

Augustine on divine foreknowledge and human free will

Both in *On Free Choice (De Libero Arbitrio)* Book III and in the *City of God (De Civitate Dei)* Book V¹, Augustine briefly deals with the perennial controversy about the compatibility of God's foreknowledge and human free will. William L. Rowe, in his article «Augustine on Foreknowledge and Free Will», criticizes Augustine's defense of the compatibility of divine foreknowledge and human free will, and maintains that it completely fails². Jasper Hopkins has carefully scrutinized Rowe's article and made a number of good criticisms of it³. But I do not think that either Rowe or Hopkins has said everything that needs to be said. In this paper, therefore, I will reexamine Rowe's article and draw attention to some new points on Augustine on free will and divine foreknowledge. The paper will limit itself merely to God's foreknowledge ; it will not discuss the subject of God's grace or God's omnipotence. The reasons for this limitation are the following. First, Rowe's article mainly discusses *De Libero Arbitrio* III, an earlier work, of which Augustine says in *Retractations* I, ix that it is not intended to discuss the subject of God's grace but rather the origin of evil, that is, the free choice of the will. Second, God's *omnipotence* and *omniscience* are really two logically distinct concepts. Although the two are closely linked in Christian theology, for the purpose of my investigation only God's foreknowledge needs to be discussed.

1. See AUGUSTINE, *On Free Choice*, Book III, ii-iv and *City of God*, Book V, 9-10.

2. William L. ROWE, «Augustine on Foreknowledge and Free Will», *The Review of Metaphysics* 18 (1964): 356-363. Rowe's article has received quite favorable attention : it has been reprinted in both *Augustine: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. R. A. MARKUS (New York : Doubleday & Co., 1972), and *Readings in the Philosophy of Religion: An Analytic Approach*, ed. Baruch Brody (Englewood Cliffs : Prentice Hall, 1974).

3. Jasper HOPKINS, «Augustine on Foreknowledge and Free Will», *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 8 (1977) : 111-126.

I. – AUGUSTINE’S ARGUMENT FROM «THE POWER TO WILL»

Rowe’s discussion mainly concerns Augustine’s argument in *De Libero Arbitrio* III. He has two main criticisms of Augustine. I shall deal with them one at a time. To begin his first objection, Rowe quotes the following texts :

«(Evodius) ... I have a deep desire to know how it can be that God knows all things beforehand and that, nevertheless, we do not sin by necessity. Whoever says that anything can happen otherwise than as God has foreknown it, is attempting to destroy the divine foreknowledge with the most insensate impiety. ... Since God foreknew that man would sin, that which God foreknew must necessarily come to pass. How then is the will free when there is apparently this unavoidable necessity ? ...

(Augustine) Your trouble is this. You wonder how it can be that these two propositions are not contradictory and incompatible, namely that God has foreknowledge of all future events, and that we sin voluntarily and not by necessity. For if, you say, God foreknows that a man will sin, he must necessarily sin. But if there is necessity there is no voluntary choice in sinning, but rather fixed and unavoidable necessity. You are afraid that by that reasoning the conclusion may be reached either that God’s foreknowledge of all future events must be impiously denied, or, if that cannot be denied, that sin is committed not voluntarily but by necessity. Isn’t that your difficulty ?

Evodius. - Exactly that⁴.»

Evodius’ argument is reconstructed by Rowe as follows⁵ :

- (1) God has foreknowledge of all future events.
- (2) Hence, if a man is going to sin, God foreknows that he will sin.
- (3) Whatever God foreknows must necessarily happen.
- (4) Hence, if God foreknows that a man will sin, he must necessarily sin.
- (5) But if such a man must necessarily sin, there is no voluntary choice in his sinning.
- (6) Therefore, such a man does not have free will.

Following this reconstruction, Rowe suggests that Augustine intends to solve the problem posed by Evodius’ argument, that of the apparent incompatibility of free will and divine foreknowledge, by denying premise (5). He writes, “Augustine’s answer to the question just raised is that even though a man necessarily wills to sin he, nevertheless, freely wills to sin⁶”. Rowe then proceeds to quote two passages from *De Libero Arbitrio* III and one passage

4. *De Libero Arbitrio* III, ii, 4-iii, 6 : CCL XXIX, 276-278. The translation is taken from J. H. S. BURLEIGH, tr. *Augustine: Earlier Writings* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980) 172-173. Rowe uses Burleigh’s translation, and in this paper I will use the same, except in places where I feel the need to use my own translation to clarify Augustine’s thought. The original text, in Latin, is provided for the more crucial passages.

5. ROWE, 356-357.

6. ROWE, 357.

from *De Civitate Dei* V to support his interpretation⁷. On the basis of these three passages Rowe concludes that Augustine's argument is based on what lies within human power. Moreover, whatever is within human power is, for Augustine, a free act. According to Rowe's reading of Augustine, Augustine's definition of what lies in a person's power is that :

«... x is not in a man's power if and only if either (1) x fails to occur even though the man wills to do x ...or (2) x occurs even though the man does not will to do x...⁸»

I shall call this definition given by Rowe "D1" hereafter. Rowe then infers, from this definition of what is in a person's power, that for Augustine "the will" is always within human power and that it is therefore free. Rowe believes that this line of reasoning leads Augustine to hold that even though a person necessarily wills to sin, he/she nevertheless freely wills to sin, "because his willing to sin (although necessary) is still in his power⁹". This, according to Rowe, leads Augustine to reject premise (5) of Evodius' argument.

But after interpreting Augustine's position thus, Rowe claims that there is a mistake in Augustine's reasoning ; that is, Augustine does not maintain a parallel between the analogies he has used. For instance, if we instantiate the variable "x" in D1 by "growing old", the instantiation of D1 is :

"Growing old" is not in a person's power if and only if either (1) "growing old" fails to occur even though one wills to grow old, or (2) "growing old" occurs even though one does not will to grow old.

Augustine needs to maintain a parallel between the cases : that of growing old and of willing to sin. In the case of my willing to sin not being in my power, Rowe argues that the proper instantiation of D1 is not the obvious contradictory statement which Rowe believes that Augustine thought resulted from that instantiation : "I will to sin even though I do not will to sin¹⁰". Rather the more ambiguous one is what results : "I will to sin even though I do not will to will to sin¹¹". Rowe believes that Augustine's mistake is even clearer in the case of substituting the variable "x" by "refraining from sinning" in D1. He writes :

Consider now the case of my willing to refrain from sinning. Parallel to the case of running

7. ROWE, 357-358. The first passage that Rowe quotes is from *De Libero Arbitrio* III, iii, 8 : CCL XXIX, 280. The second passage is from *De Libero Arbitrio* III, iii, 7 : CCL XXIX, 279. The third passage is from *De Civitate* V, 10 : CCL XLVII, 140. For the passages from *De Libero Arbitrio*, Rowe uses Burleigh's translation, pp. 174-176; for the passage from *De Civitate Dei*, Rowe adopts J. J. Smith's translation. *Basic Writings of St. Augustine*, Vol. II (New York : Random House, 1948) 68.

8. ROWE, 358.

9. ROWE, 359.

10. ROWE, 359.

11. ROWE, 359.

a four-minute mile, the proper analysis of «willing to refrain from sinning is not in my power» should be, on Augustine's view, the following :

(a) I fail to will to refrain from sinning even though I will to will to refrain from sinning.

rather than,

(b) I fail to will to refrain from sinning even though I will to refrain from sinning¹².

Rowe then proceeds to question the meaning of (a). He argues that either (a) does not make any sense at all or (a) makes sense only when it is interpreted as that "I fail to will to refrain from sinning even though I make an effort to will or choose to refrain from sinning¹³". Rowe believes that if it is the case that we fail to "will x" even though we will to "will x", then Augustine is wrong to assert that such willing is always in our power and is always free. As a result, Augustine's argument from "the power to will" does not succeed in showing the falsity of premise (5) of Evodius' argument ; and so his argument is not able to preserve the compatibility of divine foreknowledge and human free will¹⁴.

A. – *The Freedom Presupposed in the Will*

But Rowe's argument is itself problematic. First, Rowe often says that he thinks that Augustine's argument is based on the belief that "even though a man necessarily wills to sin he, nevertheless, freely wills to sin¹⁵". Rowe, however, is wrong on this point. Throughout *De Libero Arbitrio*, Augustine never uses the phrase "a man necessarily wills to sin". The only places in which he does use it is in restating Evodius' argument or in positing a hypothetical assertion to which he plans to object¹⁶. Indeed, Augustine firmly and explicitly rejects the use of such a phrase and idea. He says :

«I omit the equally strange [statement] which I indicated a moment ago that the same man says that it is necessary that I so will. The man, by supposing the necessity, strives to take away the will. For if it is necessary that he wills, whence can he will when there is no will¹⁷ ?»

12. ROWE, 360.

13. ROWE, 360.

14. ROWE, 360.

15. ROWE, 357. Statements which express a similar theme also occur on pages 358, 359, and 360.

16. Textual evidences for my view can be found in the following places : *De Libero Arbitrio* III, iii, 6 : CCL XXIX, 278, line 5 ; *De Libero Arbitrio* III, iii, 8 : CCL XXIX, 280, line 86, 92-94, 97 ; *De Libero Arbitrio* III, iv, 10 : CCL XXIX, 281, line 18, 21-22 ; *De Libero Arbitrio* III, xvi, 46 : CCL XXIX, 302, line 25.

17. «Omitto illud aequè monstruosum quod paulo ante dixi eundem hominem dicere : 'necesse est ut ita uelim', qui necessitate supposita auferre nititur uoluntatem. Si enim necesse est ut uelit, unde uolet cum uoluntas non erit ?» [*De Libero Arbitrio* III, iii, 8 : CCL

This passage shows that Augustine rejects the idea that a person may necessarily will or will in a necessary way when “necessity” is taken implicitly in a strict and absolute sense¹⁸. For Augustine, “necessity”, taken in such a sense (N2), is incompatible with “willing”; and so these two terms should not be used together to form a compound idea¹⁹. The reason for this is that for Augustine “an act of the will” already presupposes “freedom”. Augustine offers an argument for this point. First, he gives a definition of something’s being in one’s power. He says that “you cannot think that something is in our power, unless we do/make that thing when we will [it]²⁰”, and “we cannot deny that we have the power unless [the thing] which we will is not yet present to us²¹”. One might put the definition in a more general form: “having x in one’s power” means (D2) “being able to do x when one wills x”.

Then, based on (D2), Augustine gives his argument in the following two passages:

XXIX, 280]. The English translation is my own. Again, it is worth noticing that Augustine does not use such a phrase as “necesse est ut uelit” in stating or defending his own position, but rather uses it as a hypothetical position which he plans to oppose.

18. That is, “necessity” is taken to indicate the necessity of a consequent. In next section, I will argue that there is an implicit distinction between the necessity of a conditional and the necessity of a consequent in Augustine’s other argument in *De Libero Arbitrio* III. I shall call the necessity of a conditional “N1” hereafter and symbolize it as “L(p->q)” (“L” represents “necessity”). I shall then call the necessity of a consequent “N2” hereafter and symbolize it as “(p->Lq)”. By the symbolization of N1 and N2, one can clearly see that in the case of N1, the necessity governs the whole conditional “p->q”, while in the case of N2, the necessity governs only the consequent of a conditional, i.e., q. Note that “L(p->q)”, i.e., N1, is not equivalent nor does it imply “p->Lq”, i.e., N2. I shall argue that Augustine’s position on God’s foreknowledge and events He foreknows grants N1 but rejects N2.

19. I want again to call attention to the point that the distinction between N1 and N2 is only implicit in *De Libero Arbitrio*. I think that this is the reason why Augustine is extremely cautious in using the term “necesse est”. When he wants to express N1, he tries to use other phrases and avoids directly using “necesse est”. One example is in *De Libero Arbitrio* III, iv, 10 where Augustine uses the analogy of human knowledge to enlighten Evodius’ mind. Augustine says, “Unless I am mistaken, you did not directly compel [the man] to sin – the man whom you foreknew that he was going to sin; nor did your foreknowledge itself compel him to sin, although without doubt (*sine dubio*) he was going to sin”. [“Quia, nisi fallor, non continuo tu peccare cogeres quem peccatum esse praescires, neque ipsa praescientia tua peccare eum cogeret quamvis sine dubio peccaturus esset” *De Libero Arbitrio* III, iv, 10 : CCL XXIX, 281. The English translation is my own.] Notice that Augustine uses “sine dubio”, not “necesse est”, in the last sentence of the paragraph quoted above.

20. «Non enim posses aliud sentire esse in potestate nostra, nisi quod cum uolumus facimus» [*De Libero Arbitrio* III, iii, 7 : CCL XXIX, 279]. The English translation is my own.

21. «Non enim negare possumus habere nos potestatem, nisi dum nobis non adest quod uolumus» [*De Libero Arbitrio* III, iii, 8 : CCL XXIX, 280]. The English translation is my own.

«Therefore there is nothing so much in our power as is the will itself. For as soon as we will [volumus] immediately the will [voluntas] is there²²».

«If we do not have the will, we may think we will but in fact we do not. If we cannot will without willing, those who will have will, and all that is in our power we have by willing. Our will would not be will unless it were in our power. Because it is in our power, it is free. We have nothing that is free which is not in our power...²³»

The argument revealed in these passages can be formulated as follows :

- (1) If I do not perform an act of willing, I do not will. (premise)
- (2) So, when I will, I have the will (that is to say, I perform an act of willing). (by (1))
- (3) If whenever I will x, I am able to do x, then x is in my power. (by (D2))
- (4) So, the will, i.e., the act of willing, is in my power. (by (2) and (3))
- (5) So, if the will were not in my power, then it would not be a will. (by (4))
- (6) Whatever is in my power, it is free. (premise)
- (7) Therefore, my will is free. (by (4) and (6))²⁴

By the definition of “having x in one’s power”, there is nothing more evident than that the will is in our power : because every time we will (*uolumus*) to do something, the will (*uoluntas*) immediately presents itself in that willing. Since the will is in our power, the act of willing, by definition, already presupposes freedom; otherwise it will not be an act of willing. Now, by means of

- (1) Augustine’s definition that sin is the movement of the will turning away from eternal goods to temporal goods²⁵,
- and
- (2) his conclusion that an act of willing presupposes freedom,
- we thus reach the conclusion that
- (3) to sin must be a free act of the will as well (if it is not a voluntary act, it will not be a sin at all)²⁶.

22. *De Libero Arbitrio* III, iii, 7 : CCL XXIX, 279. The translation is taken from Burleigh, p.174.

23. *De Libero Arbitrio* III, iii, 8 : CCL XXIX, 280. The translation is taken from Burleigh, p.175.

24. This way of reconstructing Augustine’s argument is inspired by Jasper Hopkin’s article. *op. cit.*

25. *De Libero Arbitrio* I, xvi, 34 : CCL XXIX, 234-235 ; *De Libero Arbitrio* II, xx, 54 : CCL XXIX, 272.

26. *De Libero Arbitrio* III, xvi, 46 : CCL XXIX, 302.

This is an obviously valid syllogism. We see again that for Augustine it is impossible for someone necessarily to will or to will necessarily. In view of all of this, Augustine would not, and certainly did not, grant what Rowe thinks he did : “even though a man necessarily wills to sin he, nevertheless, freely wills to sin²⁷”. As John M. Rist has noted, for Augustine there is no such thing as “being compelled to will”, because “If a man is compelled, ... he does not will²⁸”. Rowe, in his argument, was already mistaken about Augustine’s most fundamental assumption.

B. – «*The Power to Will Secundum Se*» versus «*The Power to Achieve What One Wills*»

Another objection I would like to advance against Rowe’s interpretation and criticism of Augustine concerns the fact that Augustine’s argument refers to «the power to will according to itself (*secundum se*)» rather than “the power to realize or to achieve what one wills”. This distinction is implicitly contained in Augustine’s example of “happiness”, or rather “beatitudo” in *De Libero Arbitrio* III, iii, 7²⁹. In that section, Augustine asks Evodius whether it is possible for one to be happy against one’s will. Evodius answers that to be happy is not in his power because he wishes to be happy, but he is not able to be so ; it is God rather than himself who makes him happy. Augustine responds firmly :

«When you said that you did not make yourself happy, you said it as if I had denied it. What I say is that when you become happy in the future it will take place not against your will but in accordance with your willing... God’s foreknowledge, which is even today quite certain that you are to be happy at a future date, does not rob you of your will to happiness when you actually attain happiness³⁰».

27. ROWE, 357. One may argue that, with N1, “necessarily wills” is compatible with “freely wills”, and thus, Rowe’s interpretation of Augustine may work. However, in his article, Rowe implies that Augustine does not make, not even implicitly, the distinction of N1 and N2. I think this is why Rowe, after arguing that Augustine’s argument from the power to will fails, at the end of his article suggests that Augustine could have rejected Evodius’ argument by adopting the distinction between N1 and N2. Hence I suggest that, without granting the distinction between N1 and N2 being made at least implicitly by Augustine, it is not correct for Rowe to claim that for Augustine “necessarily wills” is compatible with “freely wills”. In addition, as I have suggested earlier, Augustine does not use the terms “necessarily” and “to will” together, unless he is restating Evodius’ position or positing a hypothetical position which he plans to attack.

28. JOHN M. RIST, «Augustine on Free Will and Predestination», *Journal of Theological Studies* 20 (1969) : 422.

29. Augustine uses the word “beatitudo”, which in Burleigh’s translation has been rendered as “happiness”.

30. *De Libero Arbitrio* III, iii, 7 : CCL XXIX, 279. The translation is from Burleigh, p.175.

In this passage, we see that Augustine does not deny Evodius' idea that it is God who makes a person's beatitude possible; in other words, Augustine grants that one cannot attain beatitude by one's own power alone³¹. Nevertheless, he emphasizes that an act of willing to happiness (*uoluntatem beatitudinis*) is still within one's power. Here we see an implicit distinction between «the power to will *secundum se*» and “the power to achieve what one wills”. This implication later becomes explicit in *De Civitate Dei* V, 10 :

«Our wills are ours and it is our wills that affect all that we do by willing, and which would not have happened if we had not willed... But the power of achievement comes from God. For if there were only the will without the power of realization, that will would have been thwarted by a more powerful will. Even so, that will would have been a will, and the will not of another, but of him who willed, although it was incapable of realization³².»

One should notice that «the power to will *secundum se*» refers only to the act of willing *simpliciter*, i.e., the act of willing considered simply in itself without reference to its object, while “the power to achieve what one wills” involves three elements : namely, the object (to which the act of willing is directed), the act of willing *simpliciter*, and the power of achieving the object to which the act of willing is directed. Thus in analyzing the example of “willing to be happy”, one must logically presuppose «one's act of willing *simpliciter*» prior to “one's willing to be happy”, for the latter theoretically involves a further element, namely, the object of the willing. In the example under consideration, then, although one cannot attain happiness/beatitude (the object of one's willing) by one's own power – for it requires some other power in addition in order to achieve happiness – yet when one wills to be happy, one's act of willing *simpliciter* nevertheless immediately presents itself in that very act of one's willing to be happy. Without that act of willing *simpliciter*, one does not will, much less proceed to the other elements needed to achieve happiness : “to will to be happy” and “to be able to be happy”. Hence, for Augustine, the act of willing *simpliciter* is always in one's power, although one may not attain the object which one wills. For Augustine, therefore, there is no such thing as one's failing to will³³.

31. It is worth noticing that, although it is not explicit in *De Libero Arbitrio*, in Augustine's later work, he holds that “to be good/virtuous” and thus “to be happy” requires, in addition to one's willing, God's grace, while “to sin” is completely in one's power. The partial reason why this idea is not explicit in *De Libero Arbitrio* may be that the subject of that work is the origin of evil, i.e., sin, not God's grace. A good discussion on this point can be found in Rist's “Augustine on Free Will and Predestination”, *op. cit.*

32. *De Civitate Dei* V, 10 : CCL XLVII, 141. The translation is taken from Henry BETTENSON, *St. Augustine: City of God* (New York : Penguin, 1984) 195.

33. In the analysis I offered above, the conceptual difference between “to will *simpliciter*” and “to will x” must especially be noted. Conceptually, the former refers to the will considered in itself without respect to any object that it may will. The latter refers to the will with respect to its object: in the example of “willing to study hard”, “study hard” is the object of the act of willing *simpliciter*. It may be argued that one can surely fail, for example, to will to study hard. But the objection will be irrelevant to my interpretation of Augustine. Even if one may fail to will to study hard, we can say from another point of

I think, then, that Rowe has made several mistakes in accusing Augustine of committing an inferential fallacy, viz., in not maintaining a uniform substitution for the variable “x” in his definition of “the power to will”. Rowe argues that, according to Augustine’s view, the proper analysis of “willing to refrain from sinning is not in my power” should be³⁴ :

- (a) «I fail to will to refrain from sinning even though I will to will to refrain from sinning»,
rather than
(b) «I fail to will to refrain from sinning even though I will to refrain from sinning».

Rowe is convinced that, in the case of (a), the willing is not necessarily in one’s power, and therefore the will is not always in one’s power. So, Augustine’s argument fails³⁵. However, I have argued that Rowe’s analysis is wrong : textual evidence shows that Augustine does not and would never assert (a). Regardless of what is the object of one’s willing, how can one fail to will *simpliciter* when one in fact wills something ? Using the example of happiness, I have also argued : (1) that for Augustine there is no possibility that “*my willing to refrain from sinning is not in my power*” ; (2) that the proper example should be “to refrain from sinning is not in my power” rather than “my willing to refrain from sinning is not in my power” ; and (3) that the proper analysis of this example is not (a) but

- (a’) «I fail to refrain from sinning even though I will to refrain from sinning».

What is really not in my power is “refraining from sinning”, not my willing. It may be that the object of my willing cannot be attained at present, but it is impossible that I cannot will it. In fact, I can will anything as long as I will. Whether or not the object of my willing can be achieved by my own power is another matter. For Augustine, one should never confuse the two.

Furthermore, even if Rowe’s analysis, i.e., (a), is correct, his argument does not succeed. His principal objection remains irrelevant. For if, *arguendo*, “willing to refrain from sinning is not in my power” is properly interpreted as that “I fail to will to refrain from sinning even though I make an effort to will or choose to refrain from sinning”, that is not a counterexample to Augustine’s view that the will is always in one’s power. As Rist has noted, “What we should call psychological compulsions are not compulsions for Augustine. They are simply the individual working out his own nature³⁶”. Thus the case

view that the person under consideration simply wills to non-studying-hard. In any case, the willing *simpliciter* presents itself, and thus there is no such thing as one’s failing to will *simpliciter*.

34. ROWE, 360.

35. ROWE, 359-360. For a brief restatement of Rowe’s argument, please refer back to the beginning of this section.

36. RIST, 422.

which Rowe presents can be understood in this way : under certain circumstances a person undergoing internal struggle tries to make a decision between different possible choices³⁷. That one fails to will x (in an awkward sense), even though one wills to will x, simply means that one finally chooses to will non-x. It is evident that the act of willing *simpliciter* is still in one's power ; otherwise, the person in question will not be able to will and to choose non-x. Therefore, even if Rowe's analysis is correct, his criticism still does not stand.

So far I have argued that for Augustine willing is always in one's power and thus is free. But how is one able to relate the argument from "the power to will" to the case of sinning ? How does Augustine's argument from "the power to will" enable him to reconcile God's foreknowledge and a person's free choice to sin ? To answer this question, we need to recall Augustine's definition of "sin". For Augustine, as I mentioned above, "sin is certainly the movement, that is, the turning away of the will from the Lord God³⁸". Thus if an act of the will is in my power, then certainly a movement of the will is also in my power. Therefore, to sin is also in my power. Since whatever is in my power is free, to sin is free, that is, voluntary. For this reason, Augustine rejects premise (5) – but not because of the reason which Rowe gives. According to Augustine, sin is always voluntary ; if sin were not voluntary, it would not be sin; therefore, no one sins necessarily.

II. – THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE NECESSITY OF A CONDITIONAL (N1) AND THE NECESSITY OF A CONSEQUENT (N2)

In this section, I will discuss Rowe's second objection to Augustine's account of free will and foreknowledge. After concluding that Augustine's argument from "the power to will" fails, Rowe suggests an alternative solution to the dilemma posed by Evodius. Rowe's solution is based on a distinction between two kinds of necessity : the necessity of a conditional (N1 = $L(p \rightarrow q)$) and the necessity of a consequent (N2 = $(p \rightarrow Lq)$). N1 applies to the whole conditional, while N2 applies only to the consequent of a conditional (in the case of N2, an antecedent of a conditional necessitates its consequent). Rowe thinks, "there is a logical mistake either in the drawing of [premise] (4) from [premise] (3) or in the interpretation of (3)" in Evodius' argument. Premise (3) can be interpreted in two ways – (3a) or (3b). If, based on N1, (3) is interpreted as (3a) "It is necessary that if God foreknows p, p will happen", then (3) is true, but the inference from (3) to (4) is fallacious. If, based on N2, (3) is interpreted as (3b) "If God foreknows p, p will happen necessarily", then the inference from (3) to (4) is valid, but (3) is not true. Rowe thinks that either way is a route

37. *De Civitate Dei* V, 10 : CCL XLVII, 141.

38. «motus iste, id est auersio uoluntatis a domino deo, sine dubitatione peccatum est» [*De Libero Arbitrio* II, xx, 54 : CCL XXIX, 273]. The English translation is my own.

which Augustine could have taken to refute Evodius' argument³⁹. Rowe's suggestion seems to imply that Augustine is not aware of the distinction between N1 and N2. However, I shall argue that although Augustine does not explicitly draw a distinction between N1 and N2, he implicitly does so.

Consider *De Libero Arbitrio* III, iv, 10-11, where Augustine says :

«Unless I am mistaken, you would not directly compel the man to sin, though you knew beforehand that he was going to sin. Nor does your prescience in itself compel him to sin even though he was certainly going to sin, as we must assume if you have real prescience... Similarly God compels no man to sin, though he sees beforehand those who are going to sin by their own will... so God has foreknowledge of all his own actions, but is not the agent of all that he foreknows... For sin is committed voluntarily and not by any compulsion from his foreknowledge⁴⁰.»

This passage shows that it is highly doubtful that Augustine is unaware of the distinction between N1 and N2. If Augustine were completely ignorant of the difference between the following two propositions :

(3a) It is necessary (N1) that if God foreknows p, p will happen ;

and

(3b) If God foreknows p, p will happen necessarily (N2),

how could he hold to the truth of the following two propositions :

(x) if God has foreknowledge of one's sinning, it is necessary (N1) that one will sin,

and

(y) one will not sin necessarily (N2) because of God's foreknowledge ?

Are not the sentences

«God by his foreknowledge does not use compulsion in the case of future events... so God has foreknowledge of all his own actions, but is not the agent of all that he foreknows⁴¹.»

clear enough to demonstrate that Augustine rejects (3b) and thereby N2, while he determinately asserts the truth of God's foreknowledge ? This is enough to show that Augustine has made an implicit distinction between the necessity of a conditional and the necessity of a consequent.

One must keep in mind that for Augustine, as for most philosophers, the truth of a proposition, e.g., «I know that human beings are mortal», consists in its conformity with reality. To be more specific with the example of

39. ROWE, 361-362.

40. *De Libero Arbitrio* III, iv, 10-11 : CCL XXIX, 281. The translation is taken from Burleigh, pp.176-177. Cf. *De Civitate Dei* V, 10 : CCL XLVII, 141.

41. *De Libero Arbitrio* III, iv, 11 : CCL XXIX, 281. The translation is from Burleigh, p.177.

knowledge, "S knows P" is true or conforms with reality only if at least the following three conditions are satisfied :

- (1) S believes P.
- (2) P is true.
- (3) S's belief in P is justified⁴².

Therefore, if it is true that S knows P, then the conjunction of (1), (2), and (3) must be true. It is then obvious that the truth of the conjunction of (1), (2), and (3) must entail the truth of (2) by the logical principle of simplification⁴³. As was shown in section I, for Augustine "sinning" is a free act. Thus if God foreknows that one is going to sin, the occurrence of sinning freely in the future is requisite, i.e., necessary, for the truth of the claim that God foreknows⁴⁴. Hence, if we affirm that God foreknows that person A will sin, we then affirm that person A will necessarily sin. However, person A will sin by performing a free act in the future. The necessity in question is that of N1. N1 is really a clearer way to state the idea that God's foreknowledge assures the occurrence of future events, if we affirm the truth of God's foreknowledge, but N1 does not necessitate future events. Consider the following passage :

«The fact that God foreknew that a man would sin does not make a man sin; on the contrary, it cannot be doubted that it is the man himself who sins just because he whose prescience cannot be mistaken has foreseen that the man himself would sin. A man does not sin unless he wills to sin ; and if he had willed not to sin, then God would have foreseen that refusal⁴⁵.»

42. To some extent, my claim here is controversial. Some contemporary philosophers reject (3) as a necessary condition for knowledge, and a smaller number reject (1).

43. Principle of simplification : p,q, so p.

44. A good exposition related to this point has been provided by Roland J. TESKE, «Omniscience, Omnipotence, Divine Transcendence», *New Scholasticism* 8 (1979) : 277-294. Teske who follows Bernard Lonergan writes : «...a contingent truth about God requires that there be a suitable contingent term really distinct from God as a necessary condition of the truth of the proposition... If God knows that P will perform x (a free act), then P will perform x necessarily – that is, with conditional necessity [i.e., N1]. However, the antecedent does not have the conformity with reality requisite for its truth unless there exists x. Hence, in affirming the antecedent, one affirms that the free act exists... with conditional necessity [i.e., N1]» [TESKE, 285-290]. I agree with Teske on many points. However, there is a difference which should be pointed out here. In his article, Teske mainly discusses and defends Thomas Aquinas's position. Teske holds that God is the eternal knower and cause of contingent events ; thus, omnipotence and omniscience cannot be separated. As was said at the beginning of this paper, I will not consider divine omnipotence in this paper. According to my point of view, omnipotence and omniscience are two theoretically *separable* concepts, although in Christianity they are not *separate* in reality. (My method is in a way similar to Aristotelian view on form and matter : form and matter are theoretically separable, but not separate in reality.) My attempt in this paper is to show that foreknowledge, insofar as it is knowledge, will not cause or compel any future events.

45. *De Civitate Dei* V, 10 : CCL XLVII, 141. The translation is taken from Bettenson, p.195.

This passage clearly demonstrates that, on Augustine's view, God's foreknowledge in itself does not compel or necessitate any future events. Put differently, the point I have been making here is also found in the two passages quoted above from *De Libero Arbitrio* III, iv, 9-11, in which Augustine uses the analogy of human foreknowledge⁴⁶. That one necessary condition of knowledge is the truth of what is known, is the reason that Augustine uses the analogy of human foreknowledge to help Evodius understand the compatibility of divine foreknowledge and human freedom. The underlying ground, which lets Augustine hold both

(1) God certainly has foreknowledge about future events

and

(2) God's foreknowledge *per se* does not compel any future event,

is the implicit distinction between N1 and N2. I want again to emphasize that the distinction between N1 and N2 is only implicit in *De Libero Arbitrio* III, iv, 9-11 and *De Civitate Dei* V, 10. Textual evidence shows that it is very possible that Augustine has this distinction in mind, but he has not yet formed a full account of the distinction. It is worth noting that Augustine is extremely cautious in using "necesse est", "necessario", and similar terms. When he wants to state that God's foreknowledge assures the occurrence of a future event, he avoids using "necesse est" to express this assurance. Instead, he uses phrases/sentences such as "quamuis sine dubio peccaturus esset"⁴⁷, "cuius est praescius ipsa erit"⁴⁸, or "immo ideo non dubitatur ipsum peccare"⁴⁹, and so on. That the distinction between N1 and N2 is implicit, rather than explicit, may be one reason why Augustine is so careful in choosing appropriate terms and phrases to express his position on divine foreknowledge and human freedom.

I have one final comment on Rowe's article. At the end of the article, Rowe appears to claim that Augustine admits that both God and human beings are able to have foreknowledge about future events⁵⁰. I shall argue that this is simply not the case⁵¹.

My argument is based on the original Latin text. In the Latin text, one will find that in the passage which Rowe refers to, Augustine uses conditional

46. *De Libero Arbitrio* III, iv, 9-11 : CCL XXIX, 280-281.

47. *De Libero Arbitrio* III, iv, 10 : CCL XXIX, 281, line 27.

48. *De Libero Arbitrio* III, iii, 8 : CCL XXIX, 280, line 113.

49. *De Civitate Dei* V, 10 : CCL XLVII, 141, line 59-60.

50. ROWE, 362. Rowe writes, «The importance of this *ad hominem* argument against Evodius must not be overlooked. For if we claim that there is a special problem for the theologian who believes in divine foreknowledge and human freedom then the reasons we give in support of that claim must at some point concern God's foreknowledge, rather than foreknowledge generally. Otherwise, the theologian is involved in no more or less a difficulty than anyone who believes that we sometimes foreknow the free decisions and actions of men».

51. A view similar to mine is defended by Jasper HOPKINS, *op. cit.*, p.124.

sentences in the imperfect subjunctive mood⁵². This indicates contrary-to-fact claims. The text thus suggests that Augustine does not say that any person has foreknowledge. Burleigh's English translation, which Rowe uses in his article, is a good one, and preserves the contrary-to-fact mood in English. I do not know why Rowe believes that Augustine thinks that the human has foreknowledge. According to the grammar of those sentences, it is certain that Augustine does not hold the position which Rowe attributes to him. The question whether the analogy of human foreknowledge succeeds in properly illustrating the compatibility of God's foreknowledge and human free will is another issue. According to my reading, Augustine uses the analogy of human foreknowledge simply for the purpose of showing that foreknowledge alone cannot compel one's act.

III. – CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have argued that there are two different pieces of reasoning in Augustine's *De Libero Arbitrio* III, ii-iv. One is the argument from "the power to will", and the other is the argument from "the implicit distinction between N1 and N2".

In the first section, I dispute Rowe's interpretation and criticism of Augustine's argument from "the power to will". I advanced several objections. First, I defended the view that for Augustine an act of will presupposes human freedom, and thus that "sin", for Augustine, is "the movement of the will when it turns from the immutable to the mutable good". A free act of the will, then ensures that one's sinning is voluntary and that no one can be compelled to sin, or can sin necessarily. Second, I pointed out the implicit distinction between "the power to will" and "the power of achieving what one wills". This implicit distinction shows that, for Augustine, "willing *simpliciter*" is always in one's power. Based on these two points, I concluded that Augustine's argument is internally consistent, and thus that Rowe's criticism is not well founded.

In the second section of this paper, I argued that Augustine makes an implicit distinction between two different kinds of necessity, N1 and N2. An alternative basis for the rejection of Evodius' argument, an alternative which Rowe suggests Augustine should have opted for, is thus already contained in *De Libero Arbitrio* III, iv, 9-11. Moreover, I argued that in Augustine's argument from "the implicit distinction between kinds of necessity", there is no claim to the effect that people have foreknowledge of future events. Hence, Rowe's understanding of Augustine's argument is therefore once again mistaken.

To be fair to Rowe, I grant that there are many implicit premises and assumptions which underlie Augustine's argument, and it is not easy to unearth them. But the fact that a premise or a distinction is implicit is not equivalent to

52. «Quid ergo ? si tu praescires peccatorum esse aliquem, non esset necesse ut peccaret ?» [*De Libero Arbitrio* III, iv, 10 : CCL 281].

the “fact” that Augustine does not hold it or have it in mind. In order to reconstruct and understand Augustine’s arguments, it is important to read his work as a whole rather than to pick out or concentrate on isolated passages⁵³.

Ann A. Pang
Marquette University
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
U.S.A.

ABSTRACT : William L. Rowe criticizes Augustine’s defense of the compatibility of divine foreknowledge and human free will, and maintains that it completely fails. Rowe contends that although Augustine defends that the power to will is always within a person’s power, Augustine’s argument fails to show this point. Thus, Augustine allows for the possibility that the power to will may not be in a person’s power. Rowe thus concludes that Augustine’s argument is not sound. To dispute Rowe’s criticism of Augustine’s argument, the author argues that there are two pieces of reasoning in Augustine’s *De Libero Arbitrio* III, ii-iv. The author first makes a distinction between “the power to will *simpliciter*”, “the power to will x”, and “the power to achieve what one wills”. The author argues that the act of willing *simpliciter* is always within a person’s power and that Augustine’s argument from the power to will is basically the argument from “the power to will *simpliciter*”. Augustine’s argument is thus internally consistent. Furthermore, the author argues that Augustine also makes an implicit distinction between the necessity of the conditional and the necessity of the consequent. An alternative basis for the rejection of Evodius’ argument, an alternative which Rowe suggests Augustine should have opted for, is thus already contained in *De Libero Arbitrio* III, iv, 9-11.

53. I would like to express my gratitude to the following persons for their comments and suggestions on the earlier draft of this paper : Mary Clark, Roland J. Teske, S. J., Lee Rice, Michael Wreen, and Steve Barbone.