 《哲学门》Zhhexue men [Beida Journal of Philosophy], No. 28, 北京 Beijing: 北京大学出版社 Beijing daxue chubanshe [The Press of Peking University], 2013), 31-54.

[8] James Wetzel, *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 76-85, 86-125; 吴天岳 Wu Tianyue, 《意愿与自由: 奥古斯丁意愿概念的道德心理学解读》Yiyuanyuziyou: aogusiding yiyuan gainian de daode xinlixue jiedu [Voluntas et libertas: a philosophical account of Augustine's conception of the will in the domain of moral psychology], (北京 Beijing: 北京大学出版社 Beijing daxue chubanshe [Peking University Press], 2010), 259-306.

concept of will.^[9] Among them, there are two different notions of will, which are related to human action and can be found in Augustine. In order to illustrate the distinction, we can examine two different examples:

(a) “ After some consideration, Michael wants to go to school instead of playing computer games. ”

(b) “The young Augustine wants to steal a peach, even though he knows that he benefits nothing from the theft. ”

In example (a), we can see that the ‘wanting to’ derives from his reasoning about what is beneficial. It might be better to call it wishing or desiring. In this example, Michael has considered which is better for his life. This notion of will denotes the understanding of will in the ancient intellectual tradition. It finds its roots in the main scheme or conception of the soul. Generally, the soul would be divided into a rational and an irrational part. The will would be subordinate to the rational parts. Hence, there is no separate faculty of will in this psychology.

Now taking example (b) into consideration, we can see that the will is independent on reasoning. It describes the voluntarist understanding of the will. In this tradition, the will can act against reason. This concept of will reveals voluntarism, which stems from the Christian tradition.

Augustine, who is familiar with ancient philosophy and Christianity, has combined these two understandings of will. In his earlier discussions, Augustine has already introduced two concepts of will, namely, will (*voluntas*) and free decision (*liberum arbitrium*). Even though Augustine uses these two concepts interchangeably, we can still illustrate the philosophical difference between them.

Voluntas belongs to the intellectual tradition. Cicero used this word to translate Plato’s *bouleŕsis*, which appears in *Gorgias* (466a9-467e5). In this passage, Plato discusses the power of tyrants and sophists. By introducing the will as an intellectual appetite, Plato points out that only those who pursue genuine happiness and lead a rational life can be called powerful. However, those who pursue riches and power are only able to satisfy their own desire. This satisfaction is only accidental and irrational. Because of this Platonic distinction, *bouleŕsis* has been used as a technical philosophical term, which refers to intellectual desire. By contrast, arbitrary decision is bounded to desire and has been criticized by Plato for not being stable. Cicero translated the term with *voluntas* and thereby influenced Augustine. In *De libero arbitrio* I, Augustine convinces Evodius that good will (*bona voluntas*) is based on prudence (*prudentia*). Here, Augustine connects good will with reason, echoing the intellectual tradition.

As for *liberum arbitrium*, it differs from *voluntas* and means a faculty of decision. Christoph Horn has illustrated the features of *liberum arbitrium*. I would like to summarize them here: (1) Ultimate and sufficient causality; (2) Consciousness; (3) Self-motion; (4) Inescapability; (5) Arbitrariness.^[10] When it comes to the turning of an individual from eternal law toward temporal law, the will in the sense of free decision must play a role. Otherwise how can we interpretate the rational will as it turns voluntarily from eternity when intellectual desire is always oriented to the

[9] Vernon J. Bourke, *Will in Western Thought: An Historico-Critical Survey*, (Sheed and Ward -New York, 1964).

[10] Christoph Horn, “How close is Augustine’s *liberum arbitrium* to the concept of *eph’hēmin*?” in: P. Destrée/R. Salles /M. Zingano eds., *What is Up to Us? Studies on Agency and Responsibility in Ancient Philosophy*, (Sankt Augustin: Academia 2014), 308.

eternal good?

With this distinction in mind, we can understand the basic ideas of Augustine. *Voluntas* means inclination, while *liberum arbitrium* refers to free decision. As Den Bok clearly summerizes, “ ‘will’ in Augustine’s understanding usually means (1) inclination which can be stronger or weaker, directed to this or to that. As such Augustine calls it ‘free’ (*libera*) to the degree what is ‘good’. This inclination is accompanied by (2) a movement of acceptance or consent which can be given to or can be withheld from this or that. Because of this second aspect, the will can be called ‘free’ (*liberum*) with respect to this alternativity, which is a lasting feature of the will. ”^[11]

With the distinction between will and free decision, we can firstly claim that Augustine is not simply an intellectualist or voluntarist. Rather Augustine combined this two traditions. Additionally, with the help of this distinction, we can better understand the different states of human being. Adam and Eve had a free will capable to sin (*posse peccare*); the postlapsarian has a free will not to sin (*non posse non peccare*); people in heaven have a free will not to sin (*non posse peccare*). All of them have free decision. Only Adam and Eve could have the power to choose between good and evil. The postlapsarians are oriented to evil and have only a false freedom. In contrast, people in heaven are only oriented towards the good, which would be called true freedom.^[12]

III. Voluntary sin

De libero arbitrio begins with Evodius’s question, whence comes evil (*unde malum*). His aim is to prove that it is not God but the human will that is the creator of evil. Augustine presents his solution in the form of a dialog. The dialog is not a historical one; rather, Augustine develops it philosophically. Augustine uses the method of *maieutics*, leading Evodius to approach the truth. We can see that Augustine proceeds from external action to moral psychology and even to a metaphysical construction of the world.

Now we begin to describe Augustine’s efforts in three steps, in order to find the definition of evil. Namely, from the evil actions to the psychological analyze of desire and lastly to the metaphysical structure of the world. In the first book of *De libero arbitrio*, Augustine begins with different kinds of evil actions. Augustine takes adultery (*adulteria*) as an example. Evodius points out that it is evil not because it is forbidden by the law. Instead, it is forbidden by the law because it is evil. From then on, Augustine reminds Evodius to turn to the inner world, in order to find the definition of evil. That means evil is not restricted to outer actions. Rather the evil is related to desire, which is not seen from the outside.

In the second step, Augustine turns to the inner world and regards “lust” (*libido*) as the cause of the evil actions, which is the synonym of desire (*cupiditas*). We should note that Augustine does not claim that desire is *per se* blameful at a first glance. Both good people and bad people have desires.

[11] Den Bok Nico W. “Freedom of the Will: A systematic and biographical sounding of Augustine’s thoughts on human willing,” *Augustiniana* 44, 3/4 (1994), 245.

[12] Marianne Djuth, “Liberty”, in Allan Fitzgerald eds., *Augustine through the Ages*, (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 496-497.

Augustine introduces the concept of blameworthy desire (improbanable cupiditas). But what kind of desire is blameworthy? Augustine raises an example. When a slave kills his master in order to protect himself, should this desire for living be taken as blameworthy? In what follows Augustine raises a Stoic criteria of desire: "Good people pursue this by turning their love away from things that cannot be possessed without the risk of losing them. Evil people, on the other hand, try to remove hindrances so that they may securely attach themselves to these things to be enjoyed."^[13] From this passage we can see the contrast between the things which we will necessarily lose and those things which we will not. Similarly, the Stoics hold that people should desire things in their power (in potestate), for example, virtue, wisdom and so on. On the other hand, people should not desire those things which are beyond their control, e. g. riches, fame. This comparison belongs also to the distinction of *ta eph'hemin* or in potestate.

With this distinction, Augustine can finally answer the question whether the slave, who kills his master, is blameworthy. At first glance, the slave was driven without doubt by his desire to continue living. However, life will be eventually lost. Therefore, the slave desires things which he will lose. He is blameworthy. Yet, Evodius also points out that the law permitted such action, in order to avoid greater evils. Here the conflict arises between the definition of evil and the requirement of the law - the law allowed the slave to kill his master in this situation, while the slave should not kill the master to keep his life.

From this point on, the dialog turns to the metaphysical realm in the third step. To strengthen the contrast, Augustine directs the discussion to a metaphysical one, by introducing the distinction between eternal laws and temporal laws. According to the eternal law, the soul is higher than desire: "since (a) anything equal or superior to a governing mind possessed of virtue does not make it the servant of lust, on account of justice, and since in addition (b) anything inferior to it could not do this, on account of weakness, as the points we have agreed on between us establish, we are left with this conclusion: Nothing makes the mind a devotee of desire but its own will and free decision."^[14]

In this passage, Augustine gives his final answer to the *unde malum* question. For him, the will and free decision are the cause of the evil. Nothing other than they themselves could force them to be the servant of lust. Moreover, we could see that Augustine appeals to the concept of order (*ordo*) implicitly. Here, he mentions the inferiority of the mind or reason to desire. And he expounds on the conception of order in the following two books. In *De libero arbitrio* II, Augustine presents in which sense free will is good. He uses a lot of ink to prove the existence of God. Based on this proof, Augustine shows to Evodius that all things that come from God are good. In order to explain the order, Augustine appeals to the neo-platonic worldview and sees the world as a hierarchy of the good: great goods (*magna bona*), intermediate goods (*media bona*) and lesser goods (*minima bona*). As the intermediate good, the will could either become greater or lower. As Augustine writes,

[13] *De libero arbitrio* I, 4. 10. "boni appetunt avertendo amorem ab his rebus, quae sine amittendi periculo nequeunt haberi; mali autem ut his fruendis cum securitate incubent, removere impedimenta conantur." For the English translation of this work, I mainly quote from *On the Free Choice of the Will*, ed. and trans. by Peter King, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[14] *De libero arbitrio* I, 11. 21. "quidquid par aut praelatum est, non eam facit servam libidinis propter iustitiam; quidquid autem inferius est, non possit hoc facere propter infirmitatem, sicut ea quae inter nos constiterunt docent; nulla res alia mentem cupiditatis comitem faciat, quam propria voluntas et liberum arbitrium."

“Therefore, when the will adheres to the common and unchangeable good, it achieves the great and fundamental goods of a human being, despite being an intermediate good. but the will sins when it is turned away from the unchangeable and common good, towards its private good, or towards something external, or towards something lower. The will is turned to its private good when it wants to be in its own power; it is turned to something external when it is eager to know the personal affairs of other people, or anything that is not its business; it is turned to something lower when it takes delight in bodily pleasures.”^[15]

Obviously, we can see the platonicharacter of Augustine’s thought. We should note that Plotinus has not raised the notion of will. However, Plotinus grounds the basic structure of Augustine’s understanding on the world - order. The free will, as an intermediate good, is given by God. When it turns toward God, it will become greater. But when it turns away from God, it becomes lower. Augustine completes the proof for the independence of the will in the *De libero arbitrio* III. “... the mind becomes a slave to lust only through its own will; It cannot be forced to this ugliness by what is higher or by what is equal, since it is unjust; nor by what is lower, since it is unable.”^[16] The just God would not force human beings to sin, and the lower things cannot force him to sin. In this sense, only the will decides itself and could choose between a better or a lesser good. No doubt, Augustine has established his understanding of the free will. Nothing can force the will except itself.

In *De libero arbitrio* II, 20, 54, when it comes to questioning whether the movement of the will comes from somewhere beyond itself, Augustine gives a negative answer. It is worthwhile to mention here that some commentators would claim that Augustine could not explain where the first will to sin comes from. Based on this text, they would see Augustitne as an agonist.^[17] However, it is not proper. As far as I can see, what Augustine wants to emphasize is that the will is the first cause. In other words, the will determines itself and hence can be seen as the first-mover.

IV. The will of fallen man

In the previous section, we have seen that Augustine provides a general discussion of voluntary sin and concludes that the human will, rather than God, is the author of sin. The theodicy question could be finally answered by introducing the notion of will. However, the will has only been presented in a normative way. Metaphysically, the will is independent. But Augustine has not yet

[15] *De libero arbitrio*, II, 19, 52. “Voluntas ergo adhaerens communi atque incommutabili bono, impetrat prima et magna hominis bona, cum ipsa sit medium quoddam bonum. Voluntas autem aversa ab incommutabili et communi bono, et conversa ad proprium bonum, aut ad exterius, aut ad inferius, peccat. Ad proprium convertitur, cum suae potestatis vult esse; ad exterius, cum aliorum propria, vel quaecumque ad se non pertinent, cognoscere studet; ad inferius, cum voluptatem corporis diligit.”

[16] *De libero arbitrio*, III, 1. 2. “nulla re fieri mentem servam libidinis, nisi propria voluntate: nam neque a superiore, neque ab aequali eam posse ad hoc dedecus cogi, quia iniustum est; neque ab inferiore, quia non potest.”

[17] 花威 Hua Wei, 《意志的创造与堕落——奥古斯丁〈论自由决断〉的内在统一》[The Creation and Fall of Voluntas: Rethinking the Continuity of Augustine’s *De libero arbitrio*], 《哲学门》Zhhexue men [Beida Journal of Philosophy], No. 28, 北京 Beijing: 北京大学出版社 Beidaxue chubanshe [The Press of Peking University], 2013, 50.

advanced to the discussion of the will of fallen people, which we could name as a non-normative will. This difference can also be reflected from the scheme of the book. Notoriously, Augustine starts to change his strategy from metaphysical argument to a historical-theological one from the text of *De libero arbitrio* III 18. 51. Based on this abrupt change, Alflatt claims that Augustine does not have a consistent position. Besides, he names the sin of fallen people as “involuntary sin”.^[18]

The distinction between the normative and non normative description of will finds its roots in the Christian understanding of original sin. As we know, Augustine gives his classification of evil, namely, the sin and the punishment of sin. From the historical-theological perspective, the first is related to Adam and Eve, while the second is related to fallen people. Adam and Eve have freedom to sin (*posse peccare*). They have a perfect state of free will in the sense of free decision between good and evil. In contrast, fallen people would sin necessarily (*necessitate*). That is to say, they have only freedom to sin. (*non posse non peccare*).

How does Augustine describe the human situation after the fall? It comes to ignorance (*ignorantia*) and trouble (*difficultas*). As Augustine writes,

“For there really are two penalties for each sinful soul: ignorance and trouble. Through ignorance the soul is dishonored by error; through trouble it is afflicted with torments. But to approve falsehoods as truths so that one errs against one’s will, and to not be able to hold oneself back from lustful actions due to the relentless and tortuous affliction of carnal bondage, is not human nature as originally established, but the penalty after being damned.”^[19]

As we can see, ignorance and trouble are two determinations of fallen people. The notion of ignorance is ambiguous, which has been interpreted from different points of view. One of these points of view relates it to practical wisdom, which echoes the Aristotelian prudence (*phronesis*). The other is the knowledge of God.^[20] Regarding trouble, it means the affliction of carnal bondage and relates to the weakness of will in this paragraph. It reflects what Paul says, “I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want.” (Rom 7:19)

Now, how should we understand the relationship between ignorance and trouble? According to T. Y. Wu, some scholars have ignored the analysis of trouble or tried to reduce trouble to ignorance.^[21] Wu criticizes that this intellectualist reading and claims that it has not considered the independence of the will. I agree with Wu’s critics and want to emphasize the relationship between trouble and will from two different perspectives. First, as we have mentioned in the first section, free decision as the faculty of decision can act against reason. This means that even if we have knowledge, either practical knowledge or knowledge of God, people could still sin. Second, Augustine defines

[18] Malcome Alflatt, “The development of the idea of involuntary sin in St. Augustine. *Revue d’Etudes Augustiniennes Et Patristiques*, 20(1-2), 1974, 113-134.

[19] *De libero arbitrio*, III, 18. 52. “Nam sunt revera omni peccanti animae duo ista poenalia, ignorantia et difficultas. Ex ignorantia dehonestat error, ex difficultate cruciatus affligit. Sed approbare falsa pro veris, ut erret invitus, et resistente atque torquente dolore carnalis vinculi, non posse a libidinosis operibus temperare, non est natura instituti hominis, sed poena damnati.”

[20] See Yang Xiaogang, *Der Begriff des malum in der philosophischen Psychologie Augustins*, (Paderbon, Ferdinand Schöningh, 2016), 163.

[21] 吴天岳 Wu Tianyue, 《意愿与自由: 奥古斯丁意愿概念的道德心理学解读》*Yiyuanyuziyou: aogusiding yiyuan gainian de daode xinlixue jiedu* [Voluntas et libertas: a philosophical account of Augustine’s conception of the will in the domain of moral psychology], (北京 Beijing: 北京大学出版社 Beijing daxue chubanshe [Peking University Press], 2010), 138-139.

trouble as carnal habit (consuetudo carnalis) or carnal bandage (vincula carnalis) in this paragraph.^[22] What Augustine says is not that the desire of the body causes the trouble, but rather that it is the consent (consensus) of the will toward the desire that causes trouble. This phenomenon cannot be interpreted in the intellectualist tradition. For the intellectualist would appeal either to lack of knowledge or to the overriding of desire over reason. Augustine would not agree that desire is the source of evil and he would point out that the consent of the will is the source of sin. For in this consent the will loses its order, namely aversion from the better good and attraction to the lower good.

Now we can turn to the question of whether fallen people are still free and should take their responsibility for ignorance and trouble. At first glance, it is worth mentioning a rhetorical solution. As O'Connell puts it, Augustine has made use of the word "proprie". It means that voluntary sin is proper sin.^[23] Accordingly, the involuntary sin is sin in a weaker sense. However, we need to find more plausible reasons for the involuntary sin.

Moreover, we should notice the distinction between punishment (poena) and sin (peccatum). It does not mean that the punishment has cancelled free will. As Augustine writes,

"If of its own will the soul neglects this progress in the best studies and in religiousness, the ability for which has not been denied to it, then it is justly cast into more serious ignorance and trouble (which is already a penalty). It is placed among inferior things by the most fitting and suitable governance. The soul is not held guilty because it is naturally ignorant and naturally incapable, but rather because it did not make an effort to know, and because it did not work enough to acquire the ability to act rightly."^[24]

We can see in this passage that fallen people still have a will (propria voluntas) and the power over themselves. As Augustine emphasizes, sin does not originate in ignorance and trouble, which are normal in the state of fallen nature. Rather human souls ignore their power to search for true life. When the soul does not make an effort to know, the soul would be seen as sinful. For the effort to know lies in the power of the will.

After making this argument, Augustine turns to his Christology to explain his ideas concerning ignorance and trouble. Augustine shows that Jesus as a person has overcome ignorance and trouble. This functions as an example to show that fallen people can also do what Jesus has done. Hence, the power to do the good lies in the belief in Christ. The belief in Christ still lies in the power of will.

[22] Augustine's understanding of carnal habit is related to his conception of sexuality and marriage. See, Gao Yuan, "Augustine's Conception of Sexuality and Marriage: A Defense against Alignment of Human Merits on Continence", *International Journal of Sino-Western Studies*, Vol. 12, (2017), 73-79.

[23] Robert J. O'Connell "'Involuntary Sin' in the *De Libero Arbitrio*", *Revue d'Etudes Augustiniennes et Patristiques* 37. 1 (1991), 23-36.

[24] *De libero arbitrio* III, 22. 64. "Quem profectum in studiis optimis atque pietate, quorum facultas ei non negata est, si propria voluntate neglecterit, iuste in graviorem, quae iam poenalis est, ignorantiam difficultatemque praecipitur, decentissimo et convenientissimo rerum moderamine in inferioribus ordinata. Non enim quod naturaliter nescit et naturaliter non potest, hoc animae deputatur in reatum; sed quod scire non studuit, et quod dignam facilitati comparandae ad recte faciendum operam non dedit."

Here I want to claim that Augustine does not claim for fideism by introducing Jesus here, rather he still emphasizes the moral meaning of Jesus Christ. In a word, Augustine shows that fallen people could still have the freedom to be saved and seek true freedom. “even in their ignorance and trouble He did not take away their free will to ask and inquire and strive.”^[25] Now we can see that fallen people are still free and have to take responsibility for their sin. This understanding of human nature in this work is still optimistic. Augustine’s pessimistic understanding on human nature has not yet been formulated.

V. Conclusion

Through this study we can conclude here with two remarks. First, Augustine has successfully replied to the classical question of the problem of evil, by introducing the concept of will and free decision. On the one hand, Augustine establishes the independence of the will by appealing to the neo-platonic order. On the other hand, Augustine has also established the relationship between will and evil or sin. Second, by analyzing the text on ignorance and trouble, we can see that even fallen people still have free decision. On the one hand, they carry the responsibility for their ignorance and trouble. On the other hand, they could still seek for their happy life through their own efforts. In this sense, *De libero arbitrio* could be seen as a whole. There is no fundamental distinction between the different books.

[25] *De libero arbitrio* III, 20, 58 “quibus etiam in ipsa ignorantia et difficultate liberam voluntatem petendi et quaerendi et conandi non abstulit.”

中文题目:

奥古斯丁论意志与罪

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摘要: 奥古斯丁作为第一个意愿哲学家与他对恶之由来(unde malum)这一问题的思考及回答密切相关。在《论自由决断》这部著作中, 奥古斯丁通过引入意愿(voluntas)/自由决断(libenum arbitrium)回应了这一问题。本文首先澄清意愿与自由决断这两者概念的区别并简单重构奥古斯丁对意愿独立性的论证; 其次本文将罪解释为对上帝的背离; 最后本文将指出处于无知(ignorantia)与困苦(difficultas)状态中的人仍然具有自由决断的能力, 并具有道德责任。

关键词: 奥古斯丁; 意愿; 自由决断; 罪