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GENERAL REMARKS ON HUMAN FREEDOM FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF CHRISTIANITY. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMAN FREEDOM AND THE OMNISCIENCE OF GOD IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF SAINT AUGUSTINE

The article is devoted to the relationship between freedom and divine providence in people's life. In his book entitled "On free choice of the will" an outstanding Christian philosopher St. Augustine argued that infallible divine foreknowledge of the future should not necessarily be in conflict with the free will of the man. This work is constructed in the form of a dialogue between St. Augustine and Evodius, who asks questions and Augustine leads him to right ideas through the line of reasoning. Such method of writing was very common in ancient times. Augustine is considered to be one of the most prominent authorities when it comes to the problem of freedom. The question of free will and choice is one of the most mysterious for the believer. We hear different opinions on this. But the emphasis here will be on the usage of the word "freedom" by St. Augustine. Just like all monotheists he calls God all-good, all-knowing, all-powerful. According to this definition, God knows everything about our plans for future, so the problem is, whether or not God foreknowledge determines our future actions. Using the "dialectical method", which is also called the "Socratic method", and some other philosophical mechanisms, Augustine tried to prove the existence of free will.

Key words: free will, freedom of choice, God, divine providence.

The goal of the article is to try to answer the question: "What did Saint Augustine mean, when he wrote about freedom and God's control over people's life?". When we discuss the concept in general, we can mention, that freedom is an ideal pursued by successive generations. Desire for freedom exceeds even the instinct of self-preservation. People give their life for it. It has its expression in the uprisings, which are substantial for political culture in many countries. An example may be France, where revolutions designed to bring freedom influenced the way of thinking of the French nation in general. This is an important issue it we talk about **the relevance** of the topic given.

Some philosophers divide the freedom into an external and internal. Such a division (without calling it that way, though) was made by ancient Stoics, formulating their attitude to slavery. Namely, in their opinion, the essence of enslavement is in human passions, which take the reason into its possession. They claimed the real freedom is expressed by full control of reason over passions and feelings of a man. They recognized enslavement by the institution of slavery as a problem of less significance. In their opinion, there are many people among the slaves, who free and many enslaved among slave owners.

Inner freedom can also be achieved by a state of external constraint. As an example we can mention the country with a totalitarian regime, which imposes one view of the world on all the citizens. Similarly, we can name concentration camps or prisons, which enslave only externally and it does not necessarily lead to the inner enslavement. As a proof, we can mention the pieces of art created in slavery by Niccolò Machiavelli.

The tasks of the present research are: to investigate the freedom from the point of view of one of Saint Fathers – St. Augustine and to make a general outline of the concept in question.

The mystery of freedom is hidden in the ontology. Freedom is an existential concept which therefore covers both the inner and outer life of the subject. Both occur in unity.

In Christianity, man is free because God, who created him, is Freedom. Man, as the image of God, was endowed with freedom as an image of the highest freedom. Freedom can be implemented by person in different ways: either as the desire to do good, or as alienation from it. Either of those directions person chooses himself. Christianity knows only ones state of human freedom, when people are really free: it is being in God. However, this should not be considered as a passive condition, occurring outside subject's volition. During the lifetime it is possible only through the enormous efforts of will on the part of the person.

One of the most important philosophical question raised by philosophers of religion, is the problem of coexistence between the divine omniscience of God and the human freedom of actions, which would be the subject of God's knowledge. This issue leads us to the question of compliance between the foreknowledge of God concerning the future actions of people with alleged freedom of these actions from the point of view of people. The notion of Eternity in this case is understood as defined in time, because God exists in every moment of time. Sometimes this problem is put in another way, namely: is God's knowledge of future human activities compatible with the freedom of people? The latter formulation of the problem is related to the ontology. Such ontology distinguishes between what is contingent and what is necessary, and it puts human acts in the area of the contingent. It is therefore not only a matter of terminology. This issue can be taken as an important one,

because the problem of compliance or non-contradiction of God's knowledge and the freedom of human acts known to God has always aroused the interest of philosophers and theologians, especially when we mention monotheistic religions, where such a question is considered to be quite a controversial one.

On the one hand, those religions tell us about the omniscience of God, the other though – introduce the concept of guilt and responsibility of people for their actions, the idea of people's agency and the freedom related to it. The monotheistic religions provided the possibility of coexistence of human freedom and the prior knowledge of God. This issue is probably discussed thoroughly in the field of Christianity. It is associated with the doctrine of providence, the concept of God's omniscience and the issues of predestination [1].

For centuries, the discussion led to many arguments against coexistence of free will and omniscience of God, those are arguments for fatalism (the claim, that we cannot do anything other than we actually do), as well as numerous counter-arguments, seeking to show that the former are incorrect and explain the possibility of such coexistence [2].

The thought of Saint Augustine was very popular and influential. Even at the time of the Reformation, both Luther and Calvin claimed to be devoted to the s St. Augustine's teachings. They were especially indebted to Saint Augustine in their elaboration of the doctrines of grace and the freedom of the will. According to a present-day French authority on Calvin, the Swiss reformer quotes more in his writings from Augustine than from all the other Church fathers [3].

It is important to say, that Saint Augustine believes in God, who knows everything and is the wisest in the same time. So in his opinion, blind determinism is unacceptable.

Augustine wrote a lot about the relationship between God's will and person's freedom. He always proclaims two truths: the first one: God controls every activity and the second one: people have freedom to choose. On the other hand, we cannot say, that he means that our actions are free and determined at the same time (Augustine is not inclined to compatibilism). He simply states, that God's providence does not deprive people from freedom. But neither does he mean that our free actions are not caused by God. This would be impossible metaphysically and the author himself would be proclaimed to be a heretic. So, how can we explain both statements are true? As philosophers, we can only show that it is not possible to deny either of those statements. Firstly, we cannot oppose to the idea, which everything we do comes from Father, as he is the source of everything that exists. Therefore, God is goodness, truth and beauty (in other words, it is the cause of those three *transcendentia*); God is providential. To deny these conclusions means to deny the faith and the legitimacy of and reason. But it is absurd to state a reasoned argument that reason does not work. So the conclusion is that all activities, together with free choices, are under God's control. Secondly, we cannot oppose to the idea of free choice, as it is impossible to imagine any acting without the word 'we'. To be more precise, our achievements need subject. Theological explanation helps us here. God perceives our life and activeness from the one side as spiritual, eternal and angelic and from the other – we are subjects to human freedom.

Augustine's famous book *The Problem of Free Choice* was written in the form of a dialogue, and it is followed by a dialogue between Augustine and Evodius, one of his friends. The book begins with a crucial question, "I should like you to tell me: is God the cause of evil?" This book deals more with the question of evil than with the idea of free choice. Augustine has a lot to say about our subject in his Confessions, where he reviews his life up to his conversion and in the form of a confession to God. Looking back at his life from its very beginning, he tries hard to examine its details in the light of the Word of God. As he was always very interested in the problem of evil, and of the entrance of evil into the world, we may expect him to have a great deal to say regarding man's will and its freedom. What he has to say on this subject does not stand in isolation from some other related doctrines. We shall look briefly at his understanding of the origin of evil, the fall of man, and the results of this fall. What a person believes in connection with these important subjects will influence his concept of the freedom of the will in a very definite way.

To make a long story short, Augustine wrote much about the relationship between God's activity and human freedom. Although he does sometimes speak as though God makes us sin, he does not mean this to indicate that God determines our behaviour, that is, takes away our freedom. He insists both that God is the cause of every activity and that we have freedom of choice. "Thus, we believe that God has foreknowledge of everything in the future and that nonetheless we will whatever we will" [4].

Here is a problem of evil and sin. Evil is deprived of the good, so it will is not an efficient cause, to be more precise: sin has no cause. To say that sin is a cause would mean denying it as sin. We can say therefore, that according to Augustine, sin cannot come from God, because God is the cause of everything that really exists, but not of any being. Sin is the only act we do without God. This means that all good actions performed by people are caused by people and by God. The knowledge of our freedom is self-evident. Can we deny it and not deny ourselves? We would rather not. It would be a meaningless statement. If we state, that we do not have freedom, do not control our actions, that we are also unable to perform the denial of the freedom's existence, as we do not act then, events just happen. So truths about freedom and God's knowledge are not contradictory, they just follow from two different sides of reason. To say that nothing is under God's control is a theoretical

contradiction and to deny that we are free is a practical one. In reality, we have no real proof that we are free, but we also cannot that we are not.

The only thing that escapes from God's control is nothing, which is not anything. Just because our right choices are not anything, they are under God's control.

Through all his career in as clear words as possible (any language in inadequate when discuss God), Saint Augustine had stated that both sentences are true: God is our creator and we are free, and also: "The victory by which sin is conquered is nothing but the gift of God who helps free choice in this struggle" [5].

Returning to the work "On free choice of the will", we can say, that Augustine brings Evodius to the main point when stating, that if a person has been deprived of his liberty a punishment from God for his sins would be meaningless. Just as God's reward for righteousness. After all, if a man has no freedom of choice, if every step of his life is predetermined from above, what can he be punished for? "Something that has not been done voluntarily, would be neither a sin, nor a righteous deed. And therefore either punishment or the reward would be unfair if the man did not have free will". God cannot be unjust. That is why: "God had to give a man free will."

God has filled us with pious feelings about ourselves, he gave us the freedom of choice. God is knocking at the door of our soul, but does not enter into it without our consent. Every person sees the sun, according to St. Augustine, but we perceive and use it in different ways. One person feels bad in the sun and never goes out in the heat. Another one has sensitive skin and that is why prefers to be in the shade in the hot days. A third one likes heat and he is afraid of being cold. Despite these different perceptions and different choices the sun is one and always the same. So we have a different attitude to the events that take place in our lives. So he states: "He who fights seems wise to himself, and he who just protects oneself also seems wise to himself. And whoever denies military service also seems wise to him. All three seem to think that their thoughts are blessed by God, so how to deal with it? Therefore, Augustine gives the following advice: "We all want a blessed life with God. In any case, we have to want it. It is the truth we are committed to. Our delusion does not lead to bliss. Although we can follow his delusion all our lives, stubbornly defending it. [...] Just as we use the sun differently, either avoid it or search for it. The truth is that a man should strive to Wisdom. In our life, "the worst must obey the better, an equal should be compared to the equal and everyone should be paid what one deserves. We can not look at the sun through the eyes of strangers. So everyone has his own way, and on this way everyone uses one's own freedom. For man can not live anyone else's life. Everyone has to do it himself. The role of education is in establishing the correct scale of values [...]."

Any good, great or small, is given to us by the Lord, including our freedom, which is also granted by God. Therefore, freedom is good. How do we use it, whether it will move us closer to god or not depends on how we understand "what is good and what is bad". The will of God is given to us for doing good. After all, we are the image of God, and God is free. One-armed man realizes clearly: two hands is good. And it is bad when the arm is one. Even worse, when there are no hands at all. But such blessing as hands can be used in different way: we can give something to a person, and can steal; cure or kill, swing children or keep a bottle of alcoholic drink etc. If a person uses this blessing wrongly, it does not mean that having a hand is bad. God has given us freedom in our actions, thoughts and choices of life goals. Yes, Providence controls everything. A single hair will not fall without the will of God, but still people are free, otherwise people would not be righteous, because the righteousness of coercion it is not righteousness at all. Here is an example: If a person simply is not given the bottle of alcoholic drink and keep under lock and key, he will not drink it. He will have nothing to drink, but this does not mean that he has ceased to be an alcoholic. He will cease to be one when he will make a free personal choice. Likewise, holiness cannot be forced, as well as deification. Because freedom is enabled by God as eternal gifts to man, it is an integral part of God's Providence. Because to sin or not to sin is our choice, not God's. How would God have judged and punished the wicked, if a person has no other way, but to sin? Can God himself deprive a person from the opportunity to choose between sin and the truth? Freedom is given to us and is, as Augustine writes, "an average good". The least benefits are those, without which we cannot do, but still, we are committed to them without any harm to our souls. By purchasing them, we do not run the risk to die in the Eternity. They do not alienate us from God, although do not make us particularly closer to Him. They are not necessary. Average goods are those, which can get us closer to God, or move us away from Him. Higher benefits are those that lead us only to God. For example, a person cannot use the virtue badly, it is just impossible.

In **conclusion** we can say that in opinion of Izzet Coban, if we were forced to act, God would not judge us. So we are rather not. It would make no sense. Moreover, His foreknowledge verifies our freedom, because His unchanging foreknowledge depends on our will and agrees with our will, so there is no incompatibility between God's foreknowledge and our free will. The only way to have freedom and purity is to state that the relationship between God and a human being is harmonious. We can learn it through Revelation as well [6].

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Туровська О. А. Загальні зауваження про людську свободу з точки зору християнства. Зв'язок між свободою людини і всевидячим оком Бога у філософії Святого Августина.

Стаття присвячена відношенню свободи і божественного провидіння в житті людини. У своїй книзі під назвою "Про вільну волю" видатний християнський філософ Святий Августин стверджував, що безпомилкове Божественне передбачення майбутнього сумісно зі свободою волі людини. На підставі цього, Августин вважається одним з найбільш помітних авторитетів в трактуванні цієї проблеми. Питання про свободу волі та вибору є одним з найзагадковіших для вірянина. На цю тему можна почути дуже різні точки зору, але увага звертатиметься саме на вживання слова "свобода" святим Августином.

Ключові слова: свобода волі, свобода вибору, Бог, божественне провидіння.

Туровская О. А. Общие замечания о человеческой свободе с перспективы христианства. Связь между свободой человека и всеведением Бога в философии Святого Августина.

Статья посвящена отношению свободы и божественного провидения в жизни человека. В книге, которая называется "О свободной воле", известный христианский философ Святой Августин хотел совместить Божественное предвидение и свободу воли человека. На основании этого он по праву может, считается одним из самых авторитетных мыслителей, которые когда-либо касались проблемы свободы. Вопрос о свободе воли и выбора является одним из самых загадочных для верующего человека. На эту тему можно услышать разные точки зрения, но наше внимание обратим именно на употребление слова "свобода" святым Августином.

Ключевые слова: свобода воли, свобода выбора, Бог, божественное провидение.