

# Augustine on Predestination and Divine Simplicity: The Problem of Compatibility†

Narve Strand, 02/06/13

*The main aim of this article is to pinpoint and solve the problem of compatibility between Augustine's accounts of God-essence as one, and of God as a discriminative agent, or cause.*

## 1. Divine Simplicity

What does Augustine mean when he says God is simple (*simplex*)?<sup>1</sup> Briefly stated, Divine simplicity entails the complete absence in God of any distinction, variation, disproportion or inequality when the relation between the Persons is ignored.<sup>2</sup> To be *simplex* in the highest, most

† This is an edit of the published version. The page-numbering doesn't correspond.

---

<sup>1</sup> The following account of Divine simplicity is based on my treatment of the concept in *The God of Augustine* (Oslo, 1998), chapter 1.3. The Latin text is taken, unless otherwise indicated, from Sancti Aurelii Augustini Opera Omnia. Monachorum Ordinis Sancti Benedictini. Editio Parisina altera, emendata et aucta (Parisiis, 1836-38).

<sup>2</sup> *De ciu. Dei* XI, 10 (CCL): '*...ideo simplex dicitur, quoniam quod habet hoc est, excepto quod relatiue quaeque persona ad alteram dicitur... In quo ergo ad semet ipsum dicitur, non ad alterum, hoc est quod habet... Propter hoc itaque natura dicitur simplex, cui non sit aliquid habere, quod uel possit amittere... Secundum hoc ergo dicuntur illa simplicia, quae principaliter uereque diuina sunt, quod non aliud est in eis qualitas, aliud substantia, nec aliorum participatione uel diuina uel sapientia uel beata sunt.*'

true sense then accords with being absolutely one. This means that whatever God is, must be viewed as identical with Himself.

A) The first aspect of Divine simplicity, I choose to call the existential aspect: The Augustinian God is Existence, or Being Itself (*Ipsum Esse*), something which is co-extensive with being simple, but also with being immutable (*immutabilis/incommutabilis*), self-identical (*idipsum*), and permanent (*manens*).<sup>3</sup> Consequently, to exist is intrinsic to God (*habens in se ut sit*), for He is Himself the cause of Him existing (*ipse sibi causa existendi est*). He immutably exists and continues to do so in and through Himself (*per seipsum est; in se manens; permanendo in se*).<sup>4</sup>

B) The second aspect of Divine simplicity, I opt to call the attributive aspect: Being absolutely one<sup>5</sup>, no parts or qualities can be found in God.<sup>6</sup> Since He is not a composite being,<sup>7</sup> you can't conceive of Him as a substance which is the underlying subject of a multitude of distinct attributes.<sup>8</sup> Rather, that which God is (*quae Deus est*) is truly (*uere*) and

---

<sup>3</sup> *De ciu. Dei* XI, 10; *De Trin.* VI, 6, 8; *Enarr. in Ps.* CXXII, 5; CXXXIV, 4; *In Joann. Ev. tract.* II, 1-3; *Serm.* VII, 7.

<sup>4</sup> *Confess.* VII, 11, 17; *De Gen.ad litt.* V, 16, 34; *De imm. An.* I, 8; I, 11, 18; *De mor.eccl. Cath. et de mor. Man.* II, 4, 6; 6, 8; *Serm.* VI, 4; CXVII, 3.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *supra*.

<sup>6</sup> *Serm.* CCCXLI, 10: '... *quia non sunt in Deo partes... quia non sunt in Deo qualitates.*'

<sup>7</sup> *De util. cred.* I, 18, 36.

<sup>8</sup> *De ciu. Dei* XI, 10; *Confess.* IV, 16, 29; *De Trin.* VI, 1, 2; 7, 8; VII, 1, 2; 5, 10 (CCL): '*Deus autem si subsistit ut substantia proprie dici possit, inest in eo aliquid tamquam in subiecto, et non est simplex*'; XV, 5, 7-8.

properly (*proprie*) designated as 'essence' (*essentia*).<sup>9</sup>

The import of the foregoing, however, is not that attributes must be conceived as being basically inapplicable to essence, for Augustine himself advocates the possibility of essential predication.<sup>10</sup> But one must keep in mind that it's only possible to speak about God-essence in a positive way as long as the attributes are not conceived as introducing real multiplicity into the Divine nature. This introduction of multiplicity Augustine avoids by saying that God is what He has (*id quod habet est*).<sup>11</sup> What is meant by this formula is that all attributes whatsoever (*omnibusque omnino praedicamentis*) that can be predicated of God when He is properly (*proprie*) referred to in Himself (*ad se ipsum*), and not in a metaphorical sense (*non translate*) or by a comparison (*ac per similitudinem*), must be thought identical with *Ipsum Esse*,<sup>12</sup> identical in turn with *essentia*,<sup>13</sup> which equals '*Deus*'.<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, simplicity, immutability and self-identity also preclude any thought of Divine attributes being subject to any kind of variation.

---

<sup>9</sup> *De ciu. Dei* XII, 2; *De Trin.* V, 2, 3; VII, 5, 10 (CCL): '*Unde manifestum est Deum abusiue substantiam uocari ut nomine usitatore intellegatur essentia, quod uere ac proprie dicitur ita ut fortasse solum Deum dici oporteat essentiam... Sed tamen siue essentia dicatur quod proprie dicitur, siue substantia quod abusiue.*' For Augustine's inconsistent use of the term, see Strand (1998), ch. 1.2.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. e.g. *De Trin.* XV, 5, 7-8. See also *infra*.

<sup>11</sup> *In Joann. Ev. tract.* XCIX, 4. See also XLVIII, 6; *De ciu. Dei* XI, 10; *De Trin.* I, 12, 26.

<sup>12</sup> *De Trin.* VI, 7, 8.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* IV, preface.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* V, 10, 11. Cf. VIII, 3, 4; XIV, 12, 15; *C. Prisc. et Orig.* I, 10, 13; *De diu. quaest.* 23+24; *In Joann. Ev. tract.* XXXIX, 8; LI, 11; CXXIII. 2.

For since whatever God has is immutably identical with Himself, He cannot be said to have gained His attributes from some external source. (The notions of 'participation' and of 'sharing (in)' cannot be applied to God.)<sup>15</sup> Neither is He for the same reason able to appropriate new ones or disappropriate what He already has, for that would mean changing what He is. To say that God is equal in everything (*in omnibus aequalis*) on account of the highest simplicity (*propter summam simplicitatem*) which is in Essence<sup>16</sup> amounts to claiming the Divine attributes are all identical in an immutable sense, not only with Essence, but also with each other.<sup>17</sup>

C) This brings us to the third aspect of Divine simplicity, which I call the aspect of activity: While it's true that we use many different words concerning God, we must never forget that the thing, or reality itself is one (*res ... una est*).<sup>18</sup> So when we say that God exists (*est*), that He is living (*uiuus*), wise (*sapiens*), powerful (*potens*), blessed (*beatus*), good (*bonus*), just (*iustus*) and so on,<sup>19</sup> we cannot claim on Augustinian premises that these attributes, or activities, are really distinct either from

---

<sup>15</sup> *De ciu. Dei* XI, 10; *De Trin.* V, 10, 11.

<sup>16</sup> *De Trin.* VI, 5, 7.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* VIII, 1, 2; *Serm.* CCCXLI, 10: '*... hoc idem dicis... idem sunt ... idem valent.*' Cf. also CCCXLI, 8 *et passim*.

<sup>18</sup> *De Trin.* VI, 7, 8; XV, 5, 8; *Serm.* CCCXLI, 8+10.

<sup>19</sup> *C. Faust. Man.* XX, 8; *De Trin.* V, 10, 11; VI, 1, 2; 7, 8; VIII, 1, 2; XV, 5, 7-8; 6, 9; 13, 22; *In Ioann. Eu. tract.* XCIX, 4; *Serm.* CCCXLI, 8+10.

each other or from the Godhead.<sup>20</sup> For in Him justice is the same as goodness (*iustitia ipsa bonitas*); He Himself *is* Justice, Goodness, as well as will (*uoluntas*), power (*uirtus*), omnipotence (*omnipotentia*), omniscience (*omniscientia*), wisdom (*sapientia*)—all essential attributes related to activity are identical with the Divine Self.<sup>21</sup>

## 2. Predestination

I will now proceed to treat briefly of Augustine's theory of predestination. In so doing, I'll focus on his mature view developed in his last writings, notably the *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, *De correptione et gratia*, *De praedestinatione sanctorum* and *De dono perseuerantiae*. My exposition of predestination aims to show that Augustine's way of thinking about the issue here involves viewing God as an ultimate discriminative agent, or cause. I will try to establish this by framing my exposition according to the Divine attributes of goodness (*bonitas*), justice (*iustitia*) and mercy (*miser cordia*).

### A) Goodness

The Deity is immutably good. He is therefore not able to sin or in any positive sense to will evil.<sup>22</sup> Further, since He is omnipotent, nothing can

---

<sup>20</sup> *De Trin.* XV, 5, 7-8.

<sup>21</sup> *Confess.* VII, 4, 6 (CCL): '*uoluntas et potentia Dei Deus ipse est*'; XI, 10, 12; XII, 15, 18; *De Trin.* V, 10, 11; XV, 5, 7. See also *supra*.

<sup>22</sup> *De nat. et grat.* I, 57,49; *Enchir.* I, 101; *Ep.* CCXXVIII; *In Ioann. Eu. tract.* LIII, 9; LXXXIV, 2;

resist what He wills.<sup>23</sup> Consequently, the good and omnipotent God created all things good (*omnia bona*).<sup>24</sup> But although every creature qua created is good, it is not immutably so, for having been created by God out of nothing (*ex/de nihilo*), it's inherently mutable (*mutabilis*),<sup>25</sup> which is consonant with possessing the metaphysical possibility of authoring moral evil.<sup>26</sup> This inherent possibility is, however, not of itself sufficient to bring moral evil about. According to the Bishop there is only one viable answer that can be given if we look for a sufficient cause, and that is the free choice of the rational creature.

Man—i.e., the concrete historical human beings called Adam and Eve—was created by God both good and upright in the beginning. They were given Divine aid, as well as full freedom of choosing either to remain in goodness, receiving eternal life as a reward, or to choose evil by turning away from God, the Supreme Good (*summum Bonum*).<sup>27</sup>

*Serm. CCXIII, 2.* God does not possess the freedom of indifference, i.e. of choosing between good and evil ('*Nam, si, ut dicis, boni malique uoluntarii possibilitas sola libertas est, non habet libertatem Deus*' (*Op. imp. c. Iul. VI, 11*).

<sup>23</sup> *Enchir. I, 96; Serm. CCCXCVIII, 2/De symb. ad catech. I, 2: 'nemo resistit omnipotenti, ut non quod uult.'*

<sup>24</sup> *Confess. XII, 7, 7. Cf. also De Gen. ad litt. IV, 16, 27; Enarr. in Ps. CXXXIV, 3.*

<sup>25</sup> *Confess. XII, 17, 25 (CCL):'...uerum tamen quia non de ipsa substantia Dei, sed ex nihilo cuncta facta sunt, quia non sunt id ipsum, quod Deus, et inest quaedam mutabilitas omnibus'; De ciu. Dei XII, 1 (CCL): '... uerum tamen mutabilia, quod non de illo, sed de nihilo facta sunt.'*

<sup>26</sup> *De nat. boni I, 10; Enchir. I, 23.*

<sup>27</sup> *De ciu. Dei XIV, 27; De correptione et gratia I, 6, 9; 10, 28; 11, 31; 11, 32: 'Namque ut reciperet bonum, gratia non egebat, quia nondum perdidit: ut autem in eo permaneret, iugebat adiutorio gratiae, sine quo id omnino non posset ... liberum erat, ut bene uelle posset et male'; 12, 33; Enchir. I, 105+106. This gratuitous help was a sine qua non (*De correptione et gratia I, 12, 34+37*).*

They freely and knowingly chose the latter.<sup>28</sup> Although God qua omniscient and omnipotent foreknew that the human being would transgress, and possessed the power to prevent it, He willingly and knowingly allowed it to happen.<sup>29</sup> But this foreknowledge and willing permission cannot be causative in the active, sufficient sense.<sup>30</sup> Only the evil choice itself can be sufficient to bring evil about.<sup>31</sup> It is therefore vain to accuse God of being the author of moral evil.

---

<sup>28</sup> *C. lul.* V, 1, 3; *De correp. et grat.* I, 10, 28: '*... per liberum arbitrium Deum deseruit*'; *De lib. arb.*; *Enchir.* I, 26; 104.

<sup>29</sup> *De correp. et grat.* I, 12, 37: '*Deo quidem praesciente quid esset facturus iniuste; praesciente tamen, non ad hoc cogente: sed simul sciente quid de illo ipse faceret iuste*' ; *De grat. et lib. arb.* I, 20, 41.

<sup>30</sup> *De praedest. sanct.* I, 10, 19: '*Praescire autem potens est etiam quae ipse non facit; sicut quaecumque peccata . . . non ibi peccatum Dei est, sed iudicium.*' What God foreknows happens of necessity. Nothing can happen otherwise than He has foreknown (*De lib. arb.* III, 2, 4). God is however not the cause of evil, since He Himself is not the cause of everything He knows. So God does not compel future events to happen by His foreknowledge (*ibid.*, III, 4, 11). If man had willed not to sin, God would have foreknown that too (*De ciu. Dei* V, 10).

<sup>31</sup> God has not compelled man to sin by creating and giving him the power of choosing (*De lib. arb.* III, 5, 14). Man was not forced by necessity of nature, or by chance or Fortune to sin. That contradicts both freedom and the reality of Divine Providence (*ibid.* III, 1, 2; 2, 5; 4, 9). While it's true that man sinned by consenting to the persuasion of the devil, this does not make the sin necessary; for to heed to persuasion is voluntary (*ibid.* III, 10, 29+31). There's nothing above (God), equal to (other wills) or below (non-rational entities or events) the human will that can force it to act unjustly (*ibid.* III, 1, 2; 4, 9). God is the cause of being (*causa essendi*) only (*De div. quaest.* XXI). A wrong choice has no efficient cause beyond itself (*De ciu. Dei* XII, 7). The will itself is the defective cause (*causa deficiendi*) of evil (*ibid.*). Rather than being a positively existing thing, evil is a privation of good (*privatio boni*) (*De ciu. Dei* XI, 17; 22). Moral evil is consonant with a voluntary movement of the will away from the Supreme Good and towards non-being (*ibid.*; *De div. quaest.* XXII). Only the evil choice itself, then, can be the sufficient cause of moral evil.

## B) Justice

Augustine believed that to claim God ought not to punish sins is to charge Him with being unjust—which is totally unacceptable.<sup>32</sup> The Augustinian God first of all displayed His just punishment in allowing the sin itself to occur; for sin is its own punishment.<sup>33</sup> Secondly, He justly punishes the whole of mankind in and through their representatives Adam and Eve with universal condemnation—unless pardoned—and with subjection to natural evils.<sup>34</sup> Every human being born after the first human beings inherits the guilt of original sin, something which alone makes him deserving of eternal condemnation. Everyone born into the world is further burdened by ignorance and a corrupted will, something

---

<sup>32</sup> *De grat. et lib. arb.* 1, 23, 45: '*Reddet omnino Deus et mala pro malis, quoniam iustus est*'; *De praedest. sanct.* I, 8, 16: '*... qui tamen aliquid iniustum uelle non potuit*'; *Enarr. in Ps. XLV*, 18. God would truly be unjust if He did not punish such a heinous sin committed in freedom and with knowledge of the consequences (cf. *De lib. arb.* III, 4, 10; 9, 26; *De nat. boni* I, 9, 20).

<sup>33</sup> *Enchir.* I, 96.

<sup>34</sup> *De An. et ei. orig.* IV, 11, 16; *De correptione et gratia* I, 10, 28: '*Quia uero per liberum arbitrium Deum deseruit, iustum iudicium Dei expertus est, et cum tota sua stirpe, quae in illo adhuc posita tota cum illo peccauerat, damnaretur*'; *De dono pers.* I, 2, 4. It is not that the descendants Adam and Eve themselves ate of the tree (*C. Iul.* I, 6, 27). For these, therefore, the original sin is not personal (*ibid.* III, 19, 37). But although the original sin is the first man's by right of ownership, it is ours by means of contagion of offspring (*ibid.* VI, 10, 28). For this sin, and its guilt, has been transmitted to their posterity (except Christ) by propagation (*ibid.* II, 10, 33; III, 26, 66; V, 15, 54+57; VI, 14, 44). So in effect the whole of mankind (except Christ) undergoes punishment for the sin of another (*ibid.* III, 5, 12; V, 15, 54+57). (To Augustine, God is just in punishing all the descendants of the first men (except Christ) since the sin - and its guilt - has become ours by means of contagion of offspring. Also because human nature was represented in Adam and Eve.) This is only remitted by the grace of God, through the blood of Christ, and in baptism (*ibid.* III, 26, 63; VI, 1, 3+4; 14, 44).

which makes him incapable of returning to the Supreme Good solely by his own efforts.<sup>35</sup> The human being will never attain union with the Divine without the latter's prior salvific initiative.

### C) Mercy

According to Augustine, God would have been just even if He had saved no one.<sup>36</sup> And certainly so God would have done, had He been just only and not also merciful (*non si etiam misericors esset*).<sup>37</sup> But while the Divine attribute of goodness is extended universally to every creature qua created, and justice requires the punishment of every sin, the mercy of God which isn't applied universally. For relatively speaking, Augustine tells us, only a few members of the human race will be saved by mercy and grace (*gratia*): The rest will be condemned by Divine justice.<sup>38</sup>

That it is God, and not man, who is the ultimate discriminative cause related to mercy and grace, Augustine substantiates by pointing

---

<sup>35</sup> *De correptione et gratia*. I, 11, 31; *De dono pers.* I, 2, 4; 11, 27 (*Retract.* I, 20): '*ad quam miseriam iustae damnationis perinet ignorantia et difficultas, quam patitur omnis homo ab exordio natiuitatis suae; nec ab isto malo liberatur quisquam, nisi Dei gratia*'; *De praedest. sanct.* I, 2, 5: '*... nemo sibi sufficit ad incipiendum uel perficiendum quodcumque opus bonum ... nemo sibi sufficit uel ad incipiendam uel ad perficiendam*', *Enchir.* I, 99.

<sup>36</sup> *De correptione et gratia*. I, 10, 28: '*Unde etiamsi nullus liberaretur, iustum Dei iudicium nemo iuste reprehenderet*'; *De dono pers.* I, 8, 16; *De praedest. sanct.* I, 8, 16; *Enchir.* I, 25; 27; 94; 95; 98; 99.

<sup>37</sup> *Enarr. in Ps.* LV, 18; *Enchir.* I, 27.

<sup>38</sup> *C. Iul.* IV, 8, 42; *De correptione et gratia*. I, 9, 21: '*... ex multitudine vocatorum: ex electorum autem paucitate*'; 9, 25; 10, 28: '*... Quod ergo pauci in comparatione pereuntium, in suo uero numero multi liberantur, gratia fit, gratis fit*'; *Enchir.* I, 97.

to the case of infants. Since infants possess neither operative reason nor a free will, they are unable to incur personal sin or merit.<sup>39</sup> Infants are bound solely by the guilt inherited from Adam.<sup>40</sup> Consequently, they fail to display a kind of relative difference which might constitute the basis for discrimination.<sup>41</sup> Rather, it is God who distinguishes in that He in His mercy chooses to Himself one infant to salvation, and in His justice abandons the other to eternal punishment.<sup>42</sup> This conclusion is further made viable by the fact that Augustine thinks it absurd and abhorrent to Christian feeling to base God's gratuitous discrimination on His foreknowledge of their potential (mis)deeds.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>39</sup> *De grat. et lib. arb.* I, 22, 44: 'de paruulis... quorum nec uoluntas ulla est in accipienda gratia, cuius uoluntatis meritum praecessisse dicant... apertissime nullo bono merito praecedente, alioquin gratia iam non esset gratia.'

<sup>40</sup> *De dono pers.* I, 9, 23.

<sup>41</sup> *De An. et ei. orig.* IV, 11, 16; *De dono pers.* I, 17, 25: 'sicut duorum geminorum, quorum unus assumitur, unus relinquitur, dispar est exitus, merita communia': 12, 31: 'Neque enim fato cogitur Deus illis infantibus subuenire, illis autem non subuenire; cum sit utrisque causa communis'; *De praedest. sanct.* I, 12, 23: '... ubi uenitur ad paruulos... omnis deficit praecedentium gratiam Dei humanorum assertio meritorum: quia nec illi ullis bonis praecedentibus meritis discernuntur a caeteris, ut pertineant ad liberatorem hominum'; *Enchir.* I, 95; 98.

<sup>42</sup> *De dono pers.* I, 11, 25+27; *De grat. et lib. arb.* I, 23, 45; *De praedest. sanct.* I, 14, 29: '...Dei manifestissimam gratiam: quae maxime apparet in paruulis; quorum cum alii baptizati, alii non baptizati vitae huius terminum sumunt, satis indicant misericordiam et iudicium; misericordiam quidem gratuitam, iudicium debitum'; *Enchir.* I, 95. Augustine thinks baptism and membership in the Catholic Church are necessary (not sufficient) for the salvation of the individual (cf. *De correptione et gratia* I, 8, 19; *De dono pers.* I, 2, 4; *De natura et gratia* I, 4, 4; *Ep. LXXIII*, 21 (where he quotes Cyprian's dictum: *Salus extra ecclesiam non est*)).

<sup>43</sup> *De dono pers.* I, 9, 22; 9, 23: '...non est cur dicatur de infantibus qui pereunt sine Baptismate morientes, hoc in eis eo merito fieri, quia praesciuit eos Deus, si uiuerent, praedicatumque illis fuisset Evangelium, infideliter audituros. Restat igitur ut solo peccato originali teneantur obstricti, et propter hoc solum eant in damnationem; quod uidemus aliis eandem habentibus causam, non nisi per Dei gratuitam gratiam regeneratione donari'; 12, 31; 13, 32.

The condition of human beings with will and operative reason is basically the same as that of infants. For although they differ in that they through developed powers both have added personal sins and are able to respond freely to grace, it is still Divine gratuity which constitutes the ultimate discriminative cause.<sup>44</sup> For merit was lost through Adam,<sup>45</sup> and grace is therefore not conferred according to distinctive merit foreknown, it is a gift which *creates* meritorious distinction.<sup>46</sup> (To deny this, Augustine tells us, is consonant with denying grace itself.)<sup>47</sup> Further, the will of man is insufficient to will what is good, as well as to remain in it.<sup>48</sup> So, before or without the aid of Divine grace, there exist meritorious differences between men only in a negative sense. But since grace creates merits, neither such differences, nor potential ones, can form the basis of

---

<sup>44</sup> *De ciu. Dei* XIV, 26-27; *De correptione et gratia* I, 7, 12: 'Discernuntur autem non meritis suis, sed per gratiam Mediatoris ... ab illa perditionis massa quae facta est per primum Adam, debemus intelligere neminem posse discerni, nisi qui hoc donum habet'; *Enchiridion* I, 99; *Epistola* CCXVII.

<sup>45</sup> *De praedestinatione sanctorum* I, 15, 31.

<sup>46</sup> *De correptione et gratia* I, 7, 13; *De dono personarum* I, 2, 4; 16, 41; 19, 49; *De gratia et libero arbitrio* I, 6, 13: '...gratiam Dei non secundum merita nostra dari: quandoquidem non solum nullis bonis, uerum etiam multis meritis malis praecedentibus uidemus datam, et quotidie dari videmus. Sed plane cum data fuerit, incipiunt esse etiam merita nostra bona, per illam tamen'; 18, 38 (cf. *John* 15, 16); 22, 55; *De praedestinatione sanctorum* I, 7, 11: 'Gratis ergo consecuta est, quod consecuta est electio: non praecessit eorum aliquid, quod priores darent, et retribuere illis: pro nihilo salvos fecit eos'; 10, 19.

<sup>47</sup> See e.g. *De dono personarum* I, 20, 53 '...Pelagiani discunt Gratiam Dei secundum merita nostra dari... quod quid est aliud quam gratiae omnino negatio?'

<sup>48</sup> *De praedestinatione sanctorum* I, 3, 7: 'Quia neque uelle possumus, nisi uocemur: et cum post uocationem uoluerimus, non sufficit uoluntas nostra, et cursus noster, nisi Deus et uires currentibus praebeat, et perducat quo uocat.'

God's gratuitous bestowal.<sup>49</sup> This being the case, predestination (*praedestinatio*) must be preached.<sup>50</sup>

In the *Enchiridion*, *De anima et eius origine* and *De ciuitate Dei*, Augustine endorses double predetermination explicitly, speaking also of a predestination to eternal punishment, death and fire.<sup>51</sup> In his last works, however, predestination is mentioned only in relation to the election of the saints.<sup>52</sup> At this final stage he also equates predestination with foreknowledge (*praescientia*).<sup>53</sup> But this type of prescience is, contrary to God's foreknowledge of the original sin, causative in the active discriminative sense.<sup>54</sup> For Augustine remains adamant in rejecting the notion that the bestowal of Divine grace (or His just condemnation) should be based on God foreknowing the future merits of free will.<sup>55</sup> Rather, predestinative knowledge is related to God

<sup>49</sup> *De dono pers.* I, 11, 25; *De grat. et lib. arb.* I, 21, 43: 'Gratia uero non secundum merita hominum datur, alioquin gratia iam non est gratia (cf. Rom. 11, 6): quia ideo gratia vocatur, quia gratis datur.'

<sup>50</sup> *De dono pers.* I, 21, 54.

<sup>51</sup> *De an. et ejus orig.* IV, 11, 16; *De civ. Dei* XV, 1; XXI, 24; XXII, 24; *Enchir.* I, 100. In *De correptione et gratia* I, 7, 14, dealing with the twelve original apostles, Augustine informs us that Judas was elected by judgment, the rest by mercy.

<sup>52</sup> See e.g. *De correptione et gratia* I, 9, 25; *De dono pers.* I, 14, 35: '...praedestinatio sanctorum. Caeteri autem ubi nisi in massa perditionis iusto diuino iudicio relinquuntur? ... a perditionis massa non sunt gratiae praedestinatione discreti ... praedestinati non erant ab eo.' Cf. also *infra*.

<sup>53</sup> *De dono pers.* I, 14, 35 'Haec est praedestinatio sanctorum, nihil aliud: praescientia scilicet, et praeparatio beneficiorum Dei'; 18, 47; *De praedest. sanct.* I, 10, 19.

<sup>54</sup> *De dono pers.* I, 16, 42: '...praedicatione praedestinationis Dei, hoc est, praedicatione de his donis eius futuris praescientiae Dei... praecognita, id est, ad donandum praedestinata esse dicantur'; *De praedest. sanct.* 18, 36.

<sup>55</sup> *De dono pers.* I, 9, 22-23; *De praedest. sanct.* I, 12, 24: 'Quis enim audiat, quod dicuntur

foreknowing His *own* salvific acts.<sup>56</sup>

God's predestinative foreknowledge is elective and aseitous, related to Divine will, love, purpose, grace, good pleasure—to choice in His beloved Son before the foundation of the world.<sup>57</sup> God's prescience is distinguished from grace in that while the former is identified with God mercifully foreknowing His own discriminative action, the latter is co-extensive with this action itself.<sup>58</sup> The number of saints has been fixed by the Deity.<sup>59</sup> If one has been chosen, God sees to it that man's will is inwardly prepared, converted, strengthened and sustained to the end by

---

*paruuli pro suis futuris meritis in ipsa infantili aetate baptizati exire de hac vita; et ideo alii non baptizati in eadem aetate mori, quia et ipsorum praescita sunt merita futura, sed mala; non eorum uitam bonam uel malam Deo remunerante uel damnante, sed nullam? ... ludicari autem quemquam non secundum merita quae habuit quamdiu fuit in corpore, sed secundum merita quae fuerat habiturus si diutius uixisset in corpore, unde opinari potuerint homines ... mirans et stupens reperire non possum'; 12, 24; 17, 34; 18, 35-38; 20, 53; 21, 56. Christ is the most illustrious example of predestination and unmerited grace. For the assumption of human nature into one person with the word is wholly by grace; God predestined Him as well as us (*De dono pers.* I, 24, 67; *De praedest. sanct.* I, 15, 30+31).*

<sup>56</sup> *De dono pers.* I, 16, 41: '*Namque in sua quae falli mutarique non potest praescientia, opera sua futura disponere, id omnino, nec aliud quidquam est praedestinare*'; 17, 47.

<sup>57</sup> *De dono pers.* I, 12, 28; 14, 35; 18, 47; 24, 66; *De praedest. sanct.* I, 3, 7; 9, 18; 17, 34; 18, 35-37; 19, 38. Cf. Ephesians 1, 3-4.

<sup>58</sup> *De dono pers.* I, 21, 54; *De predest. sanct.* I, 10, 19: '*Inter gratiam porro et praedestinationem hoc tantum interest, quod praedestinatio est gratiae praeparatio, gratia uero iam ipsa donatio... praedestinatio est, quae sine praescientia non potest esse: potest autem esse sine praedestinatione praescientia. Praedestinatione quippe Deus ea praesciuit, quae fuerat ipse facturus... Praescire autem potens est etiam quae ipse non facit; sicut quaecumque peccata... Quocirca praedestinatio Dei quae in bono est, gratiae est, ut dixi, praeparatio: gratia uero est ipsius praedestinationis effectus.*'

<sup>59</sup> *De correptione et gratia.* I, 13, 39: '*Haec de his loquor, qui praedestinati sunt in regnum Dei, quorum ita certus est numerus, ut nec addatur eis quisquam, nec minuat ex eis... Certum uero esse numerum electorum, neque augendum neque minuendum.*'

His unmerited mercy and grace<sup>60</sup>—making him fulfill what He himself has commanded and attain the Kingdom.<sup>61</sup> To those, by contrast, who have not been predestined according to the purpose, and who don't belong to the most certain and blessed number, Divine judgment is exacted. These either do not receive grace at all, or they receive it only for a while.<sup>62</sup>

The salvation of the elect is orchestrated by the Augustinian God inflexibly from eternity, not only by direct action in the grace given through His Son, and in the Holy Spirit, but also by the providential management of created agency and temporal events.<sup>63</sup> For since everything in the created order takes place either according to God's

---

<sup>60</sup> *De correptione et gratia*. I, 6, 10; 8, 17; 8, 19; 13, 40; *De dono pers.* I, 6, 10: '*...quae si data est, perseueratum est usque in finem; si autem non est perseueratum usque in finem, non est data ... nullus amittere*'; 16, 43; 20, 53; 22, 58: '*Quamuis ergo ita se habeat de praedestinatione definita sententia uoluntatis Dei, ut alii ex infidelitate, accepta uoluntate obediendi, conuertantur ad fidem, uel perseuerent in irrdie*'; 24, 66; *De praedest. sanct.* I, 11, 22; 16, 32; 19, 39; *Enchir.* I, 98.

<sup>61</sup> *De dono pers.* I, 2, 5; 3, 6; 10, 19; *De gratia et lib. arb.* I, 9, 21: '*...quia eius miseratione bona operamur, quibus corona redditur.*'

<sup>62</sup> *De correptione et gratia*. I, 7, 16: '*Qui uero perseueraturi non sunt, ac sic a fide christiana et conuersatione lapsuri sunt ... Non enim sunt a massa illa perditionis praescientia Dei et praedestinatione discreti; et ideo nec secundum propositum vocati*' ; 9, 20: '*...Nec nos moueat, quod filiis suis quibusdam Deus non dat istam perseuerantiam*'; 13, 42: '*... hi ergo qui non pertinent ad istum certissimum et felicissimum numerum, pro meritis iustissime iudicantur*'; *De dono pers.* I, 6, 10; 22, 58: '*... caeteri uero qui in peccatorum damnabilium delectatione remorantur, si et ipsi praedestinati sunt, ideo nondum surrexerunt, quia nondum eos adiutorium gratiae miserantis erexit . . . si qui autem obediunt, sed in regnum eius et gloriam praedestinati non sunt, temporales sunt, nec usque in finem eadem obedientia permanebunt*'; *De praedest. sanct.* I, 6, 11: '*...Sed cum aliis praeparetur, aliis non praeparetur uoluntas a Domino*'; 8, 16: '*Fides igitur, et inchoata, et perfecta, donum Dei est: et hoc donum quibusdam dari, quibusdam non dari, omnino non dubitet, qui non uult manifestissimis sacris Litteris repugnare*'; *Enchir.* I, 98.

willing permission (*sinendi*) or by His ordering (*iubendi*);<sup>64</sup> and since God possesses the exclusive prerogative of giving the power of all accomplishment (*potestatem uolentibus*),<sup>65</sup> He is able to steer temporal events and created agency so that the saint receives all things necessary for his salvation (the gospel, baptism, introduction into the Catholic Church),<sup>66</sup> as well as benefit from the acts of good and wicked alike.<sup>67</sup> Those, by contrast, who are condemned by Divine justice either won't receive what is necessary for salvation, or they will receive and be exposed to it, but not benefit from it.<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>63</sup> *De dono pers.* I, 12, 31; *De grat. et lib. arb.* I, 21, 42: 'Agit enim Omnipotens in cordibus hominum etiam motum uoluntatis eorum, ut per eos agat quod per eos agere ipse uoluerit, qui omnino iniuste aliquid uelle non nouit.'

<sup>64</sup> *De dono pers.* I, 6, 12: 'Nihil enim fit, nisi quod aut ipse facit, aut fieri ipse permittit. Potens ergo est, et a malo in bonum flectere uoluntates, et in lapsum pronas conuertere, ac dirigere in sibi placitum gressum'; *De praedest. sanct.* I, 19, 41: 'Agit quippe Deus quod uult in cordibus hominum, uel adiuuando, uel iudicando, ut etiam per eos impleatur quod manus eius et consilium praedestinavit fieri'; *Enchir.* I, 100.

<sup>65</sup> *De ciu. Dei* V, 9-10; XXI, 6; *De correptione et gratia* I, 8, 18; *Enchir.* I, 100.

<sup>66</sup> *De correptione et gratia* I, 7, 13 'Quicumque ergo ab illa originali damnatione ista diuinae gratiae largitate discreti sunt, non est dubium quod et procuratur eis audiendum Euangelium; et cum audiunt, credunt; et in fide quae per dilectionem operatur, usque in finem perseverant; etsi quando exorbitant, correpti emendantur... Haec enim omnia operatur in eis, qui uasa misericordiae operatus est eos, qui et elegit eos in Filio suo, ante constitutionem mundi per electionem gratiae'; *De praedest. sanct.* I, 16, 33.

<sup>67</sup> *De grat. et lib. arb.* I, 20, 41: 'Ecce quomodo probatur, Deum uti cordibus etiam malorum ad laudem atque adiumentum bonorum. Sic usus est Iuda tradente Christum ...'; *De praedest. sanct.* I, 16, 33; *Enchir.* I, 100.

<sup>68</sup> *De correptione et gratia* I, 7, 13; 12, 36: 'Ipse igitur eos facit perseverare in bono, qui facit bonos. Qui autem cadunt et pereunt, in praedestinatorum numero non fuerunt'; *De praedest. sanct.* I, 8, 15: 'Cum igitur Euangelium praedicatur, quidam credunt, quidam non credunt: sed qui credunt praedicatore forinsecus insonante, intus a Patre audiunt atque discunt; qui autem non credunt, foris audiunt, intus non audiunt neque discunt: hoc est, illis datur ut credant, illis

One might get the impression from the foregoing that both salvation and condemnation are wrought by God against, or even without, the human will. This is not the case. First of all, being forced to will (*cogi uelle*) is a contradiction in terms: When we will or act, it is we who do so; not another, be it God or man.<sup>69</sup> So when Augustine says, for instance, that grace works irresistibly upon the will to will and choose what is good, he is careful to deny that the transformation (or persevering) occurs by painful duress, or without the eventual will and express choice of the human being herself.<sup>70</sup> Likewise, he who is unable to persevere until the end falls by his own will and choice.<sup>71</sup> Although not always good, the will of man is always free.<sup>72</sup> Rather than destroying freedom, grace establishes true freedom in goodness.<sup>73</sup>

---

*non datur*'; *Enchir.* I, 100.

<sup>69</sup> *C. Iul. op. imp.*, I, 101: 'Si enim cogitur, non uult'; *De dono pers.* I, 22, 58; 22, 60; *De grat. et lib. Arb.*, 16, 32: 'certum est nos uelle, cum uolumus... certum est nos facere, cum facimus'; 17, 33; *De praedest. sanct.* I, 3, 7.

<sup>70</sup> *De correptione et gratia*, I, 14, 43 '... Deus... cui uolenti sarlum facere nullum hominum resistit arbitrium'; *De dono pers.* I, 7, 15; *De praedest. sanct.* I, 8, 13: 'Haec itaque gratia, quae occulte humanis cordibus diuina largitate tribuitur, a nullo duro corde respuitur. Ideo quippe tribuitur, ut cordis duritia primitus auferatur ... Sic quippe facit filios promissionis, et uasa misericordiae quae praeparavit in gloriam'; *Serm.* CXXXI, 2.

<sup>71</sup> *De dono pers.* I, 8, 19: 'Uoluntate autem sua cadit, qui cadit.'

<sup>72</sup> *De grat. et lib. arb.* I, 15, 31: 'semper est autem in nobis uoluntas libera, sed non semper est bona. Aut enim a iustitia libera est, quando seruit peccato, et tunc est mala: aut a peccato libera est, quando seruit iustitiae, et tunc est bona.'

<sup>73</sup> *De correptione et gratia*, I, 8, 17: '...uoluntas quipped humana non libertate consequitur gratiam, sed gratia potius libertatem, et ut perseueret delectabilem perpetuitatem, et insuperabilem fortitudinem'; *De grat. et lib. arb.* I, 20, 41: '...gratiam Dei... qua uoluntas humana non tollitur, sed ex mala mutatur in bonam, et cum bona fuerit adiuuatur.'

But it is still true to say that free will plays only a secondary role in the fearsome spectacle orchestrated by the Augustinian God. For the Augustinian God, who created all things good, and who foreknew that evil things would rise out of good, judged it better to do good out of evil things by His omnipotence rather than not allow evil things to be at all. He ordained the life of angels and men that He might first show what their free will was capable of, and then the kindness of His grace and the judgment of His righteousness.<sup>74</sup>

After the fall of the first Adam, humans lost their *freedom of indifference*, of choosing between good and evil.<sup>75</sup> Their will being insufficient to attain to goodness, having but the *freedom of spontaneity*, they're able only to choose and accomplish according to God's aforementioned pre-election and management.<sup>76</sup> In this sense, they cannot make a difference by themselves; they must be *made* to differ from each other by God's mercy, predestination and grace.<sup>77</sup> God has

---

<sup>74</sup> *De corrept. et grat.* I, 10, 27.

<sup>75</sup> *Enchir.* I, 30.

<sup>76</sup> *De corrept. et grat.* I, 2, 4; 11, 31; 12, 38; *De dono pers.* I, 2, 5; 7, 13: '*...non discedamus a Deo non ostendit dandum esse nisi a Deo, cum poscendum ostendit a Deo... Non est hoc omnino in uiribus liberi arbitrii... Post casum autem hominis, non nisi ad gratiam suam Deus uoluit pertinere, ut homo accedat ad eum; neque nisi ad gratiam suam uoluit pertinere, ut homo non recedat ab eo*'; 8, 19; 13, 33; 22, 62; 22, 64; *De grat. et lib. arb.* I, 16, 32; 17, 33; *De praedest. sanct.* I, 3, 7; 18, 37. We have seen above that the first humans were given grace as a *sine qua non*, i.e. although not able to choose good without it, they had the choice of either persevering in it or not. The predestined saints, by contrast, cannot help *but* persevere (*non nisi perseuerantes sint*) (*De corrept. et grat.* I, 12, 34; 12, 37).

<sup>77</sup> *De corrept. et grat.* I, 9, 25: '*...facturo Deo aut misericordiam, aut iudicium: misericordiam quidem, si a massa perditionis ille qui corripitur, gratiae largitate discretus est, et non est inter*

mercy on whom He wills, giving good things and remitting guilt; and whom He wills He gives recompense as deserved.<sup>78</sup> Not, then, in the created realm in general, or man in particular, is the discriminative aspect related to salvation ultimately to be found but within the Deity alone.<sup>79</sup>

### 3. The Problem

If we proceed to compare the account of Divine simplicity with that of predestination, we find they seem mutually exclusive. The core of the problem is as follows: The Divine attributes of 'goodness,' 'justice' and 'mercy' are thought by Augustine to have the same value, to be identical both with each other and with God. This being the case, how can it be possible for the Deity to act discriminatively, disproportionately? For isn't the identity between goodness, justice and mercy severed when not applied with equal universality *ad extra*? If justice requires punishing all in the first Adam, why doesn't Divine mercy entail saving all in the second Adam (Christ)? Indeed, why not, when the initiative lies wholly

---

*uasa irae quae perfecta sunt in perditionem, sed inter uasa misericordiae quae praeparavit Deus in gloriam (Rom. 9, 22-23); iudicium uero, si in illis est damnatus, in his non est praedestinatus.'*

<sup>78</sup> *De correptione et gratia*. I, 13, 41; *De dono pers.* I, 8, 16; *De praedest. sanct.* I, 8, 14.

<sup>79</sup> *De dono pers.* I, 9, 21; *De praedest. sanct.* I, 5, 10: '*...A quo, nisi ab illo qui te discernit ab alio... gratia Dei... quae bonos discernit a malis, non quae communis est bonis et malis... Illa itaque natura, in qua nobis data est possibilitas habendi fidem, non discernit ab homine hominem: ipsa uero fides discernit ab infideli fidelem... non quia credere uel non credere non est in arbitrio uoluntatis humanae, sed in electis praeparatur uoluntas a Domino.'*

with God, and when there's no relative difference between humans to serve as a basis for discrimination?

The African Bishop himself denies that God in fact wills the salvation of all men.<sup>80</sup> Moreover, he maintains that the reason for the direct and indirect discriminative action of God related to the individual, cannot — *must* not be inquired into.<sup>81</sup> That, however, does not mean that where human reason can find no discernible cause, God acts unjustly, irrationally or without reason (*sine ratione*): Augustine insists the hidden determinations of God shall be revealed in the next life.<sup>82</sup> Finally, although one cannot in this life know why God has chosen

---

<sup>80</sup> Augustine is very creative in his attempts at explaining away 1 Tim. 2. 4. Now it's a fact, he informs us, that not all, not even a majority, are saved: Just look at all infants that are not adopted by His grace (*C. lul.* IV, 8, 42; *De correptione et gratia*. I, 14, 44; *Enchiridion*. I, 97). Further, God cannot will anything in vain (*Enchiridion*. I, 103). So, it cannot be true that God wills all to be saved (*C. lul.* IV, 8, 42). By 'all' we are rather to understand 1) those predestined (*De correptione et gratia*. I, 14, 44); 2) those to whom grace comes through the justice of Christ to be saved and come to the truth (*C. lul.* IV, 8, 42); 3) a diversity of men predestined being from all nations, ranks and dispositions of wills (*De correptione et gratia*. I, 14, 44; *Enchiridion*. I, 103); he also says 4) that no man is saved unless God wills it (*Enchiridion*. I, 103); or 5) simply that God causes *us* to will the salvation of all (*De civitate Dei* XII, 2; *De correptione et gratia*. I, 15, 47). We should will all to be saved because we cannot know who is to be saved (*De correptione et gratia*. I, 15, 46-49). The consequence is that man becomes more merciful than God in a way. While the former in his ignorance is obliged, acted upon even, to will the salvation of all, the latter shows no such wish Augustine claims.

<sup>81</sup> *De correptione et gratia*. I, 7, 16; 8, 17; 8, 18-19; *De dono pers.* I, 11, 25: '*... neque inscrutabilia scrutari*' ; 11, 27; 12, 30: '*...sed quare illos potius quam illos? Iterum atque iterum dicimus, nec nos piget, O homo, tu quis es qui respondens Deo? (Rom. 9.20) Inscrutabilia sunt iudicia eius, et inuestigabiles viae eius (Rom. 11.33). Et hoc adiiciamus: Altiora te ne quaesieris, et fortiora te ne scrutatus fueris (Ecclus. 3.22); 14, 37; De gratia et lib. arb.* I, 20, 41; 22,44; *De praedest. sanct.* I, 7, 11; 8, 16-18; 9, 21; 14, 26; *Enchiridion*. I, 95. Cf. Rom 8.18; 9.20; 11.31.

<sup>82</sup> *De correptione et gratia*. I, 8, 16; *De dono pers.* I, 13, 33: '*...gratiam Dei... sed dari secundum ipsius*

one particular individual over another, or why He punishes one more than another, he maintains the *general* motive of God's discrimination is to proclaim His justice by condemning the majority of mankind and thereby to teach the elect how great and unmerited the mercy and grace they have received is.<sup>83</sup>

Augustine's theory of predestination and grace has been subject to severe criticism.<sup>84</sup> But this critique is usually confined to pointing out that the Augustinian account is problematic on the level of omnipotence.<sup>85</sup> Or that the Augustinian concept of justice is inadequate, corrupt—harmful to faith even.<sup>86</sup> Or that the Augustinian God exacts justice unfairly when we compare the elect with the damned.<sup>87</sup> I think the

---

*secretissimam, eademque iustissimam, sapientissimam, beneficentissimam uoluntatem*; *De grat. et lib. arb.* 1, 21, 43; 23, 45; *De praedest. sanct.* I, 8, 18; 14, 26. Cf. Matt. 10.26.

<sup>83</sup> *De dono pers.* I, 8, 16; 12, 28: '*...et non dat quibus non uult, ut notas faciat diuitias gloriae suae in uasa misericordiae. Dando enim quibusdam quod non merentur, profecto gratuitam, et per hoc ueram suam gratiam esse uoluit: non omnihus dando, quid omnes merentur ostendit*'; *De praedest. sanct.* I, 8, 18; *Enchir.* 1, 94.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. e.g. J. Burnaby, *Amor Dei* (London, 1947); C. Kirwan, *Augustine* (London/N.Y. 1991); J. M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient thought baptized* (Cambridge, 1994).

<sup>85</sup> Burnaby 1947, p.230: '*...Augustine never realised that his own conception of grace required nothing less than a revolution in his thought of the divine omnipotence*'; Rist 1994, p. 286: '*We conclude that Augustine lacks the conceptual resources to distinguish omnipotence from arbitrariness in God and thereby compromises the workings of the power of God's love, itself a peculiarly Augustinian divine attribute... his inadequate account of omnipotence... To escape from his difficulties he needs at least a more powerful analysis of omnipotence.*'

<sup>86</sup> Burnaby 1947, ch.7.

<sup>87</sup> Kirwan 1991, p. 149: '*...he is always deaf to the suggestion that there might be a comparative unfairness in the vast discrimination between God's final awards to the saint and the damned, both of whom are, according to the doctrine of original sin, parts of the same 'lump of sin.'* The most we get are some reasons—not very edifying—intended to

problem runs deeper: The problematic discrimination on the plane of theodicy is posterior to a *metaphysical* and *logical* difficulty. On this latter view, predestination in the deepest sense seems impossible to reconcile with Divine simplicity. My point is that Augustine cannot hide behind confessions of ignorance if his two accounts of God really contradict each other.

It might be objected that the problem of compatibility rests upon conceiving mercy as an essential attribute, something which has not been established textually to be Augustine's own position. It's true, I have not been able to find any text wherein he explicitly states that mercy is an essential attribute. To my knowledge no passage can be found wherein he clearly determines the predicative status of mercy. So it seems we are confined to arguing from silence to establish our point. For instance, we may understand mercy to be an essential attribute implied when Augustine states, as we have seen him do, the identity of all attributes whatsoever that can be predicated of God when He is properly referred to in Himself, and not in a metaphorical sense or by comparison.<sup>88</sup>

But there is another possibility related to the latter passage, viz. arguing by reduction. Can 'mercy' be a metaphorical designation, or one gained from comparison, when it's related to God's foreknowledge of

---

explain why God should have exacted the penalty of hell from some of his creation instead of remitting it to all.'

<sup>88</sup> See *supra*.

His own acts, as well as to His direct action? Must it not then be an essential attribute? And even if we agree that the name itself is rooted in the human sphere, does that of itself remove the problem of compatibility between simplicity and discrimination? It is possible to extend this process of reduction so that it also excludes 'mercy' being a relative attribute only,<sup>89</sup> as well as something pertaining only to the Divine Ideas.<sup>90</sup> From this, we can argue that 'essential predicate' is the most viable predicable status that the word 'mercy' can have when applied to the subject 'God.' That being the case, the problem of compatibility must be pronounced unsolvable, unless some other solution can be found.

Luckily for Augustine, such a solution can indeed be found, a solution which not only respects the integrity of Augustinian metaphysics, but also one to which he himself provides unconnected fragments. Our approach to the problem of compatibility has so far concentrated upon the God/creature dichotomy without giving sufficient

---

<sup>89</sup> Can it be considered a relative predicate only, pertaining to one of the Persons of the Trinity alone, while justice and goodness are essential predicates and so the common possession of all Persons? How can that be a relative attribute only which is related to God's essential will? (As we have seen above, predestination of the saints is)

<sup>90</sup> Can the problem be solved by placing the election in the Divine Ideas? Augustine, it is true, holds that these introduce some kind of distinction in Divine Wisdom, i.e. God the Son (*De civ. Dei* XI, 10; XI, 19: '*...sapientia simpliciter multiplex et uniformiter multiformis*'). One could claim that this distinction makes discriminative action possible. This is contradicted, not only by Augustine emphasizing their creative and natural, rather than salvific relevance, but also by the aforementioned problem of mercy being related to predestination and grace, in turn hinging on God's essential will

attention to the *relation itself* and how this relation must condition an *analogical way* of speaking about God and creatures (i.e. if the limited adequacy of positive theology is to be retained).<sup>91</sup> If the relation between God and creatures is claimed to be *asymmetrical*, i.e. not on the same plane,<sup>92</sup> it becomes possible to argue that Divine discrimination, *qua cause*, fully accords with Divine simplicity; and that this discrimination only results in multiplicity when it is, *qua effect*, played out in the created, composite sphere. And in *De Trinitate* XV, 5, 7, Augustine does state that Divine justice and goodness, although different in their works, are identical in God.<sup>93</sup> If this is so, it will be possible to add mercy, considered as an essential attribute, to fit this explanation too.

To this can be added that the problem of compatibility results from insisting the names we use must be applied univocally, i.e. in exactly the same sense, to God and creatures. But then we end up by not respecting the reality of the asymmetrical relation which holds between a simple God and a manifold created reality, to which also our

---

<sup>91</sup> Augustine, although strongly emphasizing the supereminent character of God, held that positive theology is possible in a limited, "sub-eminent" sense (cf. Strand 1998, ch. 4.4). The basis for this latter is his allowing for essential predication through identifying attributes with Divine Essence.

<sup>92</sup> Although Augustine himself does not operate with the term, the reality of asymmetrical relation is implied in e.g. his discussion of the name 'Lord' in *De Trin.* V, 16, 17. For a discussion of asymmetrical relation in Augustine, see Strand 1998, chs. 1.2 and 2.2.

<sup>93</sup> (CCL): '*Bonitas etiam atque iustitia numquid inter se in Dei natura sicut in eius operibus distant tamquam duae diuersae sint qualitates Dei, una bonitas, alia iustitia? Non utique. Sed quae iustitia ipsa bonitas, et quae bonitas ipsa beatitudo.*'

words belong. We must be aware that the words 'goodness,' 'justice' and 'mercy' when applied to the creature are used to signify diverse, mutable and limited qualities inhering in substances.<sup>94</sup> By contrast, when they are applied to God, they must be used in a different sense, i.e. as different ways of signifying one, undifferentiated, immutable and unlimited thing: God-essence.

And we have already found Augustine saying that while it's true that we use many different *words* about God, we must never forget that the *thing itself* is one.<sup>95</sup> To this we also add that since Augustine was aware that words applied both to God and creatures can be used neither in wholly identical nor in wholly different senses, *he acknowledges the reality of analogical predication.*<sup>96</sup>

If this analogical approach is opted for, the only approach which respects asymmetrical relation while retaining the limited adequacy of positive predication, the incompatibility dissolves. But we must be aware that what the given solution entails is de facto beyond the grasp of

---

<sup>94</sup> Cf. *De Trin.* VI, 6, 8; *In Ioann. Eu. tract.* II, 2. See also Strand 1998, ch. 1.3.

<sup>95</sup> *De Trin.* VI, 7, 8; XV, 5, 8. Cf. *supra*.

<sup>96</sup> It must be pointed out that Augustine himself never uses the term 'univocity,' ('equivocation') or 'analogy' in a technical sense. As pointed out by Lyttkens (*The Analogy between God and the World*, in *Uppsala Universitets Årsskrift* (Uppsala/Wiesbaden), 1953, pp. 110-121), the concept of analogy was not used to describe the knowledge of God and the direct likeness between God and creatures until the period of high Scholasticism. While Augustine never explicitly developed the concept of the analogy of being, it is implied in his thought. Augustine is aware that the predicate 'being (esse),' as well as attributes predicable both of God and creatures ('justice,' 'goodness,' 'mercy') cannot be applied in the same sense. (For a more in-depth account, see Strand 1998, chs. 4.3-4.)

human understanding because of the simple and supereminent character of the Deity.<sup>97</sup> For although one has established that discrimination is possible, we cannot understand from our fragmented, limited point of view *how* it is effected within God. Now while Augustine claims that the creature never will be able to understand God as He understands Himself,<sup>98</sup> he holds, as we have seen, that the reason why God discriminates in favor of one over another will be revealed to the saints in the afterlife. And for the African Bishop this was evidently the only satisfying answer that can be given.

Even if one accepts my interpretation of, and solution to, the problem of compatibility, Augustine's version of representational agency, predestination and grace is still problematic. For the question still remains whether Augustine has provided a sufficient defense as to *why* God discriminates the way He does. The theodicy problem, therefore, remains.

---

<sup>97</sup> Cf. *De doctr. christ.* I, 6, 6; *Serm.* CXVII, 15; CCCXLI, 9. See also Strand 1998, ch.4.4.

<sup>98</sup> *Confess.* XIII, 16, 19: '*...Nam sicut omnino tu es, tu scis solus*'; *De Gen. ad litt.* IV, 6, 13 : '*...etsi corda mundissima et mentes simplicissimas gereremus sanctisque Angelis iam essemus aequales non utique nobis ita nota esset diuina substantia sicut ipsa sibi.*'