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Augustine

On the Free Choice of
the Will, On Grace and
Free Choice, and
Other Writings

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*On the Free Choice of the Will, On Grace
and Free Choice, and Other Writings*

On the Free Choice of the Will

Book 1

EVODIUS: Please tell me whether God is not the author of evil.

1.1.1.1

AUGUSTINE: I shall tell you if you make it plain what kind of evil you are asking about. We usually speak of “evil” in two ways, namely when someone has (a) done evil; (b) suffered something evil.

EVODIUS: I want to know about both kinds.

AUGUSTINE: Well, if you know or believe that God is good (it is blasphemous to think otherwise), then He does not *do* evil. On the other hand, if we grant that God is just (denying it is irreligious), then He rewards the good; by the same token, He hands out punishments to evildoers, punishments that are doubtless evils to those who suffer them. Accordingly, if no one pays penalties unjustly – which we must believe since we believe that the world is governed by divine providence – then God is indeed the author of evils of type (b), though not in any way the author of evils of type (a).

1.1.1.2

EVODIUS: Then is there some other author of the evil we have found not to come from God?

AUGUSTINE: Of course! Evil could not occur without an author. But if you ask *who* the author is, no answer can be given, for there is not just a single author – rather, evil people are the authors of their evildoing. If you doubt this, pay attention to my earlier statement [in 1.1.1.1] that evildoings are redressed by God’s justice. It would not be just to redress them unless they come about through the will.

1.1.1.3

EVODIUS: Perhaps no one sins unless he has learned how. But if that is true, I ask: From whom did we learn how to sin?

1.1.2.4

AUGUSTINE: Do you hold that teaching¹ is something good?

EVODIUS: Who would dare to say that teaching is something evil?

AUGUSTINE: What if it is neither good nor evil?

EVODIUS: It seems good to me.

AUGUSTINE: Rightly so, in that knowledge is imparted to us (or awakened in us) through teaching, and nobody learns anything except through teaching. Do you think otherwise?

EVODIUS: I for one think that only good things are learned through teaching.

1.1.2.5 AUGUSTINE: Then draw the conclusion: Evil things are not learned! For “teaching” (*disciplina*) is linguistically derived from “learning” (*discere*).

EVODIUS: Evil things are not learned? Then how does it happen that we do them?

1.1.2.6 AUGUSTINE: Perhaps because we turn aside and away from teaching, that is, from learning. But whether this is the reason or not, the point is certainly clear: Since teaching is something good, and “teaching” is derived from “learning,” evil things cannot be learned at all. For if evil things are learned, they are included in teaching, and thus teaching will not be something good. But it *is* something good, as you yourself declared. Hence evil-doing is not learned, and your search for the one from whom we learn to do evil is in vain. (Alternatively, if we do learn evil things, we do so to avoid them rather than to do them.) The conclusion is that evil-doing is nothing but turning away from teaching.

1.1.3.7 EVODIUS: All in all I think there are two kinds of teaching: one through which we learn to do right, the other through which we learn to do evil. But when you asked whether teaching was something good, the love of the good itself caught my attention, and so I looked only at the first kind, and thus I replied that it is good. But now I am mindful of the second kind, which I declare without a doubt to be an evil, and whose author I am looking for.

1.1.3.8 AUGUSTINE: Do you at least think that understanding is indeed something good?

EVODIUS: Of course! It is plainly so good that I do not see what could be more excellent in humans. I declare that no understanding can be evil in any way.

¹ “Teaching”: *disciplina*, the general activity associated with a field of knowledge.

AUGUSTINE: Well, if someone were not to understand when he is taught, can he seem to you to have learned anything?

EVODIUS: Not at all.

AUGUSTINE: It follows that if all understanding is good, and no one learns without understanding, then everyone who learns is doing right. For everyone who learns, understands; everyone who understands is doing right. Hence anyone looking for an “author” through whom we learn something is really looking for the one through whom we do right. Accordingly, stop trying to track down some mysterious evil teacher! If he is evil he is not a teacher, and if he is a teacher he is not evil. 1.1.3.9

EVODIUS: Very well. Now that you have pushed me into admitting that we do not *learn* to do evil, tell me: How is it that we *do* evil? 1.2.4.10

AUGUSTINE: You are raising a question that hounded me while I was young; when I was worn out it caused my downfall, landing me in the company of heretics.² I was so injured by this fall, and so buried under such vast heaps of empty tales, that had the love of finding out the truth not succeeded in requesting and receiving divine succor for me, I would not have been able to dig my way out and breathe again, recovering my earlier freedom of inquiry. And since such pains were taken in my case to set me free from that question, I shall guide you on the same route that I used to escape. God will be at hand and make us understand what we have come to believe. Indeed, we are well aware that this is to take the course prescribed by the prophet Isaiah, who says: “Unless you believe you shall not understand” [Is. 7:9]. 1.2.4.11

Now we believe that everything that exists comes from the one God, although God is not the author of sins. But this is the sore point: If sins come from the souls that God created, and those souls come from God, how is it that sins are not almost immediately traced back to God?

EVODIUS: You have now stated plainly what keeps troubling my thoughts, pushing and dragging me into this very investigation. 1.2.5.12

AUGUSTINE: Take heart! Believe as you do; there is no better belief, even if the reason why it is so is hidden. Holding God in the highest esteem is surely the most authentic beginning of religiousness. Nor does anyone hold God in the highest esteem without believing that God is omnipotent, not changeable in even the least detail, the Creator of all good things, Who is more excellent than they are, the most just Ruler of

² The Manichaeans. See *Confessions* 3.7.12–3.10.18 and 8.10.22–24.

all He has created. Nor does God require the assistance of any nature in his creating – as though He were not sufficiently powerful all by Himself! It follows that God created all things from nothing. Yet out of Himself He did not *create* the one whom we call the only Son of God, but rather *generated* him as equal to Himself.³ When we try to describe the Son of God more plainly we call him “the power of God and the wisdom of God” [1 Cor. 1:24]; through which He made everything that was made from nothing.⁴

1.2.5.13

1.3.5.14

Now that these points have been settled, let us try with God’s help to gain an understanding of the problem you posed, as follows. You are really asking *why* it is we do evil. Thus we should first of all discuss what it is to *do* evil. Declare your view on this topic. If you cannot summarize it briefly, at least acquaint me with your view by calling to mind some particular evil deeds.

EVODIUS: Adultery, murder, and sacrilege – not to mention others that time and memory will not allow me to list. Is there anyone to whom these deeds do not seem evil?

1.3.6.15

AUGUSTINE: Then tell me first of all why you think it is evil to commit adultery. Is it because the law forbids it?

EVODIUS: It is not evil because it is forbidden by the law. Instead, it is forbidden by the law because it is evil.

AUGUSTINE: What if someone were to exaggerate the delights of adultery, pressing us insistently why we judge it to be evil and worthy of condemnation? Do you think that people who now want to understand, and not merely to believe, should take cover in the authority of the law?

1.3.6.16

Well, for my part I believe as you do. I resolutely believe that adultery is evil, and I proclaim that all societies ought to believe so. But now we are trying to know and establish most firmly through understanding what we have already accepted on faith. So think it over as carefully as you can, and tell me the reason by which you know that adultery is something evil.

³ The Persons of the Trinity are co-eternal, standing in relations of interdependence: The Father generates the Son; the Father and the Son spirate the Holy Spirit. Neither is a case of “creation” strictly speaking.

⁴ See Jn. 1:3: “All things were made by [the Word], and without Him was not any thing made that was made” (partially cited in 3.10.30.108). Also 2 Mac. 7:28: “Look upon the heavens and the Earth, and all that is in them, and consider that God made them of things that were not.”

EVODIUS: I know that it is evil because I would be unwilling to tolerate it in the case of my wife. Anyone who does to another what he is not willing to have happen to himself is undoubtedly doing something evil.

AUGUSTINE: What if someone's lust (*libido*) leads him to offer his wife to another, freely tolerating her being violated by him, and in turn desiring to have equal license with the other man's wife? Does he then seem to you to have done nothing evil? 1.3.6.17

EVODIUS: On the contrary, a great evil!

AUGUSTINE: But he does not sin according to your rule, since he does not do what he himself is unwilling to tolerate. Accordingly, you should look for something else to prove that adultery is evil.

EVODIUS: It seems evil to me because I have often seen people condemned for this crime. 1.3.7.18

AUGUSTINE: Well, people are often condemned for acting rightly, are they not? Look again at history – and, not to send you to other books, look at the history which stands out by virtue of its divine authority. You will quickly find just how evil we must think the apostles and all the martyrs are if we accept that condemnation is a reliable judgment of evil-doing. They were all judged to deserve condemnation by their admission of faith. Accordingly, if everything condemned is an evil, it was evil in those days to believe in Christ and to profess the faith. But if not everything that is condemned is evil, look for something else to establish that adultery is an evil. 1.3.7.19

EVODIUS: I have no answer to give you.

AUGUSTINE: Then perhaps lust is the evil in adultery, and you will run into difficulties as long as you are looking for evil in the outward visible deed. Now to understand that lust is the evil in adultery, consider the following. If a man does not have the opportunity to sleep with someone else's wife but it is plain somehow that he wants to do so, and that he is going to do so should the opportunity arise, he is no less guilty than if he were caught in the act. 1.3.8.20

EVODIUS: Nothing could be more obvious. Now I see that there is no need for a long discussion to persuade me about murder, sacrilege, and in fact all other sins. It is clear now that nothing but lust dominates in every kind of evil-doing. 1.3.8.21

AUGUSTINE: You do know, do you not, that lust is also called "desire"? 1.4.9.22

EVODIUS: Yes.

AUGUSTINE: Well, do you think that there is a difference between desire and fear, or that there is not?

EVODIUS: I think there is a great difference between them.

AUGUSTINE: I believe you think so because desire pursues its object whereas fear avoids it.

EVODIUS: That is it exactly.

AUGUSTINE: Then suppose someone were to kill a person, not out of a desire to get something but because of fear that some evil will happen to him. Will he not be a murderer?

1.4.9.23 EVODIUS: He will indeed. Yet his deed is not free from the domination of desire by that token; whoever kills someone in fear surely *desires* to live without fear.

AUGUSTINE: And does living without fear seem like a small good to you?

EVODIUS: It is a great good, but the murderer cannot achieve it in any way through his crime.

1.4.9.24 AUGUSTINE: I am not asking what he can *achieve* but what he *desires*. Anyone who desires a life free from fear certainly desires a good thing. Hence the desire itself ought not to be blamed; otherwise we shall blame all who love the good. The upshot is that we must admit that there are cases of murder in which the dominance of evil desire cannot be found, and either (a) it will be false that lust dominates in all sins insofar as they are evil, or (b) there will be some kind of murder that can be not a sin.

1.4.9.25 EVODIUS: If murder is killing a human being, it can sometimes happen without sin. For instance, a soldier kills an enemy; a judge or his agent executes a convicted criminal; someone throws his weapon by chance imprudently and against his will. They do not seem to me to be sinning when they kill someone.

AUGUSTINE: I agree. But they are not usually called murderers, either. So tell me: Do you hold that someone who kills his master, at whose hands he fears brutal torture, should be counted among those who kill someone but do not merit the name of murderer?

EVODIUS: I see that this case is quite different. In the earlier cases, the people were acting according to the laws – or at least not against the laws – whereas no law sanctions the crime of this slave.

1.4.10.26 AUGUSTINE: Once again you are calling me back to authority. You must remember that we have now undertaken to *understand* what we believe.

We do indeed believe the laws; hence we should try, if we somehow can, to grasp whether it is not an error for the law to punish the slave's deed.

EVODIUS: The law hardly punishes "in error" since it punishes someone who willingly and knowingly puts his master to death, which none of the others⁵ does.

AUGUSTINE: Well, do you recall having said a little while ago that lust dominates in every evil deed, and that a deed is evil due to lust? 1.4.10.27

EVODIUS: Of course I do.

AUGUSTINE: And have you yourself not also granted that someone who desires to live without fear does not have an evil desire? 1.4.10.28

EVODIUS: I remember that too.

AUGUSTINE: Then, although the master is slain by the slave on account of his desire, he is not slain on account of a blameworthy desire. Consequently, we have not yet found out why this deed is evil. For we agreed that all evildoings are evil precisely because they come about from lust, that is, from a blameworthy desire.

EVODIUS: It seems to me now that the slave was condemned unjustly. Yet I would not dream of saying so if I had another reply to offer. 1.4.10.29

AUGUSTINE: Is it so? You convinced yourself that so great a crime should go unpunished before considering whether the slave desired to have no fear of his master so as to gratify his lusts. Surely evil people desire to live without fear, just as good people do. But the difference is as follows. 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. The end result is that they lead a life full of crime and wickedness, a life which is better called death. 1.4.10.30

EVODIUS: I have regained my wits now. I am glad to know so plainly the nature of that blameworthy desire referred to as "lust." It has become apparent that lust is the love of things one can lose against one's will. So, if you agree, let us now look into whether lust dominates in sacrilege too – most of the cases of sacrilege we see are committed out of superstition. 1.4.10.31

AUGUSTINE: Make sure the question is not premature. First of all, I think there should be a discussion whether a charging enemy or a murderer attacking from ambush may be killed without lust, but for the sake of one's life, freedom, or chastity. 1.5.11.32

⁵ The soldiers and judges mentioned in 1.4.9.25.

EVODIUS: How can I think that people are free of lust if they fight ferociously for things that can be lost against their will? On the other hand, if such things cannot be lost, what need is there to resort to killing someone for their sake?

1.5.11.33 AUGUSTINE: Therefore, the law is unjust which grants permission (*a*) to a traveler to kill a highway robber, so as not to be killed himself; (*b*) to any man or woman to slay a rapist in his onslaught, if possible, before enduring rape. Indeed, the law bids a soldier to kill the enemy, and if he holds back from this bloodshed he pays the penalties from his commander. Surely we will not dream of calling these laws unjust – or rather, not to call them “laws” at all, for a law that is not just does not seem to me to be a law.

1.5.12.34 EVODIUS: I see that the law is well protected against this kind of charge. [1] The law gives the people whom it governs permission to do lesser evils in order to avoid greater ones. It is much more civilized that someone who plots against another’s life be killed rather than the one who is protecting his own life; it is much more barbarous that someone unwillingly endure a rape than that the assailant be slain by his intended victim. [2] Furthermore, in killing the enemy a soldier is then acting as an agent of the law, and thus easily does his duty without lust.

1.5.12.35 [3] Besides, the law itself, which was enacted for the protection of society, can hardly be accused of lust – at least assuming that the lawgiver, if he enacted the law at God’s bidding (namely as eternal justice prescribes), was able to do so entirely free of lust. However, even if he did decree the law out of some lust, it does not follow that obeying the law must be accompanied by lust. A good law can be enacted by a lawgiver who is not himself a good person. For example, if someone who had seized tyrannical power were to accept a bribe from an interested party leading him to decree that it is illegal to run off with a woman, even for marriage, the law will not thereby be evil merely because the one who enacted it is unjust and corrupt. Therefore, the law that bids enemy force to be repulsed by equal force, to protect the citizens, can be obeyed without lust. The same thing can be said regarding all officials who wield their powers in accordance with law and the established order.

1.5.12.37 Yet even if the law is blameless, I do not see how the people involved can be blameless. The law does not force them to kill, but merely leaves it in their power. Hence they are free *not* to kill anyone for things they can lose against their will, which they should therefore not love. With respect

to life,⁶ someone could perhaps be in doubt whether it is somehow taken away from the soul when the body dies. Yet if life can be taken away, it should be held of little worth. On the other hand, if it cannot, there is nothing to fear. With respect to chastity, well, seeing that it is a virtue, who would doubt that it is located in the mind itself? Therefore, it cannot be taken away by a violent rapist. Hence anything that was about to be taken away by the one who was killed is not completely in our power. For this reason, I do not understand why it should be called “ours.” In the end, I do not find fault with the law that permits such people to be killed. Yet I have not found any way to defend those who do the killing. 1.5.12.38

AUGUSTINE: I am even less able to find out why you are looking to defend people whom no law finds guilty. 1.5.12.39

EVODIUS: Well, perhaps no law among those that are public and proclaimed by human beings. I rather suspect they are guilty according to a more powerful and hidden law, if divine providence oversees all things. How indeed are they free of sin in the eyes of divine providence? They have been stained with human blood for the sake of things that should be held of little worth. Therefore, it seems to me that a law drafted to govern society rightly permits these things, and also that divine providence rightly redresses them. The former has in its scope redressing deeds sufficiently to maintain peace among unenlightened people, to the extent that such deeds can be governed by human beings. The other faults, however, have different penalties appropriate to them, from which wisdom alone, it seems to me, can free them. 1.5.13.40

AUGUSTINE: I approve and endorse this distinction of yours. Even though it is just a beginning and not complete, it confidently aims at exalted heights. For it seems to you that the law that is enacted to govern states tolerates and leaves unpunished many things, which are nevertheless redressed by divine providence (and rightly so). Yet it does not follow that just because the law does not accomplish everything, we should disapprove of what it *does* accomplish. 1.5.13.41

If you agree, let us look carefully at (a) the extent to which retribution for evildoings should be exacted by the law that controls society in this life, and then at (b) what remains, which is punished by divine providence in a more unavoidable, yet hidden, fashion. 1.6.14.42

⁶ Life and chastity are examples of things that can be lost against one’s will, namely by murder and rape.

EVODIUS: Yes. If only we could get to the end of such a great issue! Personally, I think it is endless.

1.6.14.43 AUGUSTINE: Have courage, and set out along the roads of reason with the support of religiousness. There is nothing so demanding or difficult that is not made completely plain and easy with God's assistance. Therefore, let us look into (a) and (b), trusting in God and praying for His aid. First of all, tell me whether promulgating a written law is helpful to human beings living this present life.

1.6.14.44 EVODIUS: Obviously. States and societies are made up out of these human beings.

AUGUSTINE: Well, these human beings and societies are the same sort of things. Are they eternal and completely unable to change or perish? Or are they instead changeable and subject to time?

EVODIUS: Changeable, plainly, and subject to time; who could doubt it?

1.6.14.45 AUGUSTINE: Suppose that a society were well ordered, responsible, and a watchful guardian of the common welfare, one in which each person regards his private interest as less valuable than the public interest. Then is it not right to enact a law whereby this society is allowed to create its own governing officials, through whom the public interest is overseen?

EVODIUS: Quite right.

1.6.14.46 AUGUSTINE: Well, now suppose that the same society gradually becomes corrupted. Private interest is put before public interest; votes are bought and sold; degraded by those who covet honors, society hands its rulership over to disgraceful criminals. Would it not again be right if a good person were then found, someone more capable than the rest, who would take the power to confer honors away from society and restrict its choice to a few good people, or even to just one good person?

EVODIUS: Rightly so.

1.6.14.47 AUGUSTINE: Then, although these two laws⁷ seem to be contrary to one another – one of them vests the power of conferring honors in the society, whereas the other takes it away – and although the latter was enacted so that the two laws cannot both hold simultaneously in one state, are we to say that one of them is unjust and hardly ought to have been enacted?

EVODIUS: Not at all.

⁷ The law investing society with the right to create its own governing officials (1.6.14.45), and the law restricting that power to only a few people (1.6.14.46).

AUGUSTINE: Then let us call a law *temporal* if, although it is just, it can justly be changed in the course of time. Do you agree? 1.6.14.48

EVODIUS: Fine.

AUGUSTINE: Well, consider the law referred to as “supreme reason.”⁸ 1.6.15.48

It should always be obeyed; through it good people deserve a happy life and evil people an unhappy one; and finally through it temporal law is both rightly enacted and rightly changed. Any intelligent person can see that it is unchangeable and eternal. Can it ever be unjust that evil people are unhappy while good people are happy? Can it ever be unjust that an orderly and responsible society sets up governing officials for itself while a dissolute and worthless society lacks this privilege? 1.6.15.49

EVODIUS: I see that this law is eternal and unchangeable.

AUGUSTINE: I think you also see, along with this, that nothing in the temporal law is just and legitimate which human beings have not derived from the eternal law. If a given society justly conferred honors at one time but not at another, this shift in the temporal law, to be just, must derive from the eternal law whereby it is always just for a responsible society to confer honors and not for an irresponsible one. Is your view different? 1.6.15.50

EVODIUS: No, I agree.

AUGUSTINE: So to explain concisely as far as I can the notion of eternal law that is stamped on us: It is the law according to which it is just for all things to be completely in order. If you think otherwise, say so. 1.6.15.51

EVODIUS: I have no objection. What you say is true.

AUGUSTINE: This law, on the basis of which all temporal laws made to govern human beings are altered [at different times], is one. Therefore it cannot itself be altered in any way, can it?

EVODIUS: I understand that this cannot happen at all. No force, no chance, no disaster could ever make it not just for things to be completely in order.

AUGUSTINE: Very well. Now let us see how a human being may be completely in order within himself. For a society is made up of human beings bound together under one law – a temporal law, as we noted. Tell me whether you are completely certain that you are alive. 1.7.16.52

EVODIUS: What could I say that is more certain?

⁸ Cicero, *Laws* 1.6.18: “Supreme reason is the law implanted in nature, which enjoins what ought to be done and forbids the contrary.”

AUGUSTINE: Well, can you distinguish *being alive* and *knowing yourself to be alive*?

EVODIUS: I know that nobody knows himself to be alive unless he is alive, but I do not know whether everyone alive knows himself to be alive.

1.7.16,53 AUGUSTINE: How I wish you also *knew* what you believe, namely that animals lack reason; our examination would quickly get past this question. But since you say that you do not know, you are initiating a long discussion. The issue is not the sort of thing we can skip over. If we do, we may not succeed in reaching our goal with as tight a chain of reasoning as I think it requires.

1.7.16,54 So tell me this. We often see wild animals dominated by human beings – that is, not merely the animal’s body, but even its spirit is so subjugated that it is enslaved to human will by habit and inclination. Do you think it could somehow happen that a wild animal, however ferocious or strong or cunning, could in turn try to subjugate a human being (even though many wild animals are able to destroy the human body either by sheer force or by a surprise attack)?

EVODIUS: This cannot possibly happen.

1.7.16,55 AUGUSTINE: Right you are! But again, tell me this. It is clear that many wild animals easily surpass human beings in strength and in other physical abilities. What is it in virtue of which a human being is superior, so that he can command many wild animals, yet none of them commands him? Is it not perhaps what we usually call *reason* or *understanding*?

1.7.16,56 EVODIUS: I don’t find anything else, since that in virtue of which we are superior to animals is in the mind. If they were inanimate, I would say that we are more excellent than them because we are animate. However, since they *are* animate, something is not present in their souls (and so we tame them) that *is* present in ours, so that we are better than they are. Since it is apparent to anyone that this is neither insignificant nor trivial, what else shall I call it more rightly than “reason”?

1.7.16,57 AUGUSTINE: See how easy it becomes, with God’s help, to do what people think is most difficult. I for one admit that I thought this question, which I see has now been settled, was going to hold us back for perhaps as long as all the topics we have covered since our discussion began. Therefore, keep it in mind now, so that our reasoning is airtight hereafter. I think you are aware that what we call “knowing” is nothing other than having in reason what was perceived.

EVODIUS: Yes.

1.7.16.58

AUGUSTINE: Then whoever knows himself to be alive does not lack reason.

EVODIUS: That follows.

AUGUSTINE: Yet wild animals are alive and, as is now plainly obvious, they do not have reason.

EVODIUS: That is clear.

AUGUSTINE: Then look! You now know what you claimed, in your [earlier] reply, you did not know.⁹ Not everything alive knows itself to be alive, whereas everything that knows itself to be alive necessarily is alive.

EVODIUS: I no longer have any doubts. Continue where you are heading. I have learned well that *being alive* is one thing, *knowing yourself to be alive* quite another. 1.7.17.59

AUGUSTINE: So which of the two seems to you to be more excellent?

EVODIUS: What do you think? The knowledge of life.

AUGUSTINE: Does the knowledge of life seem better to you than life itself? Or do you perhaps understand knowledge as a higher and more authentic life? For nobody can know except those who have understanding, which itself is nothing but living a more enlightened and perfect life in accordance with the light of the mind. Unless I am mistaken, you have accordingly not rated anything else above life, but a better life above just any life at all.

EVODIUS: You have grasped and explained my view wonderfully well. As long as knowledge can never be evil, that is. 1.7.17.60

AUGUSTINE: I think there is no way [for that to be so], unless we stretch the word “knowledge” to cover mere experience. Experience is not always good: for instance, experiencing punishments. But how can “knowledge” in the strict and proper sense be evil, since it is acquired by reason and understanding?

EVODIUS: I grasp the distinction. Keep going.

AUGUSTINE: This is what I want to say. That by which humans are ranked above animals, whatever it is, be it more correctly called “mind” or “spirit” or both – we find both terms in Scripture – if it dominates and commands the rest of what a human consists in, then that human being is completely in order.¹⁰ 1.8.18.61

⁹ See 1.7.16.52.

¹⁰ Augustine is addressing the question raised in 1.7.16.52, namely “how a human being may be completely in order within himself.”

We recognize that we share many common characteristics not only with animals but with trees and plants too. We see that taking bodily nutrition, growing, reproducing, and flourishing are also attributes of trees, and are contained in a lower level of life. We also note that wild animals are able to see, hear, and sense material objects by smell or taste or touch. We admit that their senses are often sharper than ours. Add to this energy, vigor, strength in arms and legs, the swiftness and agility of bodily movements: In all these qualities we are superior to some animals, equal to others, and even surpassed by some. Nevertheless, qualities of this sort are surely shared by human beings and animals, despite the fact that every action in an animal's life is pursuing physical pleasures and avoiding discomforts.

1.8.18.62

There are other features that seem not to occur among animals but are not the highest attributes in human beings. Take joking and laughing. Anyone judging human nature most rightly holds that these features are indeed human, but the least important part of a human being. Next, there is the love of praise and of glory, and the drive to dominate. Although absent in animals, we should not be thought better than animals because we lust after these things. When the pursuit of these things is not controlled by reason it makes us unhappy, and no one ever thought to rank himself above others on account of unhappiness.

1.8.18.63

1.8.18.64

Thus a human being should be called "in order" when these selfsame impulses of the soul are dominated by reason. For it should not be called the right order, or even "order" at all, when the better are controlled by the worse. Do you not think so?

1.8.18.65

EVODIUS: It is clear.

AUGUSTINE: Therefore, when reason (or mind or spirit) governs irrational mental impulses, a human being is dominated by the very thing whose dominance is prescribed by the law we have found to be eternal.

EVODIUS: I understand and agree.

1.9.19.66

AUGUSTINE: Then a human being who is arranged in order in this way seems to you to be wise, is that not so?

EVODIUS: I do not know who could seem wise if not this person!

AUGUSTINE: I believe you also know that most people are fools.

EVODIUS: That is true enough.

1.9.19.67

AUGUSTINE: Well, if fools are the opposite of the wise, since we have ascertained who is wise, you surely now understand who the fool is too.

EVODIUS: Is it not obvious? The fool is someone in whom the mind does not have supreme power.

AUGUSTINE: Then what should we say when people are so afflicted? That they have no mind, or that they do have a mind but it lacks dominance?

EVODIUS: The latter.

AUGUSTINE: I would very much like to hear from you the grounds on which you hold that there *is* a mind in someone when it does not exercise its sovereignty!

EVODIUS: I hope you are willing to do your share as well. It is not easy for me to shoulder the burden.

AUGUSTINE: It should at least be easy for you to recall what we said a bit earlier. Just as wild animals are broken by human beings and then remain tame, so too humans would suffer the same from animals in their turn, as the argument proved, were they not somehow superior to them. Now we did not find this superiority in the body; therefore, since it is apparent that it is in the soul, we found that it should be called “reason.” We later remembered that this is also dubbed “mind” and “spirit”; even if reason and mind are not the same, surely only mind can make use of reason, and hence it follows that whatever has reason cannot be without mind.¹¹ 1.9.19.68

EVODIUS: I do remember these points and still hold them. 1.9.19.69

AUGUSTINE: Well, do you believe that only the wise can tame animals? (I call “wise” those whom truth bids be so called, namely those who have attained peace by subjugating lust to the mind’s full governance.)

EVODIUS: It is silly to regard as wise those people who are commonly called “animal trainers” – or likewise shepherds or cowboys or horse-men, all of whom we see controlling tame animals and working to control untamed animals.

AUGUSTINE: See! You therefore have compelling evidence to make it clear that mind may be present in a human being without being dominant. It is present in these people, for they do things they could not do without mind. Yet it does not govern, for they are fools, and we know quite well that mind’s governance is characteristic only of the wise. 1.9.19.70

EVODIUS: I am astonished that we already reached this conclusion earlier and yet I was not able to think of what to say to you. Well, let us take 1.10.20.70

¹¹ See 1.8.18.61 and 1.8.18.65 for the first point, and 1.9.19.67 for the conclusion.

up other matters, for now we have found out that human wisdom is the governance of the human mind, and also that it might not govern.

1.10.20,71 AUGUSTINE: Do you think that lust is more powerful than the mind itself, which we know has been granted governance over lusts by eternal law? I do not myself think so. The weaker commanding the stronger would not be a case of being completely in order. Accordingly, I think the mind must be more *powerful* than desire for the very reason that it rightly and justly dominates desire.

EVODIUS: I think so too.

1.10.20,72 AUGUSTINE: Well, are we going to hesitate over putting every virtue ahead of every vice, such that virtue is stronger and more unbeatable to the extent that it is better and more exalted?

EVODIUS: Not at all.

AUGUSTINE: Then no vice-ridden mind overcomes a mind equipped with virtue.

EVODIUS: That is completely true.

AUGUSTINE: Now I think you will not deny that any kind of mind at all is better and more powerful than every physical object.

EVODIUS: Nobody denies this who sees, as is easily done, that a living substance is more valuable than a non-living one, and that a substance imparting life is more valuable than one receiving it.

1.10.20,73 AUGUSTINE: Then so much the less does a physical object of any sort overthrow a mind endowed with virtue.

EVODIUS: Most evidently.

AUGUSTINE: Well, can a just mind (*animus*) – a mind (*mens*) safeguarding its proper right and command – cast down from its stronghold and subjugate to lust another mind governing with equal justice and virtue?

EVODIUS: By no means. Not only is there the same degree of superiority in each, but a mind that attempts to do this to another will fall away from justice and become vice-ridden, and thereby will be weaker than the other.

1.10.21,74 AUGUSTINE: You understand quite well. Consequently, it remains for you to declare, if you can, whether you think anything is more excellent than a wise and rational mind.

EVODIUS: Nothing but God, I think.

AUGUSTINE: That is also my view. Yet even though we hold this view with the strongest faith possible, the matter is difficult, and it is not appropriate to look into it now with a view to understanding it; we should

complete a careful and diligent treatment of the question at hand. For the time being, we *are* able to know that, whatever the nature may be that is appropriately superior to a mind powerful in virtue, it cannot be in any way unjust. Thus even this nature, despite having the power, will not enslave a mind to lust. I.II.21.75

EVODIUS: Surely everyone would unhesitatingly go along with your argument up to this point.

AUGUSTINE: Therefore, 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 choice. I.II.21.76

EVODIUS: I see no other conclusion so necessary to draw.

AUGUSTINE: It follows, as you might already think, that such a mind justly pays the penalties for so great a sin. I.II.22.77

EVODIUS: I cannot deny it.

AUGUSTINE: Well, then, should we count this as a *light* penalty? Lust dominates the mind and drags it back and forth, despoiled of the richness of virtue, poor and needy; at one moment taking falsehoods for truths and even making a practice of defending them, at another rejecting what it had previously accepted and nonetheless rushing to other falsehoods; now withholding its assent and often in dread of clear lines of argument; now despairing of the whole enterprise of finding the truth, lingering deep within the shadows of foolishness; now struggling towards the light of understanding but again falling back from it due to exhaustion. All the while, that reign of desires savagely tyrannizes and batters a person's whole life and mind with storms raging in all directions. On this side fear, on that desire; on this side anxiety, on that empty spurious enjoyment; on this side torment over the loss of something loved, on that ardor to acquire something not possessed; on this side sorrows for an injury received, on that the burning to redress it. Whichever way one turns, greed can pinch, extravagance squander, ambition enslave, pride puff up, envy twist, laziness overcome, stubbornness provoke, submissiveness oppress – these and countless others throng the realm of lust, having the run of it. Can we think that this penalty, which (as you recognize) all who do not hold fast to wisdom must suffer, is in the end trivial? I.II.22.78

1.11.23,79 EVODIUS: I do judge this penalty to be harsh. But it is completely just if someone currently at the heights of wisdom were to choose to descend from there and to be the slave of lust. However, it is uncertain whether there can be anyone who has willed or who does will to do this. We believe that human beings were so perfectly created by God and established in a happy life that it was only by their own will that they fell from this condition to the afflictions of mortal life.¹² Yet even though I hold this with the firmest faith, I have not yet arrived at an understanding of it. If you think that we should defer a careful investigation into this matter for now, you do so against my will.

1.12.24,80 However, what bothers me the most is why *me*, who are certainly fools and have never been wise, should suffer such bitter penalties. Yet we are said to suffer these things deservedly, for abandoning the stronghold of virtue and choosing to be the slave of lust. Were you to clear this up through careful reasoning, should you be able, I would not allow you to postpone doing so.

1.12.24,81 AUGUSTINE: Up to now, you have talked as though you had plainly found out for certain that we have never been wise, paying attention only to the time since we were born into this life. But since wisdom is in the mind, there is a deep question (and a deep mystery) whether the mind had lived some other kind of life before its partnership with the body, and whether it lived wisely at some point. This question should really be addressed in its proper place.¹³ In any event, it does not prevent clarifying as much as possible what we now have on our hands. So tell me: We have a will, do we not?

1.12.25,82

EVODIUS: I do not know.

AUGUSTINE: Do you not want to know this?

EVODIUS: I do not know this either.

AUGUSTINE: Then from now on ask me no more questions!

EVODIUS: Why not?

AUGUSTINE: Because I am not required to answer your questions unless you are willing to know what you are asking about. Henceforth, unless you want to attain wisdom, I should not discuss these matters with you. Finally, you cannot be my friend unless you want my well-being. Then

¹² The reference is to Adam and Eve in Paradise, and their Fall.

¹³ Augustine returns to the question of the soul's antenatal existence in 3.20.58.198–3.21.59.202, though he never arrives at a settled view.

you, for your part, will see in respect of yourself whether you have no will for the happy life.¹⁴

EVODIUS: That we have a will cannot be denied, I admit. Go on; let us see what you are going to do with this. I.12.25.83

AUGUSTINE: I shall do so. But first tell me whether you think you have a good will.

EVODIUS: What is a good will?

AUGUSTINE: A will by which we seek to live rightly and honorably, and to attain the highest wisdom. Now see whether you do not seek a right and honorable life, and whether you do not passionately want to be wise – or at least whether you would venture to deny that we have a good will when we want these things.

EVODIUS: I deny none of these things. Accordingly, I grant not only that I have a will, but also that it is good. I.12.25.84

AUGUSTINE: How much regard do you have for this will, I ask you? Do you think that riches or honors or bodily pleasures, or all of these together, are to be compared to it in any respect?

EVODIUS: God forbid such horrendous madness!

AUGUSTINE: Should we then not rejoice a little that in the mind we have something – I am speaking of the good will itself – in comparison with which all the things we have mentioned are completely unimportant, things in pursuit of which we see many people spare no efforts or avoid no dangers? I.12.25.85

EVODIUS: We should rejoice a great deal.

AUGUSTINE: Well, do you think that those who do not feel this rejoicing suffer a slight loss when deprived of so great a good?

EVODIUS: On the contrary, they suffer the greatest loss.

AUGUSTINE: Then I think you see now that it lies in our will to enjoy or to lack such a great and genuine good. For what is so much in the power of the will as the will itself? When anyone has a good will, he surely has something to be put far ahead of all earthly kingdoms and all bodily pleasures. Anyone who does not have a good will certainly lacks the very thing the will alone would provide through itself, something more excellent than all the goods not within our power. Thus while someone will I.12.26.86

¹⁴ In this exchange, “want” and “will” are versions of the same Latin word: *uolle*, “to will” or “to want” or even “to wish (for)” in its verbal form; *uoluntas*, “the will” or “(a) want” or “wish” in its nominal form. I.12.26.87

judge himself thoroughly unhappy if he has lost his glorious reputation, great wealth, and whatever bodily goods, will you not by contrast judge him to be thoroughly unhappy even if he *has* all such things in abundance? For he holds fast to things that can easily be lost, and he does not have them when he wants to. Furthermore, he lacks a good will, which is not to be compared with these things – and, even though it is so great a good, it is only necessary to will in order to have it.

1.12.26.88 EVODIUS: Quite true.

AUGUSTINE: Then even if foolish people have never been wise – an uncertain and very obscure point¹⁵ – they are rightly and deservedly afflicted with these sorts of miseries.

EVODIUS: I agree.

1.13.27.89 AUGUSTINE: Now consider whether prudence¹⁶ seems to you to be knowledge of things to be pursued and avoided.

EVODIUS: It does.

AUGUSTINE: Well, is bravery not the psychological state by which we attribute little value to all hardships and losses of things that are not within our power?

EVODIUS: So I hold.

AUGUSTINE: What is more, moderateness is the state that checks and restrains the appetite from things it pursues disgracefully. Do you think otherwise?

EVODIUS: Quite the contrary; I think it is as you say.

1.13.27.90 AUGUSTINE: Then what should we say justice is but the virtue by which each receives his due?

EVODIUS: I have no other conception of justice.

AUGUSTINE: Therefore, anyone who has a good will (whose superiority we have been discussing for a long time now) would embrace this one thing¹⁷ as an unsurpassable delight – on the one hand pleasing himself, on the other hand taking complete satisfaction and rejoicing to think of it, judging how great it is and how it cannot be stolen or taken away against

¹⁵ Augustine is leaving open the possibility that foolish people were “wise” in the sense that their souls, before birth, were acquainted with wisdom: a clear allusion to the doctrine of Recollection in Plato’s *Meno*. See 1.12.24.81.

¹⁶ Prudence, bravery, moderateness, and justice are the traditional four cardinal virtues; Augustine takes them up here in order.

¹⁷ “This one thing”: the good will. Augustine’s initial “therefore” suggests that he is speaking about the virtue of justice, but 1.13.27.93 makes it plain that it is the good will here.

his will. Can we have any doubt that he is going to set himself against anything inimical to this one good?

EVODIUS: He must set himself against it completely.

AUGUSTINE: Do we think someone is *not* equipped with prudence if he sees that this good should be pursued and things that are opposed to it should be avoided? 1.13.27.01

EVODIUS: It does not seem to me that anyone can do this without prudence.

AUGUSTINE: Right! But why do we not attribute bravery to this person too? He cannot love or value highly all those things that are not in our power. They are loved by the evil will, which he must resist as inimical to his own most cherished good. But since he does not love them, he is not pained by their loss and holds them as utterly worthless. As we declared and agreed earlier,¹⁸ this is the work of bravery.

EVODIUS: Let us indeed attribute bravery to him. I do not think I could more truly call anyone brave than a person who bears with equanimity the loss of things that it is not in our power to get or keep, which we have found this person necessarily does. 1.13.27.02

AUGUSTINE: Now see whether we can deprive him of moderateness, since this is the virtue that restrains our lusts. What indeed is as harmful to a good will as lust? From this you surely recognize that the person who loves his own good will resists lusts in every way and sets himself against them, and so is rightly called moderate.

EVODIUS: I agree. Go on.

AUGUSTINE: Justice remains. I do not see at all how this person could lack it. Someone who possesses and takes delight in the good will, standing against whatever is inimical to it, as mentioned, cannot have ill-will towards anyone. Therefore, it follows that he would do injury to no one. This can happen only if he gives to each his due – and when I said that this pertains to justice, I think you remember that you agreed. 1.13.27.03

EVODIUS: I do remember, and I agree that all four virtues you sketched a little while ago, with my agreement, are found in anyone who takes delight in his own good will and regards it highly.

AUGUSTINE: Then does anything prevent our granting that his life is praiseworthy? 1.13.28.04

¹⁸ See 1.13.27.89.

EVODIUS: Absolutely nothing. Quite the opposite; all these points encourage and even compel us to do so.

AUGUSTINE: Well, is there any way you can avoid judging that the unhappy life should be avoided?

EVODIUS: No. That is exactly what I think should be done.

AUGUSTINE: But surely you do not think that a praiseworthy life should be avoided, do you?

EVODIUS: If nothing else, it should be eagerly pursued.

AUGUSTINE: Therefore, a praiseworthy life is not unhappy.

EVODIUS: That does indeed follow.

AUGUSTINE: Then as far as I can tell, no further difficulty stands in the way of your acknowledging that a life which is not unhappy is happy.

EVODIUS: That is completely clear.

1.13.28.95 AUGUSTINE: Hence we agree that someone is happy when he takes delight in his own good will, and on account of it he attributes little worth to anything else that is called good but can be lost even when the will to retain it remains.

EVODIUS: Of course. That logically follows from the points we granted earlier.

AUGUSTINE: You have understood quite well. But please tell me: Is not taking delight in one's own good will, and valuing it as highly as we described, *itself* the good will?

EVODIUS: That is true.

AUGUSTINE: If we correctly judged that this person [who has and takes delight in his own good will] is happy, is it not correct that anyone having a contrary will is unhappy?

EVODIUS: Quite correct.

1.13.28.96 AUGUSTINE: Therefore, is there any reason for us to hesitate in thinking that even if we have never been wise before, nevertheless it is by our will that we have and deserve either a happy and praiseworthy life, or an unhappy and disgraceful one?

EVODIUS: We have reached this conclusion by certain and undeniable steps.

1.13.29.97 AUGUSTINE: Look at this point as well. I think you recall how we described the good will, namely as that by which we seek to live rightly and honorably.

EVODIUS: Yes, I remember.

AUGUSTINE: Hence if it is precisely by a good will that we embrace and take delight in this will, and put it ahead of all the things that we are unable to retain just by willing to do so, then, as the argument has shown, our mind will possess those very virtues whose possession is the same thing as living rightly and honorably. The upshot is that anyone who wills to live rightly and honorably, if he wills himself to will this instead of transient goods, acquires so great a possession with such ease that having what he willed is nothing other for him than willing it.

EVODIUS: To tell the truth, I can scarcely keep myself from shouting for joy, when such a great and easily acquired good has suddenly sprung up before me! I.13.29.98

AUGUSTINE: If indeed the joy occasioned by acquiring this good elevates the mind calmly, peacefully, and steadfastly, this is called the happy life. You do not think that living happily is something other than rejoicing in genuine and certain goods, do you?

EVODIUS: No, I agree with you.

AUGUSTINE: Quite right. But do you think there is anyone who does *not* will and decide upon the happy life in all ways? I.14.30.99

EVODIUS: Who doubts that everyone wills it?

AUGUSTINE: Then *why do they not all attain it?* We had said and agreed that it is by the will that people deserve the happy life, and it is also by the will that they deserve the unhappy life; the end result is that people deserve what they get. But now some sort of contradiction has cropped up, and, unless we look into the matter carefully, it will work to undermine the earlier carefully crafted and solid argument. How does anyone suffer an unhappy life by his will, since absolutely no one wills to live unhappily? That is, how does someone gain the happy life through the will, when everyone wants to be happy and yet so many are unhappy? I.14.30.100

Does it happen because it is one thing to will in a good or evil manner, another to deserve something due to a good or evil will? Those who are happy (who must also be good) are not happy simply because they willed to live *happily*. Even evil people will this. Instead, it is because they willed to live *rightly*, which evil people are unwilling to do. For this reason, it is no wonder that unhappy people do not attain what they will, namely the happy life. They do not likewise will what goes along with it, namely living rightly, and without willing this no one is worthy of the happy life or attains it. The eternal law – it is now time for us to consider it again – established firmly with unchangeable stability that deserts are I.14.30.101

in the will, whereas reward and punishment are in happiness and unhappiness.¹⁹ Thus when we say that people are unhappy due to the will, we are not thereby saying that they will to be unhappy, but rather that they are in a condition of will upon which must follow unhappinesses, even against their will. Accordingly, the fact that all people will to be happy and yet are not able to be happy does *not* contradict our earlier argument, because not all will to live rightly; the happy life is due to this one will. Do you have anything to say against these claims?

EVODIUS: Nothing. Instead, let us see now how they are related to the question at hand about the two kinds of law [temporal and eternal].

AUGUSTINE: Yes, but first tell me this. Does not someone who takes delight in living rightly – enjoying it so that the life not only is right for him but also is pleasant and agreeable – does he not, I ask, love and hold most dear the law by which he sees that the happy life is bestowed upon the good will, and the unhappy life is bestowed upon the evil will?

EVODIUS: He loves it completely and wholeheartedly, for it is in following the selfsame law that he lives as he does.

AUGUSTINE: Well, when he loves the law, does he love something changeable and temporal, or something stable and everlasting?

EVODIUS: Surely eternal and unchangeable.

AUGUSTINE: What about those who persist in their evil will but nonetheless desire to be happy? Are they able to love the law by which people such as themselves are deservedly punished by unhappiness?

EVODIUS: Not at all, I think.

AUGUSTINE: They do not love anything else, do they?

EVODIUS: On the contrary, many things – namely the things their evil will is bent on acquiring or keeping.

AUGUSTINE: I think you are talking about riches, honors, pleasures, physical beauty, and all the other things that they can fail to acquire despite willing to, and can lose against their will.

EVODIUS: Those are the very things.

AUGUSTINE: Surely you do not think that *these* things are eternal? You see that they are subject to the vicissitudes of time.

EVODIUS: Who but a madman would hold this?

¹⁹ Augustine is perhaps thinking of 1.6.15.48–1.6.15.49, although the view that deserts are in the will is expressed more clearly in 1.11.21.76–1.11.22.77.

AUGUSTINE: Then since it is clear that some people love eternal things and others temporal things, and since we have agreed that there are two laws, one eternal and the other temporal – if you know anything about fairness, which group do you judge should be subject to the eternal law, and which to temporal law? 1.15.31.106

EVODIUS: I think the answer to your question is obvious. I hold that happy people dwell under the eternal law, due to their love for eternal things, whereas temporal law is imposed on unhappy people.

AUGUSTINE: You are right, provided you hold resolutely what our argument has already established explicitly: People subservient to temporal law cannot be free from the eternal law, from which we said all things that are just, or are justly altered, are derived. You understand well enough that people who hold fast to the eternal law through their good will have no need of temporal law, as is apparent. 1.15.31.107

EVODIUS: Yes.

AUGUSTINE: Hence the eternal law commands us to turn our love aside from temporal things and to turn it, purified, towards eternal things. 1.15.32.108

EVODIUS: It does.

AUGUSTINE: Now when people, through desire, hold fast to things that can be called ours only for a time, do you not think that the temporal law prescribes that they possess them by right – namely the right by which peace and human intercourse are preserved, to the extent they can be preserved in the case of these things?

These things are as follows: (i) this body and what are called its goods, such as sound health, keen senses, strength, beauty, and whatever other goods there may be, some of which are necessary for good skills and should therefore be more highly valued, while others should be considered less valuable; (ii) freedom, which is genuine only if it belongs to happy people who adhere to the eternal law, but for now I am discussing the “freedom” by which people who have no human masters think of themselves as free and which those who want to be set free by their human masters desire; (iii) parents, brothers, a spouse, children, neighbors, relatives, friends, and anyone else bound to us by some close relationship; (iv) the state, which typically has the role of a parent; (v) honors and praise and what is called “celebrity”; and finally (vi) property, under which single name we classify everything we control by right and appear to have the power to sell or give away. 1.15.32.109
1.15.32.110

1.15.32.111

It is difficult and tedious to explain how the law distributes each of these things to those to whom they are due, and plainly it is unnecessary for the task at hand. It is enough to recognize that the power of the temporal law to redress deeds does not extend further than taking these goods (or some of them) away from the one being punished, depriving him of them. Therefore, temporal law restrains through fear. It twists and turns the minds of the people, for whose governance it was designed, to what it wants. As long as people are afraid to lose these goods, they maintain a certain mode of conduct in using them, one appropriate to holding together whatever kind of state can be set up with such people.

1.15.32.112

Retribution for sin is not exacted when they love these goods, but rather when they are taken away from others through dishonesty.

Accordingly, see whether we have now reached the end of what you thought endless, for we meant to investigate how far the law governing earthly societies and states has the right to exact retribution.

EVODIUS: We have.

1.15.33.112

AUGUSTINE: Then you also see that there would be no penalty, whether imposed on human beings through injury or some kind of redress, if they did not love things that can be taken away against their will.

EVODIUS: I see that too.

1.15.33.113

AUGUSTINE: Hence the selfsame things are used in a good manner by one person and in an evil manner by another. The person who uses them in an evil manner holds fast to them with love and is tangled up with them. That is to say, he is controlled by things that he ought to control, and, in setting them up as goods for himself that need to be put in order and treated properly, he holds himself back from the [true] good. However, the person who uses them rightly shows that they are goods, but not his own goods, for they do not make him good or better. Instead, they become good or better due to him. Hence he does not attach himself to them with love. Nor does he make them like the limbs of his mind (which happens through loving them), so that when they start to be cut off again he is not ravaged by pain and corruption. Rather, he is completely above them, possessing and governing them when there is need; he is ready to lose them, and more ready not to have them.

Since this is how things are, then, do you think we should censure silver and gold because of greedy men, food because of gluttons, wine because of drunkards, attractive women because of fornicators and

adulterers, and so on? Especially since you recognize that the physician makes good use of fire whereas the poisoner makes evil use of bread!

EVODIUS: You are absolutely right that the things themselves should not be blamed, but rather the people who use them in an evil manner.

AUGUSTINE: Correct. We have now begun to see, I think, the power of eternal law, and to discover how far temporal law can extend in redress. We have also explicitly and adequately distinguished two kinds of things, the eternal and the temporal, and again two kinds of people: some who follow and take delight in eternal things, and others who follow and take delight in temporal things. We have established that what each person elects to pursue and embrace is located in the will, and that the mind is not thrown down from its stronghold of dominance, and from the right order, by anything but the will. It is also clear that when a person uses something in an evil manner, the thing should not be blamed, but rather the person using it in that evil manner. 1.16.34.114

Let us return then, if you please, to the question posed at the beginning of our discussion, and see whether it has been solved.

We set out to investigate what it is to do evil, and everything we have said we said to this end. As a result, we are now ready to turn our attention to consider whether evildoing is anything other than pursuing temporal things and whatever is perceived through the body (the least valuable part of a human being), which can never be fixed, as though they were great and wonderful, having neglected eternal things, which the mind enjoys through itself and perceives through itself and which it cannot lose while loving them. For all evildoings – that is to say, all sins – seem to me to be included under this one heading. But I am waiting to know what you think. 1.16.34.115

EVODIUS: It is as you say. I agree that all sins are contained under this one heading, when someone turns aside from divine and genuinely abiding things and towards changeable and uncertain things. Although the latter are rightly located in their proper place and attain a certain beauty of their own, it is the mark of a twisted and disordered mind to be subject to pursuing those things he was set above, to be in charge of as he might so command, in accordance with divine order and right. 1.16.35.116

I also see that we have simultaneously resolved and answered what we planned to look into after the question what it is to do evil, namely why 1.16.35.117

we do evil.²⁰ Unless I am mistaken, we do it out of free choice of the will, as the argument we dealt with here has established.

However, I ask whether free choice itself, through which we are found guilty of having the ability to commit sin, ought to have been given to us by Him who made us.²¹ It seems that, if we lack it, we would not be bound to sin. My fear is that in this way God will also be reckoned as author of our evildoings.

1.16.35.118 AUGUSTINE: Do not worry on that score. But we shall have to find another time to look into this again more carefully, for our current discussion should now conclude. I would like you to believe that in this discussion we have, so to speak, been knocking at the door of profound and abstruse matters that need to be explored. Once we begin to enter into their inner recesses, with God's help, you surely will judge how much distance there is between this discussion and those to follow, and how much the latter surpass the former, not only in the sagacity of the investigation but also in the grandeur of the issues and the most resplendent light of the truth. May there be enough religiousness in us that divine providence allows us to hold to and complete the course we have plotted! EVODIUS: I bow to your will, and quite freely join mine to it in judgment and in prayer.

Book 2

2.1.1.1 EVODIUS: Now if possible, explain to me *why* God gave human beings free choice of the will. If we had not received it, we surely would not be able to sin.

AUGUSTINE: Do you already know for sure that God gave us something which you think we should not have been given?

EVODIUS: As far as I seemed to understand matters in Book 1, we have free choice of the will, and we sin through it alone.

AUGUSTINE: I too remember that this was made evident to us then. But I have just asked you whether you know that God clearly gave us what we have and through which we sin.

2.1.1.2 EVODIUS: No one else, I think. We have our existence from God; whether we sin or act rightly, we deserve penalty or reward from Him.

²⁰ See 1.3.5.14: "You are really asking *why* it is we do evil." This is the main question of Book 1.

²¹ This is the main question of Book 2: see 2.1.1.1.

AUGUSTINE: I would also like to know whether you know this unequivocally, or you are induced by authority to believe it readily, even though you do not know it.

EVODIUS: I grant that at first I believed this on authority. But what is more true than that every good is from God, that everything just is good, that a penalty for sinners and a reward for those acting rightly is just? From this it follows that it is God who bestows unhappiness on sinners and happiness on those acting rightly.

AUGUSTINE: I do not disagree, but I am asking about the *other* point, namely: How do you know that we have our existence from God? You did not explain this now. Instead, you explained that we deserve penalty or reward from God. 2.1.2,3

EVODIUS: The answer to this question also seems to be clear, precisely on the grounds that God redresses sins – at least, if all justice comes from Him; for while conferring benefits on strangers is a sign of someone’s goodness, redressing [the wrongdoings] of strangers is not thereby a sign of someone’s justice. Accordingly, it is clear that we belong to God, since He is not only most generous to us in His excellence, but also is most just in redressing [wrongdoing]. In addition, I proposed and you granted that everything good is from God; human beings can also be understood to be from God on this score. For a human being *qua* human being is something good, since he can live rightly when he wills to. 2.1.2,4

AUGUSTINE: Obviously, if these things are so, the question you raised²² has been solved, [as follows]. 2.1.3,5

[1] If a person is something good and could act rightly only because he willed to, then he ought to have free will, without which he could not act rightly. We should not believe that, because a person also sins through it, God gave it to him for this purpose. The fact that a person cannot live rightly without it is therefore a sufficient reason why it should have been given to him.

[2] Free will can also be understood to be given for this reason: If anyone uses it in order to sin, the divinity redresses him [for it]. This would happen unjustly if free will had been given not only for living rightly but also for sinning. How would God justly redress someone who made use of his will for the purpose for which it was given? Now, 2.1.3,6

²² See 2.1.1.1.

however, when God punishes the sinner, what does He seem to be saying but: “Why did you not make use of free will for the purpose for which I gave it to you?” – that is, for acting rightly.

- 2.1.3.7 [3] If human beings lacked free choice of the will, how could there be the good in accordance with which justice itself is praised in condemning sins and honoring right deeds? For what does not come about through the will would neither be sinning nor acting rightly. Consequently, penalty and reward would be unjust if human beings did not have free will. There ought to be justice in punishment and in reward, since justice is one of the goods that are from God.

Hence God ought to have given free will to human beings.

- 2.2.4.8 EVODIUS: I grant that God gave it. But I ask you: If free will was given for acting rightly, does it not seem that it should be unable to be turned towards sinning, as justice itself was given to people for living correctly? Who in the world can live in an evil manner through justice? Likewise, no one could sin through the will if the will was given for acting rightly.

- 2.2.4.9 AUGUSTINE: God will enable me to answer you, I hope. Or rather, He will enable you to answer yourself, when the greatest teacher of all, truth itself, instructs you from within.²³ But if you hold that God gave us free will – which I had asked you about – as something that is known for certain, I want you to tell me briefly whether we should say that God ought not to have given what we acknowledge he gave.

- 2.2.4.10 [1] Now if it is *uncertain* whether God gave it, we rightly ask whether it was well given. Then if we find that (a) it was well given, we also find that it was given by Him from whom all goods are given to the soul; or if we find that (b) it was not well given, then we realize it was not given by Him Whom it is blasphemous to blame.
- [2] On the other hand, if it is *certain* that God gave it, then, no matter how it was given, we must recognize that it should neither (a) not have been given, nor (b) have been given otherwise than it was given. For it was given by Him Whose deed cannot be faulted in any way.

- 2.2.5.11 EVODIUS: While I hold this with resolute faith, I do not yet hold it with knowledge. So let us examine it as though all these points were uncertain.

²³ See *The Teacher* 14.45, where Augustine puts forward his view that knowledge is inner illumination. He identifies the recognition of truth with Christ as the Teacher, Who is Truth.

From the uncertainty whether free will was given for acting rightly, on the grounds that we can also sin through it, I see that it also becomes uncertain whether He ought to have given it. For if it is uncertain whether it was given for acting rightly, it is also uncertain whether it ought to have been given. Consequently it will also be uncertain whether God gave it. For if it is uncertain whether it ought to have been given, it is uncertain whether it was given by Him Whom it is blasphemous to believe gave something that ought not to have been given. 2.2.5.12

AUGUSTINE: You are certain that God exists, at least.

EVODIUS: I hold this resolutely, too, but by believing it rather than by having a theoretical grasp of it.

AUGUSTINE: Then suppose one of those fools of whom it is written: 2.2.5.13
 “The fool has said in his heart: There is no God” [Ps. 13:1 (14:1 RSV), 52:1 (53:1 RSV)] were to say this to you, and further that he did not want to join you in merely believing what you believe, but instead wanted to know whether what you believe is true. You would not turn your back on him, would you? Would you not think he should somehow be *convinced* of what you hold resolutely, especially if he eagerly wanted to know it rather than to persist in quarreling with you?

EVODIUS: Your last remark suggests to me exactly what answer I should give him. Even if he were quite unreasonable, he would surely admit that one should not discuss anything at all with an insincere and truculent person, in particular not such an important topic. After this initial admission, he would press me to believe that he is raising the question in the right spirit, and not hiding any insincerity or truculence in himself that pertains to this undertaking. I would then point out – something that I think is quite easy for anyone to do – that, since he wants another person to believe him about things that he admits are hidden in his own mind, when the other person does not know these things, it would be much more reasonable for him also to believe that God exists, from the books written by the great men who left behind their written testimony that they lived with the Son of God – for (a) they wrote that they saw things that could not have happened if [Jesus] were not God, and (b) he would be quite the fool himself if he were to find fault with me for believing these men, since he wants me to believe *him*. But then, since he could not rightly find fault with me, he would find no reason why he also should be unwilling to follow my example. 2.2.5.14

2.2.5.16 AUGUSTINE: If you hold that it is sufficient for determining whether God exists that we judge with care that such great men are to be believed, then tell me *why* you think we do not likewise believe the authority of these selfsame men regarding the other matters we have set out to explore, as though they were uncertain and plainly not known,²⁴ so that we labor no more in investigating them?

EVODIUS: Well, we want to know and understand what we believe.

2.2.6.17 AUGUSTINE: You remember aright. We cannot deny what we held even at the very beginning of Book 1: Believing is one thing, understanding another; we should first believe the great and divine matter that we desire to understand.²⁵ Otherwise, the prophet's words, "Unless you believe

2.2.6.18 you shall not understand" [Is. 7:9], would be in vain. Our Lord Himself also encouraged belief in those whom He called to salvation with both His words and His deeds. But afterwards, when speaking about the gift He was going to give to those who believe, He did not say "This is life eternal, that they might *believe*..." but rather: "This is life eternal, that they might *know* you, the true God, and Jesus Christ, the one whom You have sent" [Jn. 17:3]. Then He said to those who already believed "Seek, and you shall find" [Mt. 7:7]. For something that is believed but not known cannot be said to be 'found.' Nor is anyone made suitable for the task of finding God unless he first believes what he will later know.

2.2.6.19 Consequently, let us obey the Lord's precepts in pressing our inquiry. What we seek with His encouragement we shall find when He Himself shows it to us – at least insofar as these things *can* be found in this life by people such as ourselves. For we must believe that better people – even some who dwell in this world, and certainly all good religious people in the afterlife – grasp and recognize these things more evidently and completely. We must hope that we are going to be so, desiring and taking delight in such things, disdaining worldly and human things completely.

2.3.7.20 Let us pursue our inquiry in this order, if you agree:

[1] How is it clear that God exists?

[2] Do all things, insofar as they are good, come from God?

[3] Is free will to be counted among these goods?

Once we have answers to [1]–[3], I think it will be quite apparent whether free will was given to humans rightly.

²⁴ See 2.2.5.11. ²⁵ See 1.2.4.11–1.2.5.13.

So, to start off with what is clearest, I ask first whether you yourself exist. Are you perhaps afraid that you might be deceived in this line of questioning? Surely if you did not exist, you could not be deceived at all.

EVODIUS: Go on.

AUGUSTINE: Therefore, since it is clear that you exist, and it would not be clear to you unless you were alive, this too is clear: You are alive. Do you understand that these two points are absolutely true? 2,3,7.21

EVODIUS: Yes indeed.

AUGUSTINE: Then this third point is also clear, namely: You understand.

EVODIUS: Clearly.

AUGUSTINE: Which of these three do you think is superior?

EVODIUS: Understanding.

AUGUSTINE: Why do you think so?

EVODIUS: Because existing, living, and understanding are three [distinct] things. A stone exists and an animal is alive, yet I do not think a stone is alive or an animal understands. However, it is quite certain that one who understands both exists and is alive.²⁶ Accordingly, I have no hesitation in judging superior that in which all three features are present rather than that in which even one is missing. For anything alive surely exists too, but it does not follow that it also understands. This is the sort of life an animal has, I think. Furthermore, from the fact that something exists it does not follow that it is alive and understands. I can grant that corpses exist, but nobody would say that they are alive! And what is not now alive understands so much the less. 2,3,7.22

AUGUSTINE: Hence we hold that a corpse lacks two of the three, an animal one, and a human being none. 2,3,7.23

EVODIUS: Yes.

AUGUSTINE: We also hold that the most excellent feature among these three is what human beings have in addition to the other two: understanding. For it follows that someone having understanding also is alive and exists.

EVODIUS: Yes indeed.

AUGUSTINE: Now tell me whether you know yourself to have the ordinary bodily senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. 2,3,8.25

EVODIUS: I know that.

²⁶ See 1.7.17.59, where Evodius explains why the knowledge of life ranks higher than life as such.

AUGUSTINE: What do you think pertains to the sense of sight? That is, what do you think we sense by seeing?

EVODIUS: Any physical object.

AUGUSTINE: Do we also sense hard and soft by seeing?

EVODIUS: No.

AUGUSTINE: Then what pertains strictly to the eyes, which we sense through them?

EVODIUS: Color.

AUGUSTINE: What pertains to the ears?

EVODIUS: Sound.

AUGUSTINE: To smell?

EVODIUS: Odor.

AUGUSTINE: Taste?

EVODIUS: Flavor.

AUGUSTINE: Touch?

EVODIUS: Hard and soft, rough and smooth, and lots of such things.

AUGUSTINE: Well, do we not sense the shapes of physical objects – large or small, round or square, and the like – by touching *and* by seeing? Hence they cannot be assigned strictly either to sight or to touch, but rather to both.

EVODIUS: I understand.

2,3,8,26 AUGUSTINE: Then do you understand that while individual senses have proper objects on which they report, some [also] have common objects?

EVODIUS: Yes.

AUGUSTINE: Can we settle what pertains to each sense by means of any of these senses? Or what they all have in common with one another, or some of them?

EVODIUS: Not at all. These matters are settled by something internal.

AUGUSTINE: This is not by any chance reason itself, which animals lack, is it? For I think it is by reason we grasp these things and know that they are so.

2,3,8,27 EVODIUS: I think instead that by reason we grasp that there is an “internal sense” to which the familiar five senses convey everything. Surely that by which an animal sees is one thing, whereas that by which it pursues or avoids what it senses by seeing is another. The former sense is in the eyes, the latter within the soul itself. By it, animals either pursue and take up as enjoyable, or avoid and reject as offensive, not only what they
2,3,8,28 see but also what they hear or grasp by the other bodily senses. Now this

[internal sense] cannot be called sight, hearing, smell, taste, or touch, but something else, whatever it may be, that presides over them all in common. We do grasp it with reason, as I pointed out, but I cannot call it reason itself, since it is clearly present in animals.

AUGUSTINE: I recognize it, whatever it is, and I do not hesitate to name it the 'internal sense.' Yet unless what the bodily senses convey goes beyond it, we cannot arrive at knowledge. We hold anything that we know as something grasped by reason. But we *know* that colors cannot be sensed by hearing, nor spoken words by sight, to say nothing of the others. Although we know this, we do not know it by the eyes, nor the ears, nor by the internal sense which animals also have. Nor should we believe that they know that light is not sensed by the ears nor an utterance by the eyes, since we single these things out only by rational attention and thought. 2,3,9,29 2,3,9,30

EVODIUS: I cannot say that I quite get the general idea. What if animals also settle this question – that they cannot sense colors by hearing nor spoken words by sight – through the internal sense, which you admit they also have? 2,3,9,31

AUGUSTINE: Do you also think they can single out from one another (1) the color that is sensed; (2) the sense in the eye; (3) the internal sense in the soul; (4) reason, by which each of these is defined and enumerated?

EVODIUS: Of course not.

AUGUSTINE: Well, could reason single (1)–(4) out from one another and explicate them with definitions unless color were conveyed to it through the sense in the eyes, and this [sense] again through the internal sense that presides over it, and the selfsame internal sense through itself – at least if nothing else intervenes? 2,3,9,32

EVODIUS: I do not see how it could do so otherwise.

AUGUSTINE: Well, do you see that color is sensed by the sense in the eyes, whereas the selfsame sense is not sensed by the same sense? That is, you do not also see seeing itself by the same sense by which you see color. 2,3,9,33

EVODIUS: Absolutely not.

AUGUSTINE: Try to settle these points too. I believe you do not deny that the following differ: (a) color; (b) seeing color; (c) having the sense by which color could be seen if present, even when color is not present.

EVODIUS: I too distinguish (a)–(c), and I grant that they differ from one another.

2,3,9,34 AUGUSTINE: With regard to (a)–(c), do you see anything with your eyes other than color, that is, (a)?

EVODIUS: Nothing else.

AUGUSTINE: Then tell me: How do you see (b)–(c)? You could not single them out unless they were seen.

EVODIUS: I have no idea. I know that they are, nothing more.

AUGUSTINE: Then you do not know whether it is reason itself, or the life we call the ‘internal sense’ superior to the bodily senses, or something else?

EVODIUS: No.

2,3,9,35 AUGUSTINE: Yet you do know that it is not possible to *define* these things except by reason. And reason can do this only in the case of things presented to it for examination.

EVODIUS: Certainly.

AUGUSTINE: Hence the whatever-it-is by which we can sense everything we know is an *agent* of reason. It presents and reports to reason anything with which it comes into contact. As a result, the things sensed can be singled out within their limits and grasped not only through sensing but also through knowing.

EVODIUS: Yes.

2,3,9,36 AUGUSTINE: Reason itself singles its agents out from the things they deliver. Again, it recognizes the difference between these things and itself, and it confirms that it is more powerful than they are. Surely reason does not grasp itself by anything other than itself (*i.e.* by reason), does it? How would you know that you had reason unless you perceived it by reason?

EVODIUS: Quite true.

2,3,9,37 AUGUSTINE: Thus when we sense a color, we do not likewise also sense our sensing by the selfsame sense.²⁷ When we hear a sound we do not also hear our hearing it. When we smell a rose something is fragrant for us, but it is not our smelling. In tasting anything, the taste itself does not have a flavor in our mouth. In touching something we cannot also touch the very sense of touch. In short, it is clear that none of the five senses can be sensed by any of them, even though all physical objects are sensed by them.

EVODIUS: That is clear.

²⁷ See 2,3,9,33.

AUGUSTINE: I think this point is also clear: The internal sense not only senses the things it receives from the five bodily senses, but also senses *that* they are sensed by it. Animals would not move themselves to either pursue or avoid something unless they sensed themselves sensing – not for the sake of knowledge, for this belongs to reason, but only for the sake of movement – and they surely do not sense this by any of the five bodily senses. 2.4.10.38

If this is still obscure, it may shed some light to consider what is sufficient in the case of a single sense, for instance sight. An animal could not even open its eyes or turn its gaze to what it wants to see unless it sensed that it did *not* see [the object] when its eyes were closed, or not turned in that direction. But if the animal senses that it does not see when it does not see, it must also sense that it sees when it *does* see: When it sees, it does not turn the eyes with the desire with which it turns them when it does not see. This shows that the animal senses itself sensing in each case. 2.4.10.39

Now it is not clear whether this life, a life that senses itself sensing corporeal things, senses *itself*, unless it is for the following reason. Anyone putting the question to himself realizes that every living thing avoids death. Since death is contrary to life, life must also sense itself, for it avoids its contrary. 2.4.10.40

But if this is still not apparent, disregard it, so that we may press on to what we want solely on clear and certain grounds. The following points are clear: (a) physical objects are sensed by bodily sense; (b) the same sense cannot be sensed by the selfsame sense; (c) physical objects are sensed by the internal sense through bodily sense, as well as bodily sense itself; (d) reason acquaints us with all the foregoing, as well as with reason itself, and knowledge includes them. Do you not think so? 2.4.10.41

EVODIUS: I do indeed.

AUGUSTINE: Very well. Now tell me the state of the question. We have been trudging along the road for a long time, wanting to arrive at its solution.

EVODIUS: As far as I remember, we are now discussing the first of the three questions we put forward a little while ago to structure the discussion,²⁸ namely, how can it be made clear that God exists? (Even though this should be *believed* most firmly and strongly.) 2.5.11.42

²⁸ See 2.3.7.20.

AUGUSTINE: You recall this correctly. But I also want you to recall the following with some care. When I asked you whether you knew yourself to exist, it was apparent to us that you knew not only this but also two other things.²⁹

EVODIUS: I recall that too.

2.5.11.43 AUGUSTINE: Then look now: To which of the three, do you think, belongs everything that the bodily senses come into contact with? That is, under what heading do you think we should classify whatever our senses come into contact with through the eyes or any other bodily organ – (a) what merely exists; (b) what is also alive; (c) what also understands?

EVODIUS: Under (a).

AUGUSTINE: Well, under which of (a)–(c) do you think sense falls?

EVODIUS: Under (b).

AUGUSTINE: Then which of these two do you judge to be better: sense itself, or what sense comes into contact with?

EVODIUS: Sense, of course.

AUGUSTINE: Why?

EVODIUS: Because what is also alive is better than what merely exists.

2.5.12.44 AUGUSTINE: Well, what about the internal sense? We found earlier that it is lower than reason, though common to human beings and animals. You will not hesitate to rank the internal sense above the [external] senses – through which we come into contact with physical objects, and which you just declared should be ranked above physical objects themselves – will you?

EVODIUS: Absolutely not.

2.5.12.45 AUGUSTINE: I want to hear you explain *why* you do not hesitate. You cannot say that the internal sense should be classified under (c), but rather along with what exists and is alive, though it lacks understanding. The internal sense is also present in animals, where understanding is not present. Since this is so, I am asking why you rank the internal sense above the senses by which physical objects are sensed, for each falls under (b). You ranked the senses, which come into contact with physical objects, above physical objects, because the latter fall under (a) and the former under (b). Since the internal sense is also found in (b), tell me why you think it better. If you say because the one senses the other, I do not believe you are going to find a rule by which we can trust that whatever

2.5.12.46

²⁹ See 2.3.7.21.

senses is better than what it senses. Otherwise, we might be forced to say on this basis that whatever understands is better than what it understands, and this is false, since a human being understands wisdom and is not better than wisdom itself. Accordingly, see why it seems to you that the internal sense is superior to the sense by which we sense physical objects. 2.5.12.47

EVODIUS: Because I know that the internal sense controls and judges the bodily senses. If the latter miss anything while carrying out their job, the internal sense demands what its agent owes it (so to speak), as we argued it through a little while ago.³⁰ The sense in the eyes does not see that it sees or does not see – and since it does not, it cannot judge what is missing or what is enough – but rather the internal sense does, which prompts even an animal's soul to open its closed eyes or to fill in what it senses is missing. But nobody doubts that what judges is better than what it judges. 2.5.12.48

AUGUSTINE: Then do you also recognize that the bodily senses somehow judge physical objects? Pleasure and pain pertain to the bodily senses, namely when the bodily senses come gently or roughly into contact with a physical object. Just as the internal sense judges what is missing or what is enough for the sense in the eyes, so too the sense in the eyes itself judges what is missing or what is enough in the case of colors. Again, just as the internal sense judges whether our hearing is attentive enough, so too hearing itself judges which spoken words gently flow in or roughly grate [on our ears]. There is no need to run through the other bodily senses. I think you anticipate what I want to claim: Just as the internal sense judges the bodily senses when it approves their completeness or demands what is lacking, likewise the bodily senses themselves judge physical objects, taking in from them their 'gentle touch' and rejecting the opposite. 2.5.12.49

EVODIUS: I understand quite well, and I agree that these claims are entirely true. 2.5.12.50

AUGUSTINE: Consider now whether reason also judges the internal sense. I am not asking whether you have any doubt that reason is *better* than the internal sense. I am sure you hold that it is. In fact, I do not think we need even to raise the question whether reason judges the internal sense. Surely in the case of things lower than reason – physical 2.6.13.51

³⁰ See 2.4.10.39–2.4.10.41.

objects, the bodily senses, the internal sense – what else but reason itself, in the end, declares how one is better than another, and how much more excellent reason itself is than the rest? Yet reason could only do this if it were to judge them.

EVODIUS: That is clear.

2.6.13-52 AUGUSTINE: Therefore, a nature that only exists and neither lives nor understands, such as an inanimate physical object, is inferior to a nature that not only exists but also lives, but does not understand, such as the soul of animals. This nature is in turn inferior to one that at once exists and lives and understands, such as the rational mind in human beings. Do you think you can find anything in us, that is, find anything among the features that complete our nature as human beings, that is more excellent than understanding?³¹ It is clear that we have a body, as well as some sort of life that animates and enlivens the body. We also recognize these two features in animals. There is a third feature, something like the ‘head’ or ‘eye’ of our soul – or whatever term is more suitable for reason and intelligence – which animal nature does not have. So please see whether you can find anything more exalted in human nature than reason.

EVODIUS: I see absolutely nothing better.

2.6.14-54 AUGUSTINE: Well, suppose we were able to find something that you had no doubt not only exists but also is more excellent than our reason. Would you hesitate to say that *this*, whatever it is, is God?

EVODIUS: Even if I could find something better than what is best in my nature, I would not immediately say it was God. I do not call ‘God’ that to which my reason is inferior, but that to which none is superior.

2.6.14-55 AUGUSTINE: Plainly so, since He gave your reason the ability to think about Him so accurately and religiously. But I ask you: If you find nothing above our reason except what is eternal and unchangeable, will you hesitate to say that *this* is God? For you know that physical objects are changeable; it is clear that the life by which a body is animated is itself changeable through various states; and reason is surely proved to be itself changeable when at one time it strives to reach the truth and at another it does not, and at one time it reaches truth and at another it fails.

2.6.14-56 Suppose that reason sees something eternal and unchangeable through itself, without recourse to any bodily organ – not through touch, taste, or smell; not through the ears or the eyes, nor through any sense inferior

³¹ Literally: “than what we have listed third among these three [features]?”

to itself. Reason must then admit itself to be inferior, and the eternal and unchangeable being [that it sees] to be its God.

EVODIUS: I will plainly admit that this being, to which we agree none is superior, is God.

AUGUSTINE: Very well. It will be sufficient for me to show that there is something of this sort that you will admit is God – or, if there is something higher, you grant that *it* is God. Accordingly, whether there is something higher or not, it will be clear that God exists when, with His help, I show as promised that He is higher than reason. 2.6.14,57

EVODIUS: Then prove it! Make good on your promise.

AUGUSTINE: I shall. First, I ask whether my bodily senses are the same as yours, or whether mine are mine alone and yours are yours alone. Of course, if this were not the case, I could not see anything through my eyes that you would not also see. 2.7.15,58

EVODIUS: I fully agree that, despite being of the same kind, we each have our own sense of seeing, hearing, and so on. This is why: One person can not only see but also hear what someone else does not hear. In fact, anyone can sense something with any sense that another person does not sense. Accordingly, it is clear that your senses are yours alone and mine are mine alone. 2.7.15,59

AUGUSTINE: Will you give the same answer in the case of the internal sense? 2.7.15,60

EVODIUS: Exactly the same. Surely mine senses my senses and yours senses yours. This is why I am often asked by someone who sees something whether I see it too. I am the one who senses that I see or do not see, not the person who asks.

AUGUSTINE: What about reason? Each person has his own, does he not? Sometimes it happens that I understand something when you do not understand it, and you are not able to know whether I understand, whereas I do know. 2.7.15,61

EVODIUS: It is clear that each person has his own rational mind.

AUGUSTINE: Can you also say that we each have our own Suns that we see, or Moons, or morning stars, and so on, even though each person sees these things with his own individual sense [of sight]? 2.7.16,62

EVODIUS: I would not say anything of the sort.

AUGUSTINE: Therefore, many of us can see one thing simultaneously, even though each of us has his own senses with which we each sense the single thing that we see simultaneously. The upshot is that, although one 2.7.16,63

sense is mine and the other is yours, it can happen that what we see is not one thing as mine and another as yours, but instead a single thing in front of each of us, seen simultaneously by each of us.

EVODIUS: Quite clearly.

2.7.16.64 AUGUSTINE: We can also hear one spoken word simultaneously. Although my hearing is different from yours, the word we hear simultaneously does not differ as mine and as yours. Nor does my hearing take one part of it and yours another. Instead, whatever sound it makes is present simultaneously to both of us as a single whole to be heard.

EVODIUS: That is clear too.

2.7.17.65 AUGUSTINE: Note that what we have said about the eyes and the ears does not fit the rest of the bodily senses exactly. Yet it is not completely off

2.7.17.66 the mark, either. You and I can breathe one air and sense its state by odor. Again, we can both taste one honey, or any other kind of food or drink, and sense its state by flavor – even though the former is one, whereas we each have our own senses, you yours and me mine. Yet we sense one odor or one flavor in each case. You do not sense it with my sense, nor I with yours, nor with any sense which can be ours in common. Instead, my sense is mine completely and yours is yours, even if each senses the same odor or flavor. On this score, then, we find that the senses [of smell and taste] have something in common with the senses in the case of see-

2.7.17.67 ing and hearing. However, insofar as they are relevant to the point now at issue, they differ. For, although we breathe one air and take one food to taste, I nevertheless do not breathe the same part of the air as you, nor do I take the same part of the food as you. I have my part; you have yours. Hence when I breathe, I inhale a part of the whole air that is enough for me, and you likewise inhale a different part that is enough for you. And although we eat one food as a whole, nevertheless the whole cannot be eaten by me and the whole by you, the way I hear a word as a whole and you do too simultaneously, or the way I see some appearance and you see it as much as I do simultaneously. Instead, some part of the food or drink must go to me and another to you. You understand these matters a little, do you not?

EVODIUS: Indeed, I agree that it is remarkably clear and certain.

2.7.18.69 AUGUSTINE: You do not hold that the sense of touch should be compared to the senses associated with the eyes and the ears on the point now at issue, do you? Through the sense of touch not only can we both sense a single physical object, but you can even touch the same part I

have touched. As a result, by touch we can both sense not only the same physical object but also the same *part* of it. This is not like the case of food, where we both eat it but we cannot each take it as a whole. In the case of touch, you can touch one and the same whole that I touched. We both touch it: Each person touches it, not in individual parts, but as a whole. 2.7.18.70

EVODIUS: The sense of touch is quite similar to the first two senses³² on this score, I admit. But I see that they differ in the following respect. We can both see and hear one whole thing simultaneously, that is, at a single moment, whereas both of us can touch some whole thing at a single moment, but distinct parts of it. We can only touch the same part at different times: I can touch any part you touch, but only when you are no longer touching it. 2.7.18.71

AUGUSTINE: An acute reply! But note this point as well. Among the things we sense, some we both sense, and others we sense individually. However, we sense our own senses themselves individually, so that I do not sense your sense nor you mine. Now among the things we sense through the bodily senses (*i.e.* among physical objects), what is there that we can sense only individually, not both together? Only what becomes our own in such a way that we change and transform it into ourselves. Food and drink, for instance: You cannot taste any part that I have tasted.³³ Even if nurses give babies food that has already been chewed, any food the nurses have taken that they first taste and then have transformed into [their own] by digestion cannot in any way be called back to use in feeding the baby. When the palate tastes something pleasing, no matter how small, it claims part of it for itself as something that cannot be called back, forcing it to become suited to the body's nature. If this were not so, no flavor would remain behind in the mouth once the food had been chewed and then spat out. 2.7.19.72 2.7.19.73 2.7.19.74

The same point holds for the parts of the air that we breathe. Even if you can inhale some of the air I have exhaled, you still cannot inhale that which has gone to nourish me, since that cannot be exhaled. Physicians teach that we take nourishment even with the nose. I am the only one who can sense the nourishment while breathing, and I cannot exhale it for you to inhale and sense with your nose. 2.7.19.75

³² Seeing and hearing, discussed in 2.7.16.63–2.7.16.64.

³³ “Tasted”: *percipio*, here straddling the words “to take” (*capio*) and “to perceive” (*percipio*).

2.7.19.76 There are other sensible items that we sense without destroying them in the process of changing them into our body. These are things we can both sense, whether at one time or at different times in turn, where you also sense the whole or the part that I sense. Such are light, sound, and physical objects with which we come into contact but which we do not damage.

EVODIUS: I understand.

2.7.19.77 AUGUSTINE: Therefore, it is clear that things we sense with our bodily senses but do not transform (*a*) do not pertain to the nature of our senses, and so (*b*) are the more common to us, since they are not changed and converted into our own “private property” (so to speak).

EVODIUS: I agree completely.

2.7.19.78 AUGUSTINE: You should understand “private property” as whatever is each person’s own, which he alone senses in himself, because it pertains strictly to his own nature, and “common public property” as what is sensed by all who sense it without destroying or transforming it.

EVODIUS: Yes.

2.8.20.79 AUGUSTINE: Very well. Pay attention now. Tell me: Do we find anything that all reasoning beings, each one using his own reason or mind, see in common? That is, something that is present to all, but is not changed into the [private] use of those to whom it is present, the way food and drink are; instead, it remains incorrupt and intact whether they see it or not. Perhaps, though, you think that there is nothing of the sort.

2.8.20.80 EVODIUS: On the contrary, I see that there are many! It is enough to mention just one: The intelligible structure³⁴ and truth of number is present to all reasoning beings. Everyone who calculates tries to apprehend it with his own reason and intelligence. Some do this with ease; others, with difficulty. Yet it offers itself equally to all who are capable of grasping it. It is not changed and converted into its perceiver when anyone perceives it, the way food is. Nor is there a flaw in it when anyone makes a mistake; it remains true and intact while the person is all the more in error the less he sees it.

2.8.21.81 AUGUSTINE: Quite right. I see that you quickly found an answer, as befits one experienced in these matters. Yet suppose someone were to object that numbers are stamped on our mind not from some nature of theirs,

³⁴ “Intelligible structure”: *ratio*. Note that the term has a clear connection with the psychological faculty of reason, even though the Greek term of which it is the equivalent, λογός, has no such overtones.

but instead from the physical objects we come into contact with through bodily sense, as though they were some sort of “images” of visible things. What reply would you make? Or do you agree with the objection?

EVODIUS: I don’t think so at all. Even supposing I *had* perceived numbers through the bodily senses, that would not then enable me to perceive the intelligible structure of numerical addition or subtraction through the bodily senses. Rather, it is by the light of the mind that I prove that someone who makes a mistake in adding or subtracting is wrong. I do not know how long anything I touch with the bodily senses will last, for example when I sense the Earth or the sky or any physical objects in them. But seven and three are ten not only at the moment, but always; it never was and never will be the case that seven and three are not ten. I therefore declared that this incorruptible numerical truth is common to me and to any reasoning being. 2.8.21.82 2.8.21.83

AUGUSTINE: I am not opposed to your reply, which is completely true and certain. But you will easily see that numbers have not been drawn in through the bodily senses if you realize that any given number is so called from how many times it includes *one*. For instance, if it includes *one* twice it is called “two” and if three times “three”; if it includes *one* ten times then it is called “ten.” Any given number whatsoever derives its name and is so called from as many times as it includes *one*. 2.8.22.84

Furthermore, anyone who thinks accurately surely realizes that *one* cannot be sensed with the bodily senses. Anything such a sense comes into contact with is shown to be *many* rather than *one*, [as follows]: It is a physical object, and hence has innumerable parts; but – not to go over every tiny and hardly discernible part – no matter how small a given physical object may be, it surely has a right and a left side, a top and a bottom, a near and far side, a middle and two ends; we must admit that these parts are present in any physical object, no matter how small it is, and as a result we concede that no physical object is truly and simply one. Yet so many parts could not be enumerated in it but for a distinct understanding of *one*. When I look for *one* in a physical object and am sure that I have not found it, surely I know what I was looking for and did not find there; and I know that it cannot be found, or, rather, that it is not there at all. 2.8.22.85 2.8.22.86

Then how do I know *one*, which is not a physical object? If I did not know *one*, I could not enumerate *many* in a physical object. But no matter how I know *one*, I surely do not know it through bodily sense, since I only 2.8.22.87

know physical objects through the bodily senses, and we have truly and simply proved that *one* is not a physical object.

2.8.22.88 Besides, if we do not perceive *one* with the bodily senses, we do not perceive any number with the senses. At least, we do not perceive any of those numbers we single out with the understanding. Every one of these is so called from how many times it includes *one*, and there is no perception of *one* with the bodily senses. Half of any given physical object (no matter how small), since two [halves] make up a whole, itself includes its own half. These two parts are therefore in the physical object in such a way that they are not simply *two*: The number called “two,” since it includes twice what is simply *one*, cannot be half of [a whole] – that is, what is simply *one* cannot include a half or a third or any fraction, since it is simple and truly *one*.

2.8.23.89 Next, if we keep to the orderings of numbers, we see that after *one* comes *two*. We found this number to be related to *one* as its double. The double of *two* doesn’t follow right away, though. Instead, the triple is interposed, and then the quadruple (which is the double of *two*) follows.
2.8.23.90 This intelligible structure extends through all the rest of the numbers by the most certain and unchangeable law.³⁵ The first [number] after *one*, *i.e.* the next after the first of all the numbers, includes its double, since *two* follows. But after the second, *i.e.* next after *two*, it is the second which includes its double, for after *two* the first is the triple and the second is the quadruple, the double of the second. The third after *three*, *i.e.* next after the triple, is its double, for after *three* (*i.e.* after the triple) the first is the quadruple, the second the quintuple, and the third the sextuple,
2.8.23.91 which is the double of *three*. And thus the fourth next after *four* includes its double, for after *four* (*i.e.* the quadruple) the first is the quintuple, the second the sextuple, the third the septuple, and the fourth the octuple, which is the double of *four*. And so will you find it in all the rest as we have found in the first linkage of numbers (*i.e.* that we found in *one* and *two*), so that by whatever amount any given number is from the beginning, the same amount after it is its double.

2.8.23.92 So how *do* we recognize what we recognize to be firm and uncorrupted for all numbers? We do not come into contact with all numbers through any bodily sense; they are innumerable. How then do we know that it is

³⁵ The “law” is that for any number *n*, the *n*th number after it is its double, *2n*. Augustine’s discussion shifts between the cardinal and the ordinal attributes of number.

so for all numbers? By what imagination or image is so firm a numerical truth recognized so confidently, for innumerable cases, if not in the inner light – a truth the bodily senses do not know?

Those inquirers to whom God has granted the ability and who are not 2.8.24.93
blinded by stubbornness are compelled by these and many such examples
to admit that the intelligible structure and truth of numbers does not per-
tain to the bodily senses. It remains pure and unchangeable, and is seen
in common by all who reason. Accordingly, although many other things 2.8.24.94
could occur to us that are common and “publicly available” (so to speak)
for all reasoning beings – things each person discerns with his own mind
and reason while they remain inviolate and unchangeable – nevertheless,
I am glad to see that the intelligible structure and truth of number struck
you as the best example when you wanted to answer my question. It is no 2.8.24.95
accident that number is linked to wisdom in Scripture: “My heart and I
have gone around so that I might search out and think about and know
wisdom and number” [Ecl. 7:26 (7:25 RSV)].

Yet I ask you: What view do you think should be held about wisdom 2.9.25.96
itself? Do you think that each person has his own personal wisdom, or
instead that there is one wisdom common to all so that the more someone
participates in it the wiser he becomes?

EVODIUS: I do not yet know what you mean by “wisdom,” for I see that 2.9.25.97
people have various views about what is said or done wisely. Those in
the military seem to themselves to be acting wisely; those who spurn
the military and devote their work and care to farming praise it instead,
rating it as wisdom. Those who are shrewd at concocting money-making
schemes seem to themselves to be wise; those who disregard or renounce
all these things and everything temporal, putting all their efforts into
the search for truth so as to know God and themselves, judge that this
is the gift of wisdom. Those who are unwilling to give themselves over 2.9.25.98
to the leisure of searching for and reflecting on the truth but instead
are involved with burdensome cares and duties so that they take coun-
sel with people, caught up in running and supervising human affairs
justly, think themselves to be wise. Those who are involved with both
and live partly in the contemplation of the truth, partly in the burden-
some duties which they think are owed to human society, seem to them-
selves to grasp the prize of wisdom. I pass over countless sects, in which 2.9.25.99
each one puts its own proponents before the rest, holding them alone to
be wise.

Accordingly, since we have agreed for now to answer not what we merely believe but instead what we grasp with clear understanding, I cannot answer your question at all unless I also know by reflection and reasoning what I grasp by believing, [namely] what wisdom is.

2.9.26.100 AUGUSTINE: You do think wisdom is the truth in which the highest good is recognized and grasped, do you not? All the people you mentioned, who follow different things, pursue good and avoid evil. Yet because different things seem good to one person and to another, they follow different things. Thus anyone pursuing what should not have been pursued – even though he pursues it only because it appears good to him – nevertheless is in error. On the other hand, a person who pursues nothing cannot be in error, nor can someone pursuing what he ought to pursue. To the extent that all people pursue the happy life, then, they are not in error. But people are in error to the extent that they stray from the road of life that leads to happiness, even if they profess and protest that they only want to attain happiness; “error” means following something that does not lead where we want to reach.

2.9.26.102 The more someone is in error in the road of his life, so much the less is he wise. For he is to that extent farther from the truth, in which the highest good is recognized and grasped. But anyone who has pursued and attained the highest good becomes happy, which everyone uncontroversially wants. Therefore, just as we want to be happy, so too we want to be wise, for nobody is happy without wisdom. Nobody is happy except by the highest good, which is recognized and grasped in the truth we call wisdom. Thus just as we have had stamped on our minds the notion of happiness before we are happy, for it is through this notion that we know and confidently declare without hesitation that we want to be happy, so too we have had stamped on our mind the notion of wisdom before we are wise; it is through this notion that any one of us, if asked whether he wants to be wise, will reply without the shadow of a doubt that he does.

2.9.27.104 Accordingly, we now agree what wisdom is. Perhaps you were unable to explain it in words. But if your mind could not recognize it at all, you would not at all know that you want to be wise and that you ought to so want, which I do not think you are going to deny. Therefore, I want you to tell me now whether you think that wisdom, like the intelligible structure and truth of number, offers itself in common to all reasoning beings, or, instead, since there are as many human minds as there are

human beings (whereby I do not discern anything in your mind nor you in mine), you think that there are as many “wisdoms” as there could be wise persons.

EVODIUS: If the highest good is one for all, the truth in which it is recognized and grasped, namely wisdom, must also be one and common to all. 2.9.27.105

AUGUSTINE: Do you doubt whether the highest good, whatever it is, is one for everyone?

EVODIUS: Yes, I do, for I observe that different people rejoice in different things as their own highest goods.

AUGUSTINE: I only wish that nobody were in doubt about the highest good, the way nobody doubts that, whatever the highest good is, human beings can become happy only when it is possessed. But since this is an important question and might call for lengthy discussion, let us suppose that there are exactly as many different highest goods as there are different things that are sought by various people as the highest good. Surely it does not follow that wisdom itself is not one and common to all, just because the goods that they discern and elect in it are many and diverse? 2.9.27.106

If you think this, you can also doubt that the Sun’s light is one, since there are many different things we discern in it. Each person voluntarily elects which of these many things to enjoy through the sense of sight: One gladly looks at a mountain peak and takes pleasure in the sight; another at the level plain; another at the hollow of the valley; another at the green forest; another at the shifting surface of the sea; another brings all these or some of them together for the pleasure of looking at them. Consequently, there are many different things that people see in the Sun’s light and elect [to look at] for their enjoyment, despite the fact that the light itself is one – the light in which the person’s gaze sees and grasps the sight of any one of them. Likewise, there are many different goods from which a person elects what he wants and, by seeing and grasping it for his enjoyment, sets up the highest good for himself rightly and truly. Yet it can still happen that the light of wisdom itself, in which these things can be seen and retained, is one and common to all wise people. 2.9.27.107
2.9.27.108

EVODIUS: I admit that this can happen. Nothing prevents one wisdom from being common to all, even if there are many diverse highest goods. But I would like to know whether it is so. We granted that it is *possible* that it be so, but we do not thereby grant that it *is* so. 2.9.27.109

AUGUSTINE: We hold for now that wisdom exists. But whether it is one and common to all, or whether each has his own wisdom the way each has his own mind or soul – this we do not yet hold.

EVODIUS: Yes.

2.10.28.II0 AUGUSTINE: Well, we hold that wisdom exists, or at least that everyone wants to be wise and happy. Where do we see this claim? For I have no doubt whatsoever that you see it and that it is true. Therefore, do you see that this is so as you see your own thoughts, of which I am completely ignorant unless you declare them to me? Or do you see it in such a way that you understand that this truth can be seen by me too, even if you do not speak to me?

2.10.28.II1 EVODIUS: I have no doubt that you can see it too, even against my will.

AUGUSTINE: Then is not the one truth we each see with our individual minds common to both of us?

EVODIUS: Quite clearly.

AUGUSTINE: Likewise, I believe you do not deny that wisdom should be pursued, and you grant that this is true.

EVODIUS: I have no doubt at all.

2.10.28.II2 AUGUSTINE: Can we deny that this truth likewise is both one and common to all who know it for being seen, even though any given person recognizes it with neither my mind nor yours nor anyone else's other than his own, since what is recognized is present in common to all who recognize it?

EVODIUS: Not at all.

2.10.28.II3 AUGUSTINE: Likewise, won't you admit that the following:

One should live justly
Lesser things should be subordinate to better things
Equals should be compared to equals
To each his own

are the most true, and are present in common to me, to you, and to all who see the truth?

EVODIUS: I agree.

2.10.28.II4 AUGUSTINE: Well, can you deny that the incorrupt is better than the corrupt, the eternal better than the temporal, the inviolable than the violable?

EVODIUS: Who can?

AUGUSTINE: Therefore, can anyone say that this truth is his own, while it is there to be unchangeably regarded by all who are able to regard it?

EVODIUS: Nobody will truly claim it to be his own. It is as one and common to all as it is true.

AUGUSTINE: Likewise, does anyone deny that the mind should be turned away from corruption and turned towards the incorruptible – that is, that we should love the incorruptible and not corruption? And once this is admitted to be true, does anyone not also see that he understands the unchangeable, and that it is present in common to all minds able to look upon it? 2.10.28.115

EVODIUS: Entirely true.

AUGUSTINE: Well, does anyone doubt that a life which is *not* thrown off its firm moral stance by any misfortunes is better than one which is easily shattered and undercut by temporary inconveniences?

EVODIUS: Who could doubt it?

AUGUSTINE: I won't look for more examples now. It is enough that you grant that it is completely certain and that you see equally along with me that, insofar as they are the rules and beacons of the virtues,³⁶ they are true and unchangeable, and they are present, whether singly or collectively, for the regard of those who are capable of recognizing them, each by his own mind and reason. But I do in fact ask whether these rules seem to you to pertain to wisdom. For I believe that it is apparent to you that someone who has acquired wisdom is wise. 2.10.29.116

EVODIUS: Yes indeed. 2.10.29.117

AUGUSTINE: Well, take someone who lives justly. Could he live in this way unless he saw which lower things to subordinate to which more valuable things, and which equal things to link to each other, and which things to assign to their proper groups?

EVODIUS: He could not.

AUGUSTINE: Surely you will not deny that someone who sees these things sees wisely?

EVODIUS: I do not deny it.

AUGUSTINE: Take someone who lives prudently. Does he not elect the incorrupt, recognizing that it should be preferred to the corrupt?

EVODIUS: Quite clearly.

AUGUSTINE: Therefore, since he elects to turn his mind to that which nobody doubts should be elected, it cannot be denied that he elects wisely, can it?

³⁶ See 2.10.28.113.

EVODIUS: Not at all.

AUGUSTINE: Therefore, when he turns his mind to what he elects wisely, he surely turns it wisely.

EVODIUS: Certainly.

AUGUSTINE: And someone who is not deflected by any terrors or penalties from what he wisely elects, and to which he wisely turns, doubtless acts wisely.

EVODIUS: Exactly.

2.10.29.118 AUGUSTINE: Hence it is completely clear that everything we called “rules and beacons of the virtues” pertains to wisdom. The more someone uses them in living his life and lives his life in accordance with them, the more he lives and acts wisely. But it cannot properly be said that what is done wisely is independent of wisdom.

EVODIUS: Yes indeed.

2.10.29.119 AUGUSTINE: Therefore, just as there are true and unchangeable rules of numbers, whose intelligible structure and truth you declared to be unchangeably present in common to all who recognize them,³⁷ so too are there true and unchangeable rules of wisdom. When asked about a few of them individually just now you replied that they are true and evident, and you granted that they are present and common to be contemplated by all who are able to look upon them.

2.11.30.120 EVODIUS: No doubt. But I would very much like to know whether wisdom and number are classified under a single heading, since, as you reminded us,³⁸ they are linked even in Scripture; or one is derived from the other; or one consists in the other, for instance number from wisdom
2.11.30.121 or in wisdom. For I would not presume to claim that wisdom derives from number, or that it consists in number. I do not know how that could be, since I know many people who are skilled in numbers (by whatever name people who calculate wonderfully well should be called), but I know very few – perhaps none – who are wise. So wisdom strikes me as being much more worthy of admiration than number.

2.11.30.122 AUGUSTINE: You are describing something I often wonder about too. For when I reflect on the unchangeable truth of numbers and their lair (so to speak) and their inner sanctuary or realm – or any other suitable name we can find to refer to the dwelling-place and residence of numbers – I am far removed from the body. Perhaps I even find something

³⁷ See 2.8.20.80–2.8.24.94. ³⁸ See 2.8.24.95.

to think about, but not something I could put into words. Eventually I return in exhaustion to familiar things, so that I am able to say something or other, and I talk in the usual way about the things right in front of me. This also happens to me when I think as carefully and intently as I can about wisdom. Thus I am quite surprised, since wisdom and number are linked together in the most hidden and certain truth (with the approval of the scriptural passage I mentioned in which they are conjoined), I am quite surprised, as I said, why wisdom is precious to most people and number of little value. Yet it is indisputable that they are one and the same thing. Still, since it is nonetheless said of wisdom in Scripture that it “reaches from one end to the other strongly and puts all things in order sweetly” [Wis. 8:1], perhaps the power that “reaches from one end to the other strongly” is number, while the power that “puts all things in order sweetly” is then called wisdom in the strict sense, although both powers belong to one and the same Wisdom. 2.11.30.123 2.11.30.124

He³⁹ gave numbers to all things, even to the lowliest placed at the very end. All physical objects have their own numbers even though they are the last among things. However, He did not give wisdom to physical objects, nor even to all souls, but only to rational souls – as if He had established in them a home for [wisdom], in accordance with which He puts all things in order, even the lowliest to which He gave numbers. Therefore, since we easily make judgments about physical objects *qua* things ordered below us, in which we discern the numbers that have been impressed on them, we also think that numbers themselves are below us, and as a result we hold them to be of little value. But once we begin to turn ourselves upward again (so to speak), we find that numbers transcend our minds too and remain unchangeable in truth itself. Then, since few people can be wise but even fools are given the ability to count, people admire wisdom and think little of numbers. Yet learned and studious people, insofar as they are removed from the taint of wordly things, consider to that extent number and wisdom the more in truth itself, and hold them precious. In comparison with that truth, they rank not only gold and silver and the other things people struggle for as worthless, but even themselves. 2.11.31.125 2.11.31.126

It should not surprise you, then, that people value wisdom and belittle the numbers because they can count more easily than they can be wise, 2.11.32.127

³⁹ “He”: Wisdom (=God).

since you see they hold gold more precious than lamplight – compared to which gold is laughable. But an inferior thing is much more honored because even a beggar can light himself a lamp, whereas few people have gold.

Enough of wisdom's being found inferior in comparison with number! They are the same, but this calls for an eye able to discern it. Now one senses the brightness and the heat in a fire as "consubstantial,"⁴⁰ so to speak, nor can they be separated from one another. Yet the heat affects only what is moved close to it, whereas the brightness is diffused far and wide. Likewise, the power of understanding that is present in wisdom warms those close to it, such as rational souls, whereas things that are farther away, such as physical objects, are not affected by the heat of wisdom but are [merely] suffused with the light of numbers.

Well, perhaps this is still obscure to you, since no analogy drawn from what is visible can apply in every respect to something invisible. Merely pay attention to this point, which is enough for the investigation we have undertaken and is obvious even to humbler minds like ours: Even if we cannot be clear whether number is in wisdom or derives from wisdom, or whether wisdom itself derives from number or is in number, or whether each can be shown to be the name of a single thing, it is certainly evident that each is true, and unchangeably true.

Consequently, you will not deny that there is unchangeable truth, containing everything that is unchangeably true. You cannot call it yours or mine or anyone else's. Instead, it is present and offers itself in common to all who discern unchangeable truths, like a light that is miraculously both public and hidden. Who would claim that everything present in common to all who reason and understand pertains to the nature of any one of them in particular? You recall, I think, our discussion of the bodily senses a little while ago.⁴¹ We said that those things that we touch in common with the senses belonging to the eyes or to the ears, such as colors and sounds (which you and I see simultaneously or hear simultaneously), do not pertain to the nature of our eyes or ears but rather are common objects for us to sense. The same applies to those objects you and I recognize in common, each with his own mind. You would never say that they pertain to the nature of my mind, or to the nature of your mind.

⁴⁰ Augustine takes "consubstantial" from Trinitarian theology, where it is used to describe how the Persons of the Trinity are the same substance.

⁴¹ See 2.7.15, 58–2.7.19, 78.

You cannot say that what two people see with their eyes simultaneously belongs to one set of eyes or the other, but rather some third thing at which the gaze of each is directed.

EVODIUS: That is perfectly evident and true.

AUGUSTINE: Then, in regard to this truth we have long been talking about and in which we recognize so many things: Do you think it is *(a)* more excellent than our mind is, *(b)* equal to our minds, or even *(c)* inferior? If *(c)* were the case, we would make judgments about it rather than in accordance with it, the way we make judgments about physical objects because they are lower than us – we often say not only that they are so or not so, but that they ought to be so or not so. So too with our minds: We know not only that the mind is so, but that it ought to be so. We make judgments about physical objects in this fashion when we say that something is less bright than it ought to be, or less square, and so on, and about minds when we say that one is less well disposed than it ought to be, or less gentle, or less forceful, as we are wont to do by reason. We make these judgments in accordance with the inner rules of truth that we discern in common. But nobody makes judgments about the rules themselves. When anyone says that eternal things are more valuable than temporal things, or seven and three are ten, no one says that it *ought* to be so; he simply knows that it *is* so. He is not an inspector making corrections but merely a discoverer taking delight [in his discovery].

Now if *(b)* were the case, that this truth is equal to our minds, then it would itself also be changeable. For our minds sometimes see more of the truth and sometimes less. And for this reason, they acknowledge themselves to be changeable. The truth, remaining in itself, neither increases when we see more of it nor decreases when we see less, but instead it is intact and uncorrupted, bringing joy with its light to those who turn towards it and punishing with blindness those who turn away from it. We even make judgments about our own minds in accordance with [the unchangeable truth], although we are not able to make any judgment about it at all. For we say that a mind understands less than it ought to, or that it understands just as much as it ought to. Furthermore, the closer a mind is able to approach the unchangeable truth and hold fast to it, the more it ought to understand.

Consequently, if the truth is neither inferior nor equal, it follows that it is superior and more excellent.

2.13.35-137

Now I had promised you, if you recall, that I would show you that there is something more exalted than our mind and reason.⁴² Here you have it: the truth itself! Embrace it if you can and enjoy it; “Take delight in the Lord and He will give you your heart’s longings” [Ps. 36:4 (37:4 RSV)]. What do you long for more than to be happy? And who is happier than one who enjoys the unshakeable, unchangeable, and most excellent truth?

2.13.35-138

People cry out that they are happy when they embrace with passionate desire the beautiful bodies of their wives, or even of prostitutes. Shall we doubt that people are happy in the embrace of the truth? People cry out that they are happy when, with throats parched from the heat, they arrive at a plentiful and wholesome spring, or, when hungry, they come upon a well-supplied sumptuous lunch or dinner. Shall we deny that we

2.13.35-139

are happy when we are refreshed and nourished by the truth? We often hear the voices of people crying out that they are happy if they recline among roses and other flowers, or even delight in the most fragrant perfumes. What is more fragrant or more agreeable than drawing in the gentle breath of truth? Do we hesitate to say we are happy when we draw in its breath? Many put the happy life for themselves in the music of voices, strings, and flutes; they declare themselves miserable when such music is absent but thrill with joy when it is present. When our minds are free of any din (so to speak), and the melodious and eloquent silence of truth flows in, do we seek any other happy life and not enjoy the one that is present to us and so secure? People, taking delight in agreeable splendor – for instance the light of gold and silver, the light of gemstones and other colors, whether of the very light that belongs to these eyes,⁴³ or in earthly fires, on in the stars or the Moon or the Sun – as long as people are not called away from these delights by any poverty or problems, they think themselves happy and always want to live for these things. Are we afraid to set up the happy life in the light of truth?

2.13.35-140

Instead, since the highest good is known and possessed in the truth, and this truth is wisdom, let us recognize and possess the highest good in it and enjoy it completely, since anyone who enjoys the highest good is happy. This truth reveals all true goods, which people elect for themselves to enjoy – either one or many of them – in accordance with their capacity

2.13.36-141

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⁴² See 2.6.13.53 and 2.6.14.57.

⁴³ Augustine holds an “extromission” theory of vision, according to which the eyes see physical objects by emitting rays of light.

for understanding. Consider the following analogy. There are people who elect what they like to look at in the sunlight, and take pleasure in the sight. And if they were by chance to be supplied with sound, healthier, and quite powerful eyes, they would like nothing better than to gaze at the Sun itself, which also sheds its light on the rest of the things that weaker eyes take pleasure in. Likewise, when the sharp, healthy, and strong sight of the mind is trained upon many unchangeable truths with its sure reason, it directs [its gaze] on the very truth itself by which all things are disclosed; holding fast to it as though it were unmindful of the others, it enjoys them all together in the truth itself. For whatever is agreeable in the other truths is surely agreeable in virtue of the truth itself. 2.13.36.142

Our freedom is this: to submit to this truth, which is our God Who set us free from death – that is, from the state of sin. Truth itself,⁴⁴ speaking as a human being among others, said to those believing in Him: “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free” [Jn. 8:31–32]. The soul does not enjoy anything with freedom unless it enjoys it with security. 2.13.37.143

Now nobody is secure in goods that can be lost against his will. Nobody loses truth and wisdom against his will, however. It is not possible for anyone to be physically separated from it. Instead, what we call “separation” from truth and wisdom is a perverse will that takes delight in inferior things, and nobody unwilling wills anything. 2.14.37.144

Hence we possess something that all can enjoy equally in common. It has no restrictions or defects. It welcomes all its lovers who are not envious of each other: It is common to all and faithful to each. No one says to the other: “Back off so that I too may approach! Take your hands away so that I too may embrace it!” All hold fast to it and all touch the selfsame thing. Its food is not divided into portions; you drink nothing from it that I cannot drink. For you do not change anything from its commonness into something private of yours, but rather you take something from it and yet it remains intact for me. When you draw in its breath I do not wait for you to exhale for me to then draw breath from it. No part of it ever becomes the property of anyone. On the contrary, it is common as a whole to all at once. 2.14.37.145

Therefore, the objects we touch or taste or smell are less analogous to this truth than those we hear or discern. Every word is heard as a whole 2.14.38.147

⁴⁴ “Truth itself”: Christ.

by all who hear it and as a whole at once by each of them; any sight before the eyes is seen at once as much by one person as another. But these analogies [to the truth] are quite remote. No utterance is spoken as a whole at once, for it is brought forth and extended in time, so that one part of it is pronounced before another. Any visible sight is elongated (so to speak) in space, and is not a whole in any one place.

All these things can surely be taken away against our will, and various obstacles prevent us from being able to enjoy them. For example, suppose that someone could sing an everlasting sweet song. His admirers, who eagerly came to hear him, would jostle each other and, the greater the crowd, the more they would fight over places to get closer to the singer. Yet they could not retain anything to keep for themselves in their listening, being only touched upon by all the fleeting sounds. Now suppose I wanted to look upon the Sun itself and were able to do so steadily. It would desert me at sunset, and also when hidden by a cloud or many other hindrances; against my will I would lose the pleasure of seeing it. To cap it off, even if the sweetness of light were always present for me to see, and of sound for me to hear, what great benefit would I gain? This would be common to me and the animals.

By contrast, insofar as the will to enjoy it is steadfastly present, the beauty of truth and wisdom does not shut out those coming to it if there is a mob of listeners crammed together; it does not pass with time or change places; nightfall does not interrupt it and shadows do not obscure it; it does not depend on the bodily senses. It is close to all the people in the whole world who take delight in it and have turned themselves to it; it lasts forever for all; it is never absent from any place; outwardly it counsels us and inwardly it teaches us. It changes for the better all those who behold it, and it is not changed for the worse by anyone. No one passes judgments on it, and no one passes judgments rightly without it. And from this it is clear beyond a doubt that it is more valuable than our minds, each of which becomes wise by this one thing and passes judgment, not on it, but on other things through it.

Now you had conceded that if I were to show you something above our minds you would admit it to be God, as long as there were nothing still higher.⁴⁵ I accepted your concession and said that it would be sufficient if I were to prove this point. For if there is something more excellent,

⁴⁵ See 2.6.14.57.

that instead is God; but if not, then the truth itself is God. Therefore, in either case you won't be able to deny that God exists, and this was the question we agreed to examine and discuss.⁴⁶ (If it bothers you that wisdom has a father, according to the hallowed teaching of Christ that we have accepted in faith, remember that we have also accepted in faith that the Wisdom begotten by the Eternal Father is equal to Him; this is not a matter to be investigated now,⁴⁷ but we must hold it with resolute faith.) There is a God who truly *is*, in the highest degree. This we now not only hold free of doubt by faith, I think. We also reach it by a form of understanding that, although as yet very slight, is certain. But it is sufficient for the question we undertook and will enable us to explain other matters that are relevant to it – unless you have some objection to raise. 2.15.39-154

EVODIUS: I am completely overwhelmed by an unbelievable joy that I cannot express to you in words. I hear what you say and cry out that it is most certain. But I am crying out with an inner voice, which I want to be heard by the truth itself so as to hold fast to it. I grant it to be not only good but also the highest good and the source of happiness. 2.15.39-156

AUGUSTINE: Quite appropriate! I too rejoice a great deal. But I ask you: Are we now wise and happy? Or are we still trying to arrive at that point? 2.15.40.157

EVODIUS: I think we are merely trying.

AUGUSTINE: Then how do you grasp these things so that you cry out that you rejoice in them as certain truths, and you grant that they belong to wisdom? Or can someone unwise know wisdom?

EVODIUS: As long as he is unwise he cannot.

AUGUSTINE: Therefore, you are already wise, or you do not yet know wisdom. 2.15.40.158

EVODIUS: Indeed, I am not yet wise, but I would not say that I am unwise either, insofar as I know wisdom: the things I know are certain, and I cannot deny that they belong to wisdom.

AUGUSTINE: Please tell me: Will you not admit that someone who is not just is unjust, someone who is not prudent is imprudent, and someone who is not moderate immoderate? Or is there some doubt on this score?

EVODIUS: I admit that when a person is not just he is unjust, and I would also say the same for prudence and moderation.

⁴⁶ See 2.3.7.20.

⁴⁷ Augustine defends the equality of the divine Persons at length in *The Trinity*, written c.400–416.

2.15.40.159 AUGUSTINE: Why then, when he is not wise, is he not unwise?
EVODIUS: I also admit that when someone is not wise he is unwise.
AUGUSTINE: Now then: which of these are you?
EVODIUS: Whichever you call me. I do not yet venture to call myself wise, and I see from what I have granted that I should not hesitate to call myself unwise.

2.15.40.160 AUGUSTINE: Then someone unwise knows wisdom. For, as we have already declared, nobody would be certain that he wills himself to be wise and that he ought to do so unless some notion of wisdom were in his mind. Likewise in the case of those matters belonging to wisdom itself, in whose knowledge you rejoiced when asked about them one by one.
EVODIUS: You have said it exactly.

2.16.41.161 AUGUSTINE: Then what are we doing when we strive to be wise? Nothing but somehow to gather up our whole soul, as quickly as we can, to what we have touched with our mind, to give it a firm foothold there. The upshot is that the soul no longer rejoices in its own private goods that entangle it with ephemeral things. Instead, stripped of all attachments to times and places, it apprehends that which is always one and the same. Just as the soul is the whole life of the body, God is the happy life of the soul. While we are doing this, until we have done it completely, we are on the road [to wisdom].

We have been granted the enjoyment of these true and certain goods, though for now they are but glimmerings along our shadowy path. See whether this is what was written about wisdom, what it does with its lovers when they seek and come to it: "Wisdom shows herself favorably to them along the roads, and in all providence does she meet with them" [Wis. 6:17 (6:16 RSV)].

2.16.41.163 Whichever way you turn, [wisdom] speaks to you by the traces left behind on its works. It calls you back within when you are slipping away into external things through their very forms, so you see that whatever delights you in a body and entices you through your bodily senses is full of number. You search for its source and return into yourself, understanding that you cannot approve or disapprove of what you come into contact with through the bodily senses, unless within you there are some laws of beauty, to which you compare anything beautiful you sense outside yourself.

2.16.42.164 Look upon the heavens, the Earth, and the sea, and at everything in them, whether they shine down or creep below or fly or swim. They have

forms because they have numbers. Take the latter away from them and they will be nothing. What is the source of their existence, then, if not the source of the existence of number? After all, they have being precisely to the extent that they are full of numbers.

Craftsmen, who fashion all bodily forms, have numbers in their craft which they apply to their works. They use their hands and tools in designing, until what is formed externally achieves its consummation when it conforms as much as possible to the inward light of numbers and, using sense as the go-between, it pleases the internal judge who looks upon the numbers above. 2.16.42.165

Next, ask what moves the craftsman's hands. It will be number, for their movements are also full of numbers. If you were to take the work out of his hands and the goal of designing from his mind, and chalk up his bodily movements to pleasure, it will be called "dancing." Ask therefore what pleases you in dancing; number will answer: "Here I am!" 2.16.42.166

Then inspect the beauty of a sculpted body. Its numbers are held in place. Inspect the beauty of movement in a body: its numbers are involved with time. Enter into the craft from which they proceed and seek in it time and place: It never and nowhere exists, yet number lives in it; it is neither an area of space nor an age of days. Still, when people who want to become craftsmen set themselves to learn their craft, they move their bodies in place and time, but their minds only in time; indeed, as time passes they become more skilled. 2.16.42.167

So rise above even the mind of the craftsman to see everlasting number! Wisdom will then shine upon you from its inner abode and from the hidden chambers of truth. If it beats back your gaze as still too weak [for such a vision], turn your mind's eye to the road where [wisdom] showed itself favorably.⁴⁸ Remember, of course, that you have postponed a vision you will seek once more when you are stronger and healthier.

Wisdom! The sweetest light of a mind made pure! Woe to those who abandon you as guide and wander aimlessly around your tracks, who love indications of you instead of you, who forget what you intimate. For you do not cease to intimate to us what and how great you are. All the 2.16.43.168

⁴⁸ See the citation of Wis. 6:17 (6:16 RSV) in 2.16.41.162 and 2.17.45.174. For the gaze being too weak to sustain, see 2.13.36.142. Augustine uses similar language in *Confessions* 7.10.16 to describe his experience of God (addressed to God): "When first I came to know You, You lifted me up so I might see that what I saw *is*, whereas I who saw it not yet was. Shining upon me intensely, You beat back the weakness of my gaze, and I trembled with love and awe."

loveliness of Creation is an indication of you. The craftsman somehow intimates to those who view his work that they not be wholly attached to its beauty. Instead, they should cast their eyes over the appearance of the material product in such a way that they turn back, with affection, to the one who produced it. Those who love what you do in place of you are like people who hear someone wise speaking eloquently and, while they listen too keenly to the sweetness of his voice and the arrangements of his well-placed syllables, they miss the most important thing, namely the *meanings* of which his words were the audible signs.

Woe to those who turn themselves from your light and hold fast with delight to their own darkness! Turning their backs on you (so to speak), they are chained to fleshly labor as to their own shadows. Yet even then, what gives them pleasure shares in the encompassing brilliance of your light. But when a shadow is loved, it makes the mind's eye weaker and less fit to reach the sight of you. Consequently, a man is plunged farther into darkness when he eagerly pursues anything that catches him the more readily in his weakened condition. Due to this, he begins to be unable to see what exists in the highest degree. He starts to think evil anything that deceives him through his lack of foresight, or that entices him in his need, or that torments him in his captivity – although he deservedly suffers these things because he has turned away, since whatever is just cannot be evil.

Therefore, if either with bodily sense or with the mind's consideration you cannot get hold of whatever changeable thing you are looking upon, unless you grasp some form of numbers (without which it would lapse back into nothing), do not doubt that there is some eternal and unchangeable form! As a result, these changeable things are not interrupted but instead run their courses through time, with measured movements and a distinct variety of forms, like poetic verses. This eternal and unchangeable form is not contained in and spread out through space; nor is it extended and varied in time. But through it, all [changeable] things are able to be given form, as well as to fulfill and carry out the numbers pertinent to the times and places appropriate to their kind.

Every changeable thing must also be formable. (Just as we call what can be changed "changeable," I shall in like manner call what can be given form "formable.") Yet no thing can give form to itself, for the following reason. No thing can give what it does not have, and surely something is given form in order to have form. Accordingly, if any given thing has

some form, there is no need for it to receive what it [already] has. But if something does not have a form, it cannot receive from itself what it does not have. Therefore, no thing can give form to itself, as we said. Now what more is there for us to say about the changeability of the body and the mind? Enough was said previously. Thus it follows that mind and body are given form by an unchangeable form that endures forever. To this form was it said: “You shall change them, and they shall be changed; but you are the same and your years shall not fail” [Ps. 101:27–28 (102:26–27 RSV)]. The prophetic figure of speech uses ‘years without fail’ in place of ‘eternity.’ About this same form again was it said that “remaining in itself, it makes all things new” [Wis. 7:27]. 2.17.45.173

On these grounds we understand that all things are governed by providence. For if all existing things would be nothing were they completely deprived of form, the unchangeable form through which all changeable things maintain their existence – so that they are fulfilled and are carried out by the numbers pertinent to their forms – is itself their providence. For they would not exist if it did not exist. Therefore, anyone who carefully considers the whole of Creation and takes the road to wisdom senses that “Wisdom shows herself favorably to him along the roads, and in all providence does she meet with him” [Wis. 6:17 (6:16 RSV)]. He will be the more fervent to get along that road to precisely the extent that the road itself is beautiful through the wisdom he is burning to reach. 2.17.45.174

Now if you find some kind of creature other than (a) that which exists but does not live, (b) that which exists and lives but does not understand, or (c) that which exists and lives and understands – *then* venture to say that there is some good that is not from God!⁴⁹ These three kinds can also be expressed by two names, if they were called “body” and “life,” since that which only lives but does understand, as in the case of brute animals, and that which understands, as in human beings, is quite correctly called alive. These two things, namely body and life, are counted among creatures at least – for “life” is said of the Creator Himself, and this is life in the highest degree. Hence, because these two creations, body and life, are “formable” (as shown by what was said previously), and because if the form were completely lost they would lapse back into nothing, they reveal well enough that they maintain their existence from that form which always remains the same. Consequently, all good things whatsoever, 2.17.46.175 2.17.46.176

⁴⁹ The distinction (a)–(c) was mentioned earlier at 2.3.7.22–2.3.7.24 and 2.5.11.43–2.6.13.53.

2.17.46.177 no matter how great or small, can exist only from God. What can be greater in Creation than intelligent life? What can be less than body? However much these things deteriorate and thereby tend to nonbeing, some form nevertheless remains in them, so that they do exist in some way. Whatever form may remain in a deteriorated thing, it comes from that form which knows no deterioration, and it prevents the movements of these things – as they deteriorate or improve – from transgressing the laws of their own numbers. Hence whatever is found to be praiseworthy in the world, whether it is judged to deserve full or slight praise, should be traced back to the most excellent and inexpressible praise of its Maker. Do you have any objections to raise?

2.18.47.178 EVODIUS: I admit that I am sufficiently convinced – and it has become clear as much as it can in this life among people such as us – (a) that God exists, and (b) that all goods are from God, seeing that all the things that exist are from God, whether they understand and live and exist, or only live and exist, or only exist.

Now then, let us have a look at whether the third question can be disentangled: Should free will be counted among the goods?⁵⁰ Once this has been proved, I shall concede without hesitation that God has given it to us, and that it ought to have been given to us.

2.18.47.179 AUGUSTINE: You have remembered well the questions on the table, and quickly noticed that the second question has now been settled. But you should have seen that the third question has thereby also been resolved. You had declared that it seemed to you that free choice of the will ought not to have been given, on the grounds that it is through it that anyone sins.⁵¹ When I replied to your view that one cannot act rightly except by this selfsame free choice of the will, and maintained that God instead gave it for this reason,⁵² you answered that free will should have been given to us the way justice was given, which no one can use except rightly.⁵³ Your reply forced us to enter into a great round-about course of argument, in which I proved to you that greater and less good things are from God alone. This could only be shown clearly if, first, against the opinions of irreligious foolishness – in accordance with which “the fool has said in his heart: There is no God” [Ps. 13:1 (14:1 RSV), 52:1 (53:1 RSV)] – whatever kind of reasoning we entered into

⁵⁰ This is the “third question” raised in 2.3.7.20, the first two having been answered in (a) and (b).

⁵¹ See 2.1.1.1. ⁵² See 2.1.3.5. ⁵³ See 2.2.4.8.

about so great a matter, fit to our abilities (with God Himself giving us help along this perilous path), were directed at some evident truth. Now although we held these two points – that God exists, and that all good things are from Him – with resolute faith even before, they have nevertheless been discussed in such a way that a third point was quite clearly apparent: that free will should be counted among the good things [as follows]. 2.18.47.181

It has already been made clear from the previous argumentation and we agreed that the nature of the body is at a lower level than the nature of the mind, and, on these grounds, that the mind is a greater good than the body. Therefore, if we find among goods of the body some that could not be used rightly by human beings, but we nevertheless do *not* say as a result that they should not have been given (since we admit that they are goods), then it is not surprising if there are also some goods in the mind that we are also able to not use rightly – but since they are goods, they could not have been given except by Him from Whom all good things come. 2.18.48.182

See how much good is missing in a body that does not have hands! Yet hands are used for evil when someone does cruel or disgraceful things with them. If you saw someone without feet, you would admit that a great good is lacking in his body's wholeness. Yet you would not deny that someone who uses his feet to harm another, or to disgrace himself, uses his feet for evil. With our eyes we see light and distinguish the forms of physical objects; the eyes are the most appealing parts of our body, which is why they are situated in an exalted place of honor, and we use them to oversee our health as well as for many other benefits of life. Yet many people do many disgraceful things with their eyes, enlisting them in the service of lust. You see how much good a face is missing if it does not have eyes. When eyes are present in a face, though, who gave them but the one who generously bestows all goods, God? 2.18.48.183 2.18.48.184

Therefore, just as you approve of these things in the body and praise Him Who gave these good things, disregarding those who use them for evil, you should also admit that free will, without which no one can live rightly, is a good thing and a divine gift – and also that those who use this good for evil should be damned, rather than that He Who gave it ought not to have given it. 2.18.48.185

2.18.49.186 EVODIUS: First, then, I would like you to prove to me that free will is something good; then I will grant that God gave it to us, since I acknowledge that all good things are from God.

2.18.49.187 AUGUSTINE: Did I not in the end prove this with so much effort in the previous argumentation? You admitted that every bodily species and form maintains its existence from the highest form of all things, *i.e.* from truth, and you granted that they are good.⁵⁴ Truth itself declares in the gospel that the hairs on our head are numbered.⁵⁵ Has it slipped your mind what we said about the supremacy of number, and its power

2.18.49.188 that “reaches from one end to the other” [Wis. 8:1]? How terribly perverse it is to number the hairs on our head among the good things (though among the least and lowly of them), nor to find any author to whom they may be attributed but God as the Maker of all good things (since great and small good things are from Him from Whom every good thing exists), and yet to have doubts about free will – without which even those who live badly grant that we cannot live rightly! Please tell me now which seems better: (*a*) something in us without which we can live rightly, or (*b*) something in us without which we cannot live rightly?

2.18.49.189 EVODIUS: Stop, stop! I am ashamed of my blindness. Who could doubt that (*b*) is far more excellent?

AUGUSTINE: Then will you now deny that a one-eyed man can live rightly?

EVODIUS: Away with such great madness!

AUGUSTINE: Then since you grant that the eye in the body is a good thing, even though its loss does not prevent one from living rightly, does not free will, without which no one lives rightly, seem to you to be something good?

2.18.50.190 Consider justice, which no one uses for evil. Justice is counted among the highest goods there are in human beings – as well as all the virtues of the mind, upon which the right and worthwhile life is grounded. For no one uses prudence or courage or moderateness for evil. Right reason prevails in all of them, as it does in justice itself (which you mentioned). Without it they could not be virtues. And no one can use right reason for evil.

⁵⁴ See 2.16.42.164 and 2.16.44.171–2.17.45.173.

⁵⁵ Mt. 10:30: “Yet the very hairs of your head are all numbered.”

Therefore, the virtues are great goods. But you must remember that not only great but even small goods are able to exist from Him alone from Whom all good things are, namely God. The previous line of argument established this, and you agreed to it many times with joy. Hence the virtues by which we live rightly are great goods. The beauties of any given physical objects, without which we can live rightly, are small goods, whereas the powers of the mind, without which we cannot live rightly, are intermediate goods. No one uses the virtues for evil, but the other goods – namely, the intermediate and small goods – can be used not only for good but also for evil. Hence no one uses virtue for evil, because the task of virtue is the good use of things that we can also fail to use for good. But no one uses [something] for evil in using it for good. Accordingly, the abundance and the greatness of God's goodness has furnished not only great goods but also intermediate and small goods. His goodness is more to be praised in great goods than in intermediate goods, and more in intermediate goods than in small goods, but more in all of them than if He had not bestowed them all. 2.19.50.191

EVODIUS: I agree. But one point bothers me. Our question is about free will; we see that it uses other things for good or not. How is it also to be counted *among* the goods we use? 2.19.51.193

AUGUSTINE: In the way we know all things of which we have knowledge by reason, and yet reason itself is also counted among the things we know by reason. Or did you forget that when we asked what is known by reason, you conceded that reason is also known by reason?⁵⁶ So do not be surprised that even if we use other things by free will, we are able to use free will through free will itself. The will that uses other things somehow uses itself, the same way as reason, which knows other things, knows itself too. Memory does not only embrace all the other things we remember. Since we do not forget that we have memory, memory also somehow grasps memory itself in us, and it remembers not only other things but also itself – or, rather, we remember other things as well as memory itself through it. 2.19.51.194 2.19.51.195

Thus when the will, which is an intermediate good, holds fast to the unchangeable good as something common rather than private – like the truth, which we have discussed at length without saying anything adequate – a person grasps the happy life. And the happy life, *i.e.* the 2.19.52.196

⁵⁶ See 2.3.9.36.

attachment of the mind holding fast to the unchangeable good, is the proper and fundamental good for a human being. It also includes all the virtues, which no one can use for evil. Although the virtues are great and fundamental goods in human beings, we thoroughly understand that they are proper to each person, not that they are common. Truth and wisdom, however, are common to all, and people become wise and happy by holding fast to them. Of course, one person does not become happy by the happiness of another. Even if you emulate another in order to be happy, you seek to become happy by means of what you saw made the other person happy, namely through the unchangeable and common truth. Nor does anyone become prudent by another person's prudence, or is made courageous by another's courage, or moderate by another's moderateness, or just by another's justice. Instead, you conform your mind to those unchangeable rules and beacons of the virtues,⁵⁷ which live uncorruptibly in the truth itself and in the wisdom that is common, to which the person furnished with virtues whom you put forward as a model for your emulation has conformed and directed his mind.

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. And thus someone who is made proud or curious or lascivious is captured by another life that, in comparison to the higher life, is death.⁵⁸ Even this life is ruled by the oversight of divine providence, which puts all things in order in their appropriate places and distributes to each what is due according to his deserts.

Thus it turns out that the good things desired by sinners are not in any way evil, and neither is free will itself, which we established should be numbered among the intermediate goods.⁵⁹ Instead, evil is turning the will away from the unchangeable good and towards changeable

⁵⁷ See 2.10.29.116–2.10.29.118.

⁵⁸ See 1.4.10.30.

⁵⁹ See 2.19.51.193–2.19.51.195.

goods. Yet, since this “turning away” and “towards” is not compelled but voluntary, the deserved and just penalty of unhappiness follows upon it.

But perhaps you are going to raise the question: Since the will is moved when it turns itself away from the unchangeable good towards the changeable good, where does this movement come from?⁶⁰ It is surely evil, even if free will should be numbered among good things on the grounds that we cannot live rightly without it. If this movement, namely turning the will away from the Lord God, is undoubtedly a sin, then surely can we not say that God is the author of sin? Therefore, this movement will not be from God. Then where does it come from? 2.20.54.201

If I were to reply to your question that I do not know, perhaps you will then be the sadder, but I will at least have replied truthfully. What is nothing cannot be known. Hold firm with resolute religiousness that you will not encounter, by sensing or understanding or whatever kind of thinking, any good thing which is not from God. Hence there is no nature you encounter that is not from God. Do not hesitate to attribute to God as its Maker everything in which you see number and measure and order. Once you remove these things entirely, absolutely nothing will be left. For even if some inchoate vestige of a form were to remain, where you find neither measure nor order nor number – since wherever these exist the form is complete – you must also take away that vestigial form, which seems to be a sort of material its Maker needs to complete. For if the completion of a form is good, the vestigial form is already something good. Thus if every good were taken away, what will be left is not something, but instead absolutely nothing. Yet every good is from God. Therefore, there is no nature that is not from God. Thus see what the movement of “turning away” pertains to. We admit that this movement is sin, since it is a defective movement, and every defect is from nothing. Be assured that this movement does *not* pertain to God! 2.20.54.203

Yet this defective movement, since it is voluntary, is placed within our power. If you fear it, you must not will it; if you do not will it, it will not exist. What then is more secure than to be in that life⁶¹ where what you do not want cannot happen to you! But since we cannot rise of our own accord as we fell of it, let us hold on with firm faith to the right hand of God stretched out to us from above, namely our Lord Jesus Christ; let us 2.20.54.204

⁶⁰ This is the main question of Book 3. ⁶¹ “That life”: the afterlife.

await Him with resolute hope and desire Him with burning charity.⁶² If you still think there is something about the origin of sin that should be looked into more carefully, we should defer it until Book 3.

2.20,54,206

EVODIUS: I comply with your will to defer to another time the issues stemming from this, for I agree that we have not yet looked into the matter sufficiently.