

The Relationship between Faith, Reason, and Will in Augustine *

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Research Article

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Abstract: Faith has a great place in the epistemology of Augustine, who adopted the phrase “you will not understand unless you believe (nisi credideritis, non intellegetis).” This situation has led to the comments by the philosophers that reason is insufficient or has no importance in Augustine, but according to Augustine, reaching the truth is only possible with the working of reason and belief together, and it cannot happen without any of them. The rational part of the soul (animus), which is at the top of it, is like a door to God, but faith is essential for this to be possible. According to Augustine, the reason why faith is necessary for the realization of divine illumination, which is the only way to reach the truth, is that the will, polluted by original sin, hinders the mind, and that which will enable the mind to grasp all mysteries is the purification of the will by faith. In this study, why Augustine used faith together with reason will be examined in terms of the relationship between divine illumination and the will.

Keywords: Augustine, reason, faith, will, truth.

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Fides quaerit, intellectus invenit.

De Trinitate: VX.2.2

The relationship between reason and faith has a very important place for Augustine. Since Augustine's thoughts on reason are intertwined with faith, generally philosophers think that reason is not as important as faith in Augustine, but for him, reason and faith are concepts that do not replace each other, and one is incomplete without the other.

According to Augustine, understanding can only be realized with reason accompanied by faith; according to him, reason cannot grasp all the mysteries of God, and therefore some truths cannot be reached by the mind alone. This feature of reason Augustine sees as the result of Adam's original sin; that is, by sinning, man has closed his reason to the path to the truth (*De Ver. Rel.:* viii. 14). In *Contra Academicos*, Augustine says that he will never depart from the guidance of Christ but will also seek his faith with reason in hopes of gaining a better understanding (*C. Acad.:* III.20.43). He expresses this thought again in *De Ordine*; According to Augustine, we reach learning in a two-stage way through reason and authority; temporally, authority comes first, and the reason is prioritized about the things (*De Ord.:* II.9.26).¹ He mentions that people who are not properly guided only turn to religious authority, and educated people are based on reason. However, according to Augustine, both alone are not enough, it is necessary to start with faith and reach understanding with reason, because he says that it cannot be lived with only religious authorities, therefore reason should not be left no matter how badly it is used. Likewise, the biggest mistake of philosophy is that it starts with reason and bases it only on reason alone (*De Ord.:* II.5.16). Augustine says that people should use reason as a tool to understand authority. Before his conversion, when he looked at the Scriptures and saw the words, he knew what they meant, but he could not understand

¹ *Ad discendum item necessario dupliciter ducimur, auctoritate atque ratione. Tempore auctoritas, re autem ratio prior est.*

them; but after believing, he has begun to understand what these words meant because now he is benefiting from divine enlightenment. Thus it is not possible for him to believe in the Bible without the authority of the Catholic Church (*De Trin.*: XI.8.15). Although Augustine thought in his early days that philosophical inquiry was useful for reaching the knowledge of important truths, later in his *Confessiones* he says that we are too weak to reach the truth by reason alone, and therefore we need the authority of the Sacred Scriptures (*Conf.*: VI.5.8). Augustine says that it is a marvelous thing for the mind (*mens*) to go beyond the created universe and reach the immutable reality of God, yet this mind, in which reason (*ratio*) and understanding (*intellegentia*) resides, is too weak to hold this unchanging light and cannot afford such bliss. It needs to be strengthened day by day to be suitable. This can only happen by purifying the mind with faith (*De Civ.*: XI.2).

In *Soliloquies*, Augustine says he wants to know God and the soul, and in the second book of *De Libero Arbitrio*, Augustine asks Evodius how he can be sure of God's existence. His purpose is to find out how to attain the knowledge of God. Evodius replied that he certainly believed that God existed, but that he did not know; he ends the discussion by saying that he wants to know and understand what we believe (*De Lib. Arb.*: II.2.5). Augustine did not engage much in God arguments, but here he implies that God's existence can be attained by faith and reason. When he later revises that work in his letter to Evodius, he says that reason has never proven God's necessity, or that reason cannot prove God's existence (*Ep.*: 162.2). Still, Augustine does not abandon the idea that faith is the way to reach God, because knowing God also includes knowing that He opens our perceptive power.

For Augustine, God is the precondition of knowledge and they are inseparable. God is truth; to know God is to know the truth and we can reach God only by faith. Therefore, for Augustine, *fides* is the door of understanding: "Faith is a low-entry door through which the heart bends to enter, through which the whole reason

is cleared to grasp the universal truth, to see God”.² Although reason stands at the highest point of the soul and is directly connected with God, it does not have the full understanding. This can only happen if it is guided by faith: “Contemplation is the counterpart of faith that our hearts are purified by faith, just as it is written: By faith, it has purified our hearts”³ (*De Trin.*: I.8.17).

Here, the will has an important place in terms of belief. To know God fully is to know again, says Cushman (*cognition/re-cognition*), because only in the case of God there can be *cognitio* without *agnitio*. God can be known without being known, without being aware of it. “Faith is what moves the will, or rather, belief is a certain action of the will”.⁴ At this point, faith serves a reason, not replaces it, that is, Augustine does not abolish reason and replace it with faith. The reason somehow grasps reality, whether eternal or temporal, but it is the virtue of the will to know what it grasps. This re-cognition or awareness is the grace of the will.⁵ According to Augustine, it is not the mind that is already corrupt, but the will itself. Augustine does not doubt that reason is useful in understanding the existence of God but adds that it can still provide false information if not guided by faith, which does not make reason bad. For this, Augustine also puts great value on reason and places it just below God, at the very top of the soul, always in connection with God. Even when fully occupied with creatures and turned away from God, reason still receives power from divine enlightenment by the power of will (*De Lib. Arb.*: II.4.13; *Sol.*: I.7.14). In this way, man can know God without knowing that he knows Him, but knowing God fully can only happen by wanting to know. Cushman says that Augustine sought a timeless principle that could be an effective basis for value judgment and found nothing but God, the

² Robert E. Cushman, “Faith and Reason in the Thought of St. Augustine,” *Church History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950), 273.

³ Acts 15:9. *Contemplatio quippe merces est fidei, cui mercedi per fidem corda mundantur, sicut scriptum est: Mundans fide corda eorum.*

⁴ Cushman, “Faith and Reason in the Thought of St. Augustine,” 273.

⁵ Cushman, “Faith and Reason in the Thought of St. Augustine,” 274.

eternal and unchangeable truth above the mind.⁶ Thus, Augustine concludes that the mind is necessary for communication with God (*Conf.*: VII.17.23). God resides in the mind of man and is used by many but is not known to anyone except those who go inward. Unless a man turns to God within, he cannot discover the creator of this world by observing things outside. For this reason, Augustine says that the soul that looks outward, not inward, while seeking God, is blind (*Conf.*: III.3.6).

Then why is faith needed when reason is so important to Augustine? The reason why Augustine sees faith as a principle on which knowledge and reason depend is because of the character of the will because according to him, every will is corrupted and God can only be found with a purified mind (*De Trin.*: I.2.4). Augustine sees belief and knowledge as an act of will. Considering the fallen man's condition, man has turned his face from the light to the creatures illuminated by the light. Here, man's turning his back on God's light is a symbol of corrupt love, that is, it signifies the original sin.⁷ The first evil will from which all human evil acts spring is man turning away from the works of God towards his own. Therefore, the resulting actions are bad. Because of this corrupt will of man, creations have become the dominant object of knowledge (*De Trin.*: XV.20.28). Augustine, therefore, puts faith at the beginning of knowledge, for only those with a pure heart can see God, and this heart can only be cleansed by faith, by setting aside pride; for pride is the beginning of all sin, and the beginning of man's sin is turning away from God (*De Civ.*: XIV.11). Only after believing does a man take full advantage of divine enlightenment.

The divine enlightenment or *illuminatio* doctrine has an important place in Augustine's epistemology. According to this teaching, God illuminates the truths in our minds and enables us to see these truths. Augustine is convinced that certainty comes from God, that is, from the light in which everything is known for cer-

⁶ Cushman, "Faith and Reason in the Thought of St. Augustine," 278.

⁷ Cushman, "Faith and Reason in the Thought of St. Augustine," 288.

tain. Seeing this light means reaching all the unchanging and certain knowledge that lies in the darkness of the mind. This divine enlightenment occupies an important place in Augustine's epistemology and explains his understanding of truth. The truth in God can only be grasped by our minds through this divine light. Augustine proposes the illumination of divine light as a solution to the problem of how the mind grasps the transcendent, which arises because the truth is above the mind:

Qualis in me tunc erat nesciente alio lumine illam illustrandam esse, ut sit particeps veritatis, quia non est ipsa natura veritatis, quoniam tu illuminabis lucernam meam, Domine; Deus meus, illuminabis tenebras meas, et de plenitudine tua omnes nos accepimus. Es enim tu lumen verum, quod illuminat omnem hominem venientem in hunc mundum, quia in te non est transmutatio nec momenti obumbratio.

I was in such a situation at that time. I knew that in order for my mind to share in the truth, it had to be illuminated by another light from outside, because the mind itself was not the essence of truth. So, you will light my lamp, O Lord, you will illuminate my darkness, my God, because we all have something from your fulfillment. You are the true light that illuminates every person who comes into this world, for there is no room for change in you, nor for the shadow formed as a result of deviation from the path (*Conf.*: IV.15.25).

Thanks to this light within us, the mind can reach the truth that is transcendent to itself. The enlightenment here is not in the sense that God gives us the truth, but rather an insight into the truth. Unless we grasp the truth of things based on the senses with our minds, we are not acquiring knowledge.

Augustine's *De Magistro* is a work that can be a source of divine enlightenment. The subject of this book is the teacher's role in the meaning and purpose of the speech, but it also examines the possibility of learning in terms of language, will, reason and belief. In *De Magistro* x.31, Augustine writes that "nothing is taught without signs (*nihil sine signis doceri*)" but a few paragraphs later in x.33 he says, "nothing is taught through signs (*fortasse nihil invenies, quod per sua signa dicatur*)". For this situation, Louis H.

Mackey says that a paradox has occurred and that the solution to this paradox is in Christ according to Augustine.⁸

Augustine speaks primarily of learning through signs (*signum*). Signs take the place of things in our minds, and we receive these signs through our senses, so that the signs that enter the mind call to our attention what they stand for; that is, when we encounter an object, our mind creates an image of that object and stores it in memory. When the same object is encountered again, this mark in the mind is brought to our attention and we recognize the object we encounter. For example, when we see a table for the first time, the *signum* of that table is placed in the mind, and when we see a table again or when someone tells us about the table, we remember the table. Here Augustine speaks of a kind of law of reason, a sort of rule of speech implanted in our minds, which briefly states that unless we say otherwise, we assume that signs indicate things (*De Mag.*: viii.24). Augustine explains this with the example of a man (*homo*). “What is a human?” When the question is asked, he says that the first answer to this is animal (*animal*), but later when asked what the *human* in the sentence is, he says that the answer is named (*nomen*). In this case, a human can be both a noun and an animal, but by the convention of speech, if it is not clearly stated which one is asked, the mind directly thinks about what the sign symbolizes, that is, it is thought that man is an animal. The rule mentioned here is not immutable; it only explains the tendency of the mind.

Augustine then explains the influence of signs (*signum*) on learning. As stated earlier, Augustine first says that nothing can be taught without signs. If the table is to be told what it is, it can be explained with a sentence such as “it is a table that can be used for different tasks and is placed on a support” and the person on the other hand can get an idea of what the table is. Without signs, by pointing at the table, it can be explained to the other party what

⁸ Louis H. Mackey, “The Mediator Mediated: Faith and Reason in Augustine's *De Magistro*,” *Franciscan Studies* 42 (1982), 136.

the table is, but although teaching by showing is seen as an exception, the situation is not different, because an object can be explained by pointing, but it may be difficult to show the actions of walking or talking. When someone asks, “What is talking?” although it is tried to show that this action is the speech by saying something to the question, the other person may think that the words mentioned describing speech. Augustine says that this kind of learning carries uncertainty, ergo, nothing can be taught without signs. However, he later says that nothing can be taught through signs because the sign cannot be made sense of without knowing what the signs signify. Signs require prior knowledge of the object to which they are placed. Hearing the sign that symbolizes the object without knowing what it is does not give us information about the object, for this, it is necessary to look at the object itself. In this case, learning is not through spoken words, but by looking at reality itself (*De Mag.*: x.33). Without knowing what a table is, hearing the word “table” means nothing; where the table itself is *significatum* and the word table is *signum*. The sign cannot be interpreted correctly without knowing in advance what its *significatum* is, the senses are needed in this regard so that the table can be seen beforehand, and its sign is formed in the mind. For this reason, Augustine says, signs do not serve as instructive, but as reminders of things learned without signs (*De Mag.*: xi.36). Thus, the speaker does not teach us anything by uttering the words, his words only lead us to consult the truth within us:

De universis autem quae intellegimus non loquentem qui personat foris, sed intus ipsi menti praesidentem consulimus veritatem, verbis fortasse ut consulamus admoniti. Ille autem qui consulitur, docet, qui in interiore homine habitare dictus est Christus, *id est incommutabilis Dei Virtus atque sempiterna Sapientia*: quam quidem omnis rationalis anima consulit;

About what we understand, we appeal not to the speaker’s sounds, but to the truth that rules from within the mind itself, although we are led to consult it because of the words. It is Christ who is consulted,

who teaches us and is said to live in the inner man, that is, *the unchanging power and eternal wisdom of God with whom every soul consults* (*De Mag.*: xi.38).

Truth (veritas), which shows us things as they are and organizes our minds by enabling us to interpret signs correctly. For Augustine, too, Truth is a name for Christ, the Word of God, the wisdom of God.⁹ It lies within the soul and shows us the truth through the interpretation of signs. The signs themselves are adverbs like *ecce*, they have no meaning on their own; they enter the mind and call to our attention what we know (*De Mag.*: x.34-35). Only God's wisdom lies within us and has the power to teach us things and show us what they mean. The reason why Augustine generally calls his enlightenment teaching divine illumination is that the light referred to here is the light of Christ or God:

Nam illud iam ipse Deus est, haec autem creatura, quamvis rationalis et intellectualis ad eius imaginem facta, quae cum conatur lumen illud intueri, palpitat infirmitate, et minus valet. Inde est tamen quidquid intellegit sicut valet.

Because that light is God himself, on the other hand, the soul is the creature, even though the reason and the mind were created in his image; and when the soul adjusts its gaze towards that light, it trembles with weakness and does not quite achieve it. Yet it is from this light that the soul understands what it understands (*De Gen. Lit.*: XII.31.59).

It may be thought that this enlightenment in Augustine applies only to *a priori* truths, but all human understanding derives from this source.¹⁰ Augustine also speaks of sensory-based information received from the outside about divine illumination. For example, we need the bodily senses for the headscarf (*sarabara*); we need to see what it is, but learning by showing is, as has been

⁹ Mackey, "The Mediator Mediated: Faith and Reason in Augustine's *De Magistro*," 141.

¹⁰ Gareth B. Matthews, "Knowledge and Illumination," *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. Norman Kretzmann & Eleonore Stump (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 180.

said before, ambiguous. No matter how much we see the headscarf, it always remains unclear. Understanding exactly what this is is possible with the illumination of divine light. The most important feature of the divine illumination teaching is that it enables us to reach the realities that we cannot directly sense. Therefore, according to Augustine, man can reach the truth, but he cannot do this through a teacher; The information received from the teacher remains pure belief, without divine illumination:

Sed tunc quoque noster auditor, si et ipse illa secreto ac simplici oculo videt; novit quod dico sua contemplatione, non verbis meis. Ergo ne hunc quidem doceo vera dicens, vera intuentem; docetur enim non verbis meis, sed ipsis rebus, Deo intus pandente, manifestis: itaque de his etiam interrogatus respondere posset. Quid autem absurdius quam eum putare locutione mea doceri, qui posset, antequam loquerer, ea ipsa interrogatus exponere?

If someone here sees those things clearly with the inner eye of the soul when he hears my words, he knows them not from my words but from his own thought. Therefore, if when I say something is true and he sees that these things are true, it is not me who is teaching him. It is therefore taught not by my words but by truths that make it clear by God's illumination. So he could also answer questions about these things if we asked him. If asked about it, what could be stranger than the thought that he was taught by my words, when he could explain these things before I even opened my mouth? (*De Mag.*: 12.40).

This claim excludes the physical world from being the object of mere truths and the senses from being the source of this truth. So, the place where we can reach the truth must be the mind. Truth is also not accessible to everyone, only believers can experience divine illumination. From this, Augustine attributes the source of human knowledge to Christ (*Christus*), that is, God's unchanging Power and Eternal Wisdom (*incommutabilis Dei Virtus atque sempiterna Sapientia*) (*De Mag.*: 11.38). The intelligibility of things is intelligible not by the words of the speaker, but by the

truth that rules the mind itself from within. By inner truth, Augustine means Christ himself, who lives in the heart of a man by faith (Ephesians 3:16). He is the source of knowledge of every rational soul, but he reveals himself to all according to the good or bad inclinations of his will. In its simplest form, this explanation reveals how the mind goes beyond sensible data and grasps the true essence of things. For Augustine, faith always precedes understanding; the saying “you will not understand until you believe” is very important in the Bible (Isaiah 7:9). Hence Augustine says, “Do you want to understand? Then believe it. As God said through the prophet: You will not understand until you believe.” (*In Eu. Io. Tract.*: 29.6).¹¹ For him, the light is God, and only the believers can achieve this divine illumination.

Truth, that is, God, teaches not by speaking, but by revealing Himself in the soul. Our minds have unlimited access to eternal truth; but this inner truth does not reveal everything to everyone, people can reach the truth according to the power of their will. If everyone is not perfectly illuminated, it is not the fault of the light but the fault of their own corrupted will (*De Mag.*: xi.38). This is why Augustine says we need faith; according to him, the knowledge of God is the condition of all other knowledge, because he knows the limits of our perceptive power. Therefore, faith is necessary: The movement of faith is from sign to truth; when Augustine says that faith leads to understanding, what he means is that faith moves us from the grasp of material signs to the understanding of immaterial things. Therefore, all we can know is God and divine things.¹² At this point, faith is important. The teacher is the truth itself, and this Truth within us only shows us the immaterial things, but it is only by faith that we make sense of what we see (*De Mag.*: xiv.45-46). According to Mackey, this sign paradox in Augustine thus turns into a dialectic; nothing can be taught

¹¹ *Intellegere vis? crede. Deus enim per prophetam dixit: Nisi credideritis, non intelletis.*

¹² Mackey, “The Mediator Mediated: Faith and Reason in Augustine’s *De Magistro*,” 142.

through signs alone without divine illumination, but also nothing can be taught without signs; we cannot open our minds to the light of truth without the faith that follows their mediation and their direction.¹³

Augustine says in *Confessiones* that he is healed by faith and the vision of the soul is cleared, and he began to seek the truth in the right place (*Conf.*: VI.4.6). For this reason, the relationship between faith and reason in Augustine is dialectical; they are inseparable, they are dependent on each other, and neither can grasp the outside without the other. Illumination makes reasoning possible, there is no understanding without believing, but there is also no faith without understanding: “Understanding without faith is vain, faith without understanding is blind.”¹⁴ For this reason, there is no need for faith in Augustine because the mind is insufficient, and the mind cannot function due to the perversion of the will; the real problem here is the will, not the mind itself. Augustine says that some heretics¹⁵ also accept the scriptures as an authority but do not understand them:

Omnes enim haeretici, qui eas in auctoritate recipiunt, ipsas sibi videntur sectari, cum suos potius sectentur errores; ac per hoc non quod eas contemnant, sed quod eas non intellegant, haeretici sunt.

All heretics who accept the authority of [the Scriptures], when they think they are following them, are in fact pursuing their own mistakes; and they are heretics, not because they despise the Scriptures, but because they do not fully understand them (*Ep.* : 120.3.13).

Augustine explains that although God is the truth, there are still unbelievers because they do not want to believe because for Augustine belief is nothing but thinking with consent:

¹³ Mackey, “The Mediator Mediated: Faith and Reason in Augustine’s *De Magistro*,” 145.

¹⁴ Mackey, “The Mediator Mediated: Faith and Reason in Augustine’s *De Magistro*,” 147.

¹⁵ Especially the Pelagians and Donatists, although they are sects belonging to the Christian faith, according to Augustine, they are infidels.

Vide nunc utrum quisque credat, si noluerit, aut non credat, si voluerit. Quod si absurdum est -quid est enim credere nisi consentire verum esse quod dicitur? consensio autem utique volentis est, profecto fides in potestate est.

Now imagine someone believing even though they did not want to, or whether they wanted to or not. Such a thing would be meaningless for Augustine for what is belief but not consent to the truth of what is said? And this consent is absolutely voluntary – therefore the belief is strictly in our own power (*De Spi. Lit.*: 31.54).

For this reason, faith and will are interrelated concepts in Augustine. While the mind reaches its full potential through faith, faith becomes possible with a will. Robert Pasnau says that Augustine was the first philosopher to make a detailed will explanation close to the modern concept of will, although it is a controversial issue.¹⁶ However, the will is still not independent of God for Augustine. In *Confessiones*, although Augustine thinks that all will be good when he is finally ready to leave doubt behind and be ready to believe, this does not happen, for he discovers that knowing what is right alone is not enough to do what is right (*Conf.*: VIII.5.10). Even Augustine is ready to change his life his will holds him. Augustine's understanding of will also shaped his concept of grace; just as reason must be enlightened by God for true understanding, so in moral goodness, the will must be infused with virtue.¹⁷ Willpower, badly accustomed from a young age, made it difficult for Augustine to return to God.

Even if it does not fit well with the concept of free will in modern thought, there is still a kind of free will concept (*liberum voluntatis arbitrium*) in Augustine. In general, for the person to be held responsible for his actions, the action must not depend on a factor other than the actor. For this reason, it can be said that a person acts with free will or is morally responsible for his actions

¹⁶ Robert Pasnau, "Human Nature," *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Arthur Stephen McGrade (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 221.

¹⁷ Pasnau, "Human Nature," 222.

only if his action is not determined by something outside himself. Apart from this, it can also be said that the actor acts with free will only if he can do the opposite of the action. In addition to these, Eleonore Stump adds a third definition of free will: An actor acts with free will only if his mind or will is the first and only source of his action.¹⁸ This is where Augustine's concept of free will is controversial because Augustine relates will to God.

Augustine's most fundamental view on free will is in *De Libero Arbitrio*. Although his views developed and changed, later on, his idea of will basically did not change. He admits that he made a mistake regarding the relationship of the will to God, but he says that this error is not due to the nature of the will, but to the view of grace, which was not yet developed at the time (*Retr.*: I.8). Therefore, he still did not think that his views of free will in this book were wrong. Augustine says that everything good comes from God. The source of all good in man is God, so good in the will can only come from God:

Ista ergo magna bona sunt: sed meminisse te oportet, non solum magna, sed etiam minima bona non esse posse, nisi ab illo a quo sunt omnia bona, hoc est Deo.

Then these are the great good: but it should be remembered that not only the great good but also the little good comes from where all good things come from, that is, from God (*De Lib. Arb.*: II.19.50).

Although Augustine mentions that without God's help people cannot do good, he still says that if people decide to sin, they alone are responsible, because it is only because of their own will that the mind turns to sin: There is nothing else that makes you a companion in lust."¹⁹ (*De Lib. Arb.*: III.1.2, I.11.21).

Augustine also says that sin has two sources; one is the sin of one's own thoughts, and the other is the sin committed by the persuasion of another, and Augustine says both are voluntary. Even

¹⁸ Eleonore Stump, "Augustine on Free Will," *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, 126.

¹⁹ Nulla res alia mentem cupiditatis comitem faciat, quam propria voluntas et liberum arbitrium.

if someone else persuades us to sin, it is still up to us to choose to sin or avoid it. Therefore, if we choose to sin, even with the persuasion of someone else, we alone are responsible for that action (*De Lib. Arb.*: III.10.29). In addition, Augustine says that the reason why people do not do good is that they do not know what is good in that situation; or even if they want to see what is good and have the will to want it, they find it difficult to do. In this case, too, Augustine still says that the ultimate cause of action is reason and will (*De Lib. Arb.*: III.18.30-32).

The state of wanting the good is an important factor in Augustine's concept of will. According to him, it is the grace of God to want what is good. Whether in the form of knowledge of what ought to be done or in the form of grace to strengthen the will to do what is good, Augustine considers God to grant his grace to all who ask of him (*De Lib. Arb.*: III.22.65). He also says that those who sin out of ignorance are guilty of not striving for knowledge because if they sought this knowledge God could have given it to them. Similarly, the person who cannot will on his own is likewise guilty, for he could ask God to help his will, and if he did, God would have given him the help he needed to do good. In this case, people cannot want not to sin in a way, but they can ask God to strengthen his will, and God gives him this power.²⁰ Although the will is largely connected with God, nevertheless Augustine insists that humans have free will. One of the most important reasons for this is that he says that the counsel found in the Scriptures would be meaningless if humans did not have free will:

Primum, quia ipsa divina praecepta homini non prodessent, nisi haberet liberum voluntatis arbitrium, quo ea faciens ad promissa praemia perveniret.

In the first place, the divine commands by which they achieved the promised reward would be of no use to man if they did not have free will (*De Gra. Lib Arb.*: 2.2).

For this reason, even though Augustine's views of free will

²⁰ Stump, "Augustine on Free Will," 133.

and grace have developed and changed over time, he always argued that people had free will, it is his views on the grace that changed. According to Augustine, the most important relationship between grace (*gratia*) and will is that the secondary will is the grace of God. This secondary will is defined by Augustine as a desire for a right will, a desire to improve God's will, and a will to understand and to believe (*De Spi. Lit.:* 32.56).

Augustine insists on God as the source of his will to believe, but according to Stump, this notion makes free will problematic. According to her, Augustine has to deny that the will to believe comes only from divine grace, because in this case, God would be responsible for the good, and it could not be called free will.²¹ In *De Spiritu et Littera* he questions where the will to believe comes from; is it God's gift to us or does it come from the free will naturally found in a man? If it is not a gift from God, it will contradict the words of the Apostle Paul²²; but if it is a gift from God, this time it cannot explain why it is not for everyone, for then unbelievers may seem to have a just excuse for their unbelief because God refused to give them this gift (*De Spi. Lit.:* 33.57). Yet Augustine accepts God as the sole source of his will to believe. For sin not to be attributed to God in this case, Augustine says somewhere that God offers this grace to everyone, but it is up to people's free will whether to accept it or not because otherwise, the will to sin can also be attributed to God since it is God who regulates the will (*De Spi. Lit.:* 34.60). Again, in a different book, Augustine says that someone who opposes this issue may ask if the will to believe in people is a gift of God, why he saves those who want to believe and punish others. He does not answer that either because he says he has not discovered what to say yet (*De Don. Per.:* 8.18).

As a result, Augustine associates the will with God, so as not to say anything against the Scriptures, because the Bible clearly says

²¹ Stump, "Augustine on Free Will," 136.

²² I Corinthians 4:7. "What do you have that you have not received from God? If you got it, why do you brag as if you didn't get it?"

“will is prepared by God.”²³ Although he connects his concept of will to believing in God, he does not give up on the idea of the existence of the free will. According to Stump, if Augustine had said that the will to accept or reject this grace, which is God’s gift, was in man’s will and then remained undecided about it, he would say that God offers everyone this will to believe, but people reject it. This was he would have given the necessary answer against the Pelagians and defended the existence of the free will. However, Stump says that Augustine’s explanation of free will is incomplete because he did not first give the will to accept grace to human beings and then continue this view. After all, the human will’s inability to reject this grace does not make the will free.²⁴ However, although Augustine did not go around these thoughts and make a definite judgment, it would not seem correct to say that he did not have any concept of free will.

In conclusion, faith makes free will possible, and because of faith, knowledge is possible, because by faith the way to God has now been opened. Therefore, in Augustine, the road to knowledge is through faith; faith is realized only by the will of God. This creates a kind of paradox: in order to believe, one must have the will to believe, which is only possible by asking God, but to ask God to regulate the will, one must first believe in God. Since to believe in God one must first ask God to believe, the concept of free will in Augustine is not very clear; apart from asking something from a God whose existence you do not believe in, wanting to believe in Himself creates a kind of paradox. Granting, Augustine does not make a clear statement about the working of the will, once you believe, the way to understanding is illuminated by God. Will is necessary for wisdom, but God’s grace is necessary for will.

Augustine thinks that he can pass from this state of ignorance to knowledge only through faith. For him, faith seems like the only possible remedy for the state of his soul in the past, so he starts the search for truth with faith and finally reaches the truth through

²³ Proverbs 8:35

²⁴ Stump, “Augustine on Free Will,” 142.

faith. That's why it doesn't seem right to say that reason is inadequate in Augustine; he only puts faith in the head of acquiring knowledge, in order to clear the will that prevents the mind from working at its full potential. This does not imply that he sees reason as inadequate or bad in itself; Augustine does not even see the will as bad, although it is so corrupted that the mind cannot function. The fact that belief is the first stage in the process of acquiring knowledge is not due to the fault or inadequacy of the mind and is not unimportant compared to faith. Even though it starts with faith, acquiring knowledge is possible through reason, and according to Augustine, reason and faith are two important concepts that do not replace each other and reach their full potential together.

Abbreviations

<i>C. Acad.</i>	:	<i>Contra Academicos</i>
<i>Conf.</i>	:	<i>Confessiones</i>
<i>De Civ.</i>	:	<i>De Civitate Dei</i>
<i>De Don. Per.</i>	:	<i>De Dono Perseverantiae</i>
<i>De Gen. Lit.</i>	:	<i>De Genesi ad Litteram</i>
<i>De Gra. Lib</i>	:	<i>De Gratia et Libero Arbitrio</i>
<i>Arb.</i>		
<i>De Lib. Arb.</i>	:	<i>De Libero Arbitrio</i>
<i>De Mag.</i>	:	<i>De Magistro</i>
<i>De Ord.</i>	:	<i>De Ordine</i>
<i>De Spi. Lit.</i>	:	<i>De Spiritu et Littera</i>
<i>De Trin.</i>	:	<i>De Trinitate</i>
<i>De Ver. Rel.</i>	:	<i>De Vera Religione</i>
<i>Ep.</i>	:	<i>Epistolae</i>
<i>In Eu. Io.</i>	:	<i>In Evangelium Ioannis Tractatus Centum</i>
<i>Tract.</i>		<i>Viginti Quatuor</i>
<i>Retr.</i>	:	<i>Retractationes</i>
<i>Sol.</i>	:	<i>Soliloquies</i>

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