ebookbe.com

ON FREE CHOICE OF THE WILL (SAINT AUGUSTINE BISHOP OF HIPPO ETC.)

Scan Qr Code To Access Full Version

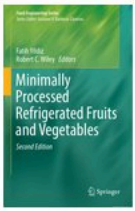
Full Version On:

ebookbe.com

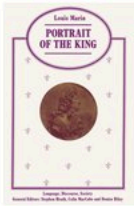
Get instant access to the complete digital publication, supplementary materials, and full unabridged content. Scan the QR code above or visit our website.

Recommended Course Materials & Supplementary Reference Resources

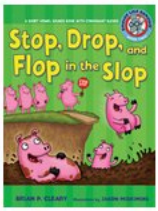
Please note: Below are recommended reference materials that accompany this subject. Scan the QR code next to any title to view syllabus details.



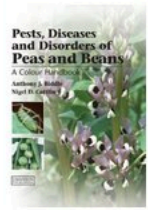
Minimally Processed Refrigerated Fruits and Vegetables (Fatih Yildiz, Robert C. Wiley (eds.))



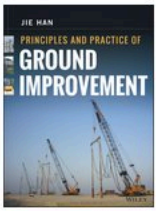
Portrait of the King (Louis Marin (auth.))



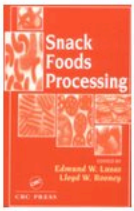
Stop, Drop, and Flop in the Slop A Short Vowel Sounds Book With Consonant Blends (Brian P.



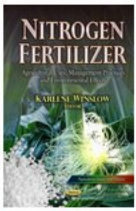
Pests and Diseases of Peas and Beans A Colour Handbook (Anthony Biddle, Nigel D Cattlin)



Principles and Practice of Ground Improvement (Jie Han)



Snack Foods Processing (Edmund W. Lusas, Lloyd W. Rooney)



Nitrogen fertilizer agricultural uses, management practices and environmental effects (Winslow,



Operators Manual Long Range Sniper Rifle (LRSR), Caliber .50,



Self-Made Boys A Great Gatsby Remix (Remixed Classics 5) (Anna-Marie McLemore)

Augustine

On Free Choice of the Will

Translated, with Introduction
and Notes, by
Thomas Williams

On Free Choice of the Will

AUGUSTINE

On Free Choice of the Will

Translated by
Thomas Williams

Hackett Publishing Company
Indianapolis / Cambridge

ugustine: 354–430

opyright © 1993 by Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.

ll rights reserved
rinted in the United States of America

4 13 12 11 10 6 7 8 9 10

over design by Listenberger & Associates
nterior design by Dan Kirklin

or further information please address

Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.
P.O. Box 44937
Indianapolis, Indiana 46244-0937

ibrary of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

ugustine, Saint, Bishop of Hippo.
[De libero arbitrio. English]
On free choice of the will/Augustine; translated, with introduction and notes, by Thomas Williams.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references.
ISBN 0-87220-189-9 (cloth) ISBN 0-87220-188-0 (pbk.)
1. Free will and determinism—Early works to 1800. 2. God—Omnipotence—Early works to 1800. I. Williams, Thomas, 1967–II. Title.
BR65.A664E5 1993
233′.7—dc20 93-22170
CIP

Pub ISBN: 978-1-60384-630-1

For My Parents

Contents

- Note on the Translation
- Introduction
- Selected Bibliography

n Free Choice of the Will

- Book One
- Book Two
- Book Three

econsiderations

Note on the Translation

y aim in this translation has been to reproduce as faithfully as possible ugustine's meaning, emphasis, and sequence of thought. I have made no attempt o reproduce the polysyllabic splendor of Augustine's Latin; such weighty rhetoric s too much for the slender skeleton of contemporary English to bear. This ecision has frequently meant sacrificing some of Augustine's favorite rhetorical evices: for example, his habit of expressing arguments in the negative, and often n interrogative form; his tendency to apologize for metaphors by inserting an xpression like "as it were" or "in a certain sense"; and his repetitions for hetorical effect. In choosing between a literal but turgid translation and a freer ut crisper one, I have preferred the latter, provided always that the meaning and mphasis are preserved.

I have adopted gender-inclusive language only where it could be used without alling attention to itself. It would be the worst of anachronisms to make ugustine sound as if he had the same concerns about inclusiveness that we have owadays. In general, I have preferred 'human being' to 'man' in the generic ense. Where appropriate, I have also changed singular subjects to plural in order o allow the use of common-gender pronouns. Otherwise my usage is that of raditional English, in which the masculine bias is actually less pronounced than t is in Latin.

References to Scripture are given in accordance with the verse and chapter ivisions of the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

For the Latin text of *On Free Choice of the Will* I used the critical edition in the *orpus Christianorum: Series Latina,* volume 29, edited by W. M. Green (Turnhout, elgium: Brepols, 1970). Except for its surprisingly frequent typographical errors, his edition is the same as the one that appeared earlier in the *Corpus Scriptorum cclesiasticorum Latinorum.* I have adopted variant readings in two places: at page 56, line 22, for 'iuste videndum est' read 'iuste vivendum est'; and at page 276, ine 6, for 'bonum hominem' read 'primum hominem'. In addition, at page 308, ine 47, I have emended 'esse' to 'esset'.

For the Latin text of the *Reconsiderations* I used the critical edition from the ame series, volume 57, edited by Almut Mutzenbecher (1984). It should be note hat the quotations that appear in the *Reconsiderations* do not always correspond ord for word with the text that appears in *On Free Choice of the Will.*

I wish to thank Professor Alfred J. Freddoso of the University of Notre Dame, ithout whose encouragement I would not have undertaken this translation. And am especially grateful to Professor Paul Spade of Indiana University, who read he entire translation with painstaking care and great insight. To him I owe the limination of any number of errors and infelicities, and many helpful suggestions or improvement.

Introduction

espite its relative brevity, *On Free Choice of the Will* contains almost every istinctive feature of Augustine's philosophy. It presents the essentials of his thics, his theory of knowledge, and his views of God and human nature. It is herefore the ideal introduction to Augustine's thought for introductory courses nd surveys of medieval philosophy, where there is not time for a complete and etailed reading of longer works such as the *Confessions* and *The City of God.* But ts very richness makes it impossible for me to discuss in this brief introduction ven all of the more important aspects of this work. In what follows, therefore, I oncern myself chiefly with the two concepts that figure in the title: *freedom* and *he will.*

The word 'freedom' has many senses. One sort of freedom involves the absence f restraints. As long as the door is not locked, I am *free* (in this sense) to leave he room. We might call this *physical* freedom. Physical freedom means that there s nothing to hinder me from acting as I choose to act.

But suppose I live in a deterministic universe. Every choice I make is etermined by prior states of the universe, states over which I have no control. I ay still be physically free—no one has locked me up or tied me down—but it eems that I lack freedom in some stronger and more interesting sense. I am free o act as I choose, but my choices themselves are not free. The freedom to choose n a way that is not determined by anything outside my control is what I shall cal *etaphysical* freedom.

The view that human beings have metaphysical freedom is called libertarianism'. Libertarianism is no longer a popular view among philosophers, ost of whom think that at best we have only physical freedom. But Augustine as one of the great defenders of libertarianism; indeed, he was the first to rticulate the view clearly. According to Augustine, human beings are endowed ith a power that he calls the will. Augustine compares the will to the weight of n inanimate object. Just as a falling apple is carried to the ground by its weight, o a human being is carried to his goal (whatever that may be) by his will. But he analogy is deficient in one important respect. The falling apple has no say bout where its weight will take it. A human being, however, can use his will to o in a seemingly limitless variety of directions. This feature of the will Augustine alls *liberum arbitrium,* which can be translated as "freedom of decision" or (more sually) "free choice." Because it has free choice, the will, truly the captain of its oul, looks out over the vast sea of good things and sails wherever it pleases, lithely unaffected by the winds and waves of cause and effect that steer nthinking and unfree vessels. Thus, the will is not determined by any external actors. Only the will can determine itself to choose. This freedom is what allows s to be responsible for our actions; if outside forces beyond our control caused u o choose to act in a certain way, we could hardly be held responsible for acting n that way.

Thus far I have talked about being determined by *external* things. Some

gree," they might say, "that if our choices are caused by external forces, then hey are not our responsibility. But it is not external states that determine our hoices; it is *internal* states: beliefs, desires, states of character, and so on. And ince it is *my* desires and *my* character that determine *my* choices, my freedom is ot threatened."

A libertarian like Augustine would not be convinced by this sort of reasoning. hese philosophers still insist that my choices are determined; the fact that they re determined by internal rather than external factors is inconsequential. It is no etter to be a hand puppet than a marionette. Besides, to a libertarian, this view s just a dodge. To see why this is the case, suppose that I have made some choice hat was determined by my state of character at the time of the choice. Call that tate of character *S*. How did I acquire *S*? If we admit that determinism is true, w ust say that, given the laws of nature and the causal factors at work both inside nd outside me, *S* is the inevitable result of some prior state *R.* And how did I cquire *R*? It was the result of some prior state *Q*, which in turn was the result of ome prior state *P*, and so on. And thus we trace the causal chain back in time, ventually reaching a point before I was born. But how can I be responsible for hoices that are the assured causal results of states of the universe that existed efore I was born? For obviously I have no control over things that happened efore I was born. The fact that this causal chain eventually wormed its way nside me, so to speak, determining my choices from within, no longer seems to uarantee my freedom. It is with such considerations in mind that Augustine ejects the view (known as 'compatibilism') that determinism is compatible with uman freedom and moral responsibility; and since he is convinced that human eings are in fact free and responsible, he must reject determinism as well.

Because human beings have metaphysical freedom, we are capable of making a eal difference in the world. We do not merely play the parts that the laws of ature and the past history of the universe have written for us; to some extent at east, we write our own scripts. In this way we can truly be said to be in the mage of God, who created all things distinct from himself by a free and nconditioned act of the will. Like God, human beings can introduce genuine hange, can bring into being something that except for their free choice would ever have existed.

Unfortunately, this metaphysical freedom can be used—indeed, Augustine hinks that it *has* been used—to introduce evil into the world. The initial problem or Augustine in *On Free Choice of the Will* is whether God is the cause of this evil. uppose there is no metaphysical freedom. Then any evil that exists would be the nevitable and predictable result of the initial conditions of the universe (the state t was in at the very beginning) and the laws of nature (which are just the rules hat the universe follows in going from one state to the next). And it would be lausible to assign responsibility for that evil to whoever set up the initial onditions and the laws of nature. But of course that was God. And so Evodius sks at the beginning of Book One, "Isn't God the cause of evil?"

Augustine's answer is that human beings have metaphysical freedom, and so he blame for any evil action rests on the person who performed that action. But hen one might object, "If metaphysical freedom can lead to evil, then shouldn't od be blamed for giving it to us in the first place?" Augustine agrees that