

Article

Augustine's Introduction to Political Philosophy: Teaching *De Libero Arbitrio*, Book I

Daniel E. Burns

Department of Politics, University of Dallas, 1845 E. Northgate Dr., Irving, TX 75062, USA;
E-Mail: dburns@udallas.edu; Tel.: +1-972-721-5023

Academic Editors: Scott McGinnis and Chris Metress

Received: 22 December 2014 / Accepted: 20 January 2015 / Published: 30 January 2015

Abstract: Book I of Augustine's work *On Free Choice (De Libero Arbitrio)* offers a helpful introduction to some of the most important themes of political philosophy. The paper makes a case for teaching this text in introductory courses on political thought, theology of social life, and similar topics, alongside or even in place of the more usually assigned excerpts from *City of God*. The text is written as a dialogue in which Augustine seeks to introduce a student of his to reflection on the ways in which our moral outlook is profoundly shaped by our political citizenship. It invites all of us, whether Christian or non-Christian citizens, to enter into the dialogue ourselves as Augustine's students and so to reflect on the moral significance of our own citizenship.

Keywords: Augustine; teaching; political philosophy; *On Free Choice*; dialogue; temporal law; eternal law; citizenship; earthly city

1. The Pedagogical Value of the Text

When Augustine gets taught in survey courses of the history of political thought, he usually appears as something of an outlier. I know that many of my fellow political scientists who teach those courses conceive of him along the lines of a misanthropic uncle sitting silently in the corner at the family Christmas party: it is hard to question his right to be there or our concomitant obligation to tolerate his presence, but it is equally hard not to be slightly embarrassed whenever one has to glance in his direction. Some even seem to think that having Augustine on a syllabus about political thought is comparable to having him on a syllabus about visions of human sexuality. We show our open-mindedness by including in our readings this strange author who seems to have contempt for the whole subject of

the course, who sees it as at best an ugly necessity, and who probably would say we should not be teaching courses like this at all. For one week in the semester, we wonder about a radical alternative to all the other authors we teach: maybe everything else we say in this course is a waste of time, because maybe all that really matters is God, and maybe the subject of this course ought then to lose a lot of its previous interest for us—for although it may indeed be important insofar as it can impede our journey towards God when it is conducted badly, as in fact it nearly always is, still we ought for that very reason to avoid dealings with it as much as possible, and to the extent that we (sinful beings that we are) cannot avoid such dealings, we should at least somehow feel sad about that. After opening our minds to such difficult thoughts for one week, we return for the rest of the semester to authors who manage to write about the same subject with much less distaste, and who finally confirm our own inclination to think that its human importance cannot be dismissed so easily as the old bishop of Hippo would have us believe.

Now, the view of Augustine's attitude toward politics that I have just sketched is not one that I share, and I think that courses in which he is taught this way are doing students a real disservice. They prevent those students from confronting aspects of Augustine's thought that could pose a more genuine challenge to their own understanding of the relation between morality and politics. And those aspects are most clearly on display in a text of Augustine's that makes for a wonderfully compact introduction not only to his political thought but even to political philosophy as a discipline: Book 1 of his dialogue *On Free Choice (De Libero Arbitrio)*. I would therefore like to make a case for teaching this text in classes on political thought, intellectual history, theology of social life, and similar areas of study—for teaching it, possibly even in place of the more usual excerpts from *City of God*, but in any case at least alongside them.

My impression on the basis of very limited anecdotal evidence is that many students, especially at secular schools but even at religious ones, do not exactly warm to the political teaching they find in *City of God*. Some of them find it too didactic or dogmatic. Others are bothered when they think they see Augustine using his Christian faith to dismiss the political attachments that were felt very strongly by his Roman contemporaries and in a way are still felt by many of our students today, attachments to which they are inclined to give serious moral weight. Is it really the case that Christians must be, not true citizens (of the United States for example), but merely foreigners passing through, all carrying green cards as it were ([1], 19.17, 19.26)? Is it really the case that the choice between different forms of government is all but irrelevant in this brief earthly life, as long as our rulers “do not compel [us] to impious and wicked deeds” ([1], 5.17)? Does Augustine really have no sympathy for those who feel themselves to be genuine Christian citizens, “citizens of both cities” [2]? For that matter, what about all the pagan citizens, then or now: can patriotism, this massive fact of common human experience, really be dismissed as at best a noble delusion, and in any case a delusion from which Christ is supposed to have freed us (see, e.g., [1], 14.28)? And finally, again in a related vein, some students are put off by what seem in *City of God* to be Augustine's unacceptably low expectations from politics. If the earthly city is and always will be an aggregation of vicious sinners, a “Babylon” whose most valuable accomplishment is securing a fragile “earthly peace” ([1], 19.17, 19.26), then it seems hard to justify, for example, disobedience to *unjust* laws. Of course the laws are unjust, the Augustinian position would seem to say: we cannot expect any better, but for precisely that reason, as long as they are keeping the peace, we must leave them in place rather than cause any disturbance by trying to

change them. The same would be true even for the extreme case of overthrowing a tyrant, as long as that tyrant is not stopping anyone from going to church: if every city without justice is no better than a gang of robbers ([1], 4.4), and true justice is found in no earthly city but only in the Heavenly City ([1], 19.21, 19.24–25, 19.27), then it is hard to see on what grounds one would go to the trouble of replacing the tyrant of one's earthly city with whatever gang of robbers is sure to take his place. Augustine seems then to allow little possibility of holding our country's laws or government to any standard of morality. And this, understandably, rubs many students the wrong way.

Again, in my own view, this is an inadequate reading of even the most famously anti-political passages of the *City of God*. But I would hardly blame any undergraduate who came away with impressions like these after reading just a week's worth of excerpts from that text. And that would be a great shame, because these impressions certainly do not paint an accurate picture of how Augustine himself approached the study of politics. We learn this from Book 1 of *On Free Choice* which, unlike *City of God*, explicitly claims to treat certain moral-political questions in the very order in which Augustine himself worked through them on the road toward his own religious conversion (see [3], 1.2.4.10–11).¹ The reflections outlined in this book thus lay the groundwork for the understanding of politics that Augustine would later elaborate in greater detail in *City of God* and elsewhere. For this reason and others, Book 1 of *On Free Choice* is a text uniquely well suited to introducing students to his thoughts on politics, one that in particular does not suffer from some of these pedagogical difficulties that *City of God* may seem to present.

First, Book 1 of *On Free Choice* can hardly be called dogmatic, because its literary form is that of a philosophic dialogue. There are two characters, Augustine and his friend Evodius; the book is based (loosely) on real conversations that these two men actually had [5]. And Augustine's main role in the conversation, like that of any Socratic teacher, is simply to get Evodius to state clearly and coherently his own opinions about a number of moral and political questions. This means that the task of extracting the author's own view from the conversation poses certain interpretive challenges. But what may be frustrating to some scholars can be all the more exciting for undergraduates, and I do find that students enjoy coming to see how the literary form invites them, as indeed it invites all of us as readers, to enter into the conversation themselves: Do you agree with Evodius's answer here? How could he have answered differently? Why didn't he give the answer you would have expected? and so on.

For the same reason, this book is not vulnerable to the charge sometimes leveled by readers of *City of God* that Augustine sets himself on a lofty Christian peak from which all political attachments appear petty and vain, and that he thus unfairly dismisses the moral and political experiences of ordinary Christian citizens or for that matter of pagan citizens. For Evodius, whose opinions (to repeat) are the focus of the dialogue, turns out to be very much a Christian citizen. He does not think politics is petty or meaningless, and his attachment to his political community runs very deep indeed. In fact, the

¹ Citations to *De Libero Arbitrio* are given by book number followed by several section numbers. The most faithful translation available [4] offers the same section numbers, as does the best critical edition [3], to whose line numbers I occasionally also refer. Unfortunately, most other translations refer to only some of these section divisions: what appears here as section 1.5.11.33 would elsewhere be section 1.5.11, 1.33, 1.11, or a similar combination. But any translation's section numbers can easily be "keyed" to those given here by a glance at the last section of Book 1, which would be cited here as 1.16.35.118.

dialogue shows us how much the moral opinions that Evodius holds as a Christian citizen have in common with opinions that would be held by an equally upright pagan citizen. This is one of its most interesting aspects from the point of view of scholarship on Augustine, since it forces us to question the assumption, common to nearly all studies of his political thought, that he thinks Christian attitudes towards politics must be radically different from pagan attitudes toward politics. And it also makes this text particularly relevant to those of us who teach a religiously diverse student body. Since the text shows us Evodius struggling with questions that must be faced by any citizen, Christian or otherwise, it has immediate appeal even for students who do not share Augustine's (and Evodius's) Christian faith. In fact, although Evodius is still struggling with those questions as a believing Christian, Augustine seems to say that he himself worked through them before his own conversion to the Christian faith, and even that he *had* to work through them before he could be free of the intellectual obstacles that held him back from that faith (see again [3], 1.2.4.10–11). So when non-Christian students are introduced to those questions by reading this book, they have in one respect more in common with the author himself than do Christian students in the same position.

Finally, when it comes to the accusation that Augustine's unacceptably low expectations from politics seem to leave no place for morality in political life, for legitimate disobedience to unjust laws, or for legitimate resistance to tyranny, Book 1 of *On Free Choice* is perhaps the strongest defense of the author against any such accusations. The character Augustine in this book, in one of the rare contributions he offers in his own name (as opposed to the majority that merely draw out Evodius's views), makes what is perhaps the single statement that has most famously and frequently been quoted by centuries' worth of Christians resisting political injustices: "An unjust law, it seems to me, is no law at all" ([3], 1.5.11.33). This dialogue even includes a short discussion of the principles to which one may legitimately appeal in undertaking a political revolution, along with an example of such a justified revolution that Augustine offers as apparently indisputable ([3], 1.6.14.45–47). So again, this text engages much more closely with our ordinary moral intuitions about politics than the *City of God* at least appears to. And while I believe that a careful study of *City of God* would reveal that even the views presented there are much more nuanced than many attempted summaries of Augustine's political thought would have it (see, e.g., the detailed reading of Burnell on the justifiability of political revolution [6]), such a careful study may not be possible in the short time to which many undergraduate survey courses are forced to limit their treatment of Augustine. There is therefore a case to be made for beginning where Augustine himself begins and following out his own original reflections on politics; in light of these, students interested in pursuing the matter further may in later studies turn to *City of God* with more of the background needed to appreciate its subtleties.

Since this text then has many features that recommend it to our students, and I would say to all of us as well, I would like to walk through a few of the ways in which this very compact and extraordinarily rich dialogue could provoke reflection and stimulate discussion over the course of a week or so in an undergraduate survey course.

2. Highlights of the Text for Classroom Discussion

On Free Choice as a whole is dedicated to the problem of whether God is responsible for the evil in the world, the theological problem that had held Augustine up for so long on his intellectual

journey towards the Christian faith. Book 1 treats the preliminary problem of what we mean when we speak of evil, in particular of moral evil: it discusses the question *quid sit malefacere*, “what is wrongdoing?” ([3], 1.3.6.14). Although Book 1 must ultimately be understood in the context of the investigation of divine providence that governs the whole work, its discussion of political topics does turn out to have value independent of that investigation, as is already suggested by Augustine’s presentation of its theme as distinct from that of the rest of the work (see [3], 1.3.6.14 with 1.16.34.115, 1.16.35.118). It is on the way to answering this moral question “what is wrongdoing?” that Augustine and Evodius articulate a distinction between the “temporal law” that governs human political communities and the “eternal law” by which God governs the universe ([3], 1.5.13.41–6.14.42; 1.6.14.48–15.51; 1.14.30.101–15.32.112). (Hence Book 1 of *On Free Choice* is cited frequently, for example, in Aquinas’s so-called “Treatise on Law.”) The distinction between these two types of law has obviously been a very important one in the history of western thought. It is drawn in this text with a sharpness that I am not aware of in any pre-Christian treatment of natural law, and with a clarity that I have not seen in any pre-Augustinian Christian thinker. But my remarks here will concentrate only on the part of the conversation that leads up to that distinction. Augustine subjects Evodius to a Socratic dialogue on this question “what is wrongdoing”: he shoots down some of Evodius’s inadequate answers, presses him to give better ones, complains when Evodius evades the question, and so on. In the course of this dialogue, Augustine ends up presenting to Evodius four sets of moral-political dilemmas that are meant to challenge Evodius’s understanding of his own political attachments, and again are (I believe) meant also to do the same for us as readers.

The first of these dilemmas is one that could be encountered by any citizen or subject, because it has to do with the question whether to obey the law. Under interrogation from Augustine, Evodius reveals that on the one hand he ordinarily assumes that the law of his political community ought to be obeyed. In particular, he generally takes for granted the distribution of property, the definition of mine and thine, that that law supplies. When he thinks about who is married to whom, for example, he assumes that it is the couples whom his legal system recognizes as married (cf. [3], 1.3.6.15–17, lines 23, 26, 27 [*mea, suam, cuius*], with 1.3.7.18, lines 34–35). He is barely even conscious of doing this: he uses terms like “my house” and “your wife” all the time, attaches significant moral weight to these terms, and yet hardly thinks of the fact that their definitions are, at least primarily, supplied to him by his community’s legal system. (I like to think about the angry parent exclaiming “not in my house!”—imagine how much of a smart-aleck teenager it would take to respond, “well how do I know it *is* really your house?” We often forget to question these definitions, even when we might have had an interest in doing so.) But on the other hand and at the same time, Evodius does recognize in principle that not all laws are morally binding. He thinks serious moral progress has been made in his own community’s laws in the past hundred years—which means that he thinks the older laws were wrong, and therefore not morally binding ([3], 1.3.7.18–19). Augustine reminds him of this fact by referring to the “divine authority” of the Christian Church, which clearly teaches that the old Roman laws outlawing Christian worship were wrong, but in the same breath Augustine says he could also have chosen to refer to “other books” that do not rely on this “divine authority” (*ibid.*): one does not then have to be a Christian to recognize the insufficiency of human law as a moral standard, or the insufficiency of what we today might call legal positivism. Evodius implicitly holds the law to some higher standard than itself, without often having to think about what that standard really is. A thoughtful citizen, though,

wants to know what that standard is, so that he can make sure he is judging rightly as to which laws should and should not be obeyed.

So in the second set of hypothetical dilemmas, Augustine moves Evodius up a level in the scale of political responsibilities. He now puts Evodius in the position of, not a citizen or subject who is asked merely to obey the law, but a judge who is asked to apply that law in particular cases. He asks Evodius in effect to imagine judging the trial of a slave who has murdered his master, but who did so only out of fear that the master was going to hurt him first ([3], 1.4.9.22–10.29). The details of this case are interesting, but I will focus here on just one point. The question of principle that this case raises is whether one can ever kill another human being without being guilty of murder. In discussing it, then, Evodius brings up the fact that he recognizes at least four other types of people who do indeed kill without thereby becoming murderers: first, people involved in accidents with weapons, and then more interestingly, soldiers, judges, and public executioners, with the latter three all defined as blameless on the ground that their actions have positive legal sanction ([3], 1.4.9.25). So we see here again what enormous importance the law has in Evodius's moral life. The law defines the difference between murder and justified killing—a difference that a Christian, at least, sees as having great relevance to the well-being of his soul. The law tells us that certain forms of killing are acceptable while others are not. And in many cases, we tend to take for granted what it tells us. Certainly Evodius does so. As Augustine says, “such persons are not *customarily* called murderers”: most of us do not ordinarily think that a soldier is no more than a hit man with tuition benefits (*ibid.*, emphasis added). Yet as Augustine immediately reminds Evodius, a Christian in particular, and really any human being, has no right to assume that something must be right merely because the law commands it (see [3], 1.4.10.26; cf. [3], 1.3.7.18–19). So the question is raised even more sharply: what makes a law justified, or what defines a just law?

This brings them to the third set of dilemmas, in which Augustine now puts Evodius in the place of a politician, especially a legislator, who is tasked with writing the laws that a judge only applies and that a citizen (ordinarily) obeys. Here Augustine zeroes in, as does no other political philosopher whom I have read, on two particular laws that seem to suggest very different answers to the question “what makes a just law.” He asks Evodius whether either or both of these laws are just. The first is what we could call the law of self-defense: the law granting to all citizens permission to kill a violent robber or murderer when they are under attack and cannot defend themselves in any other way. The second could be called the law of military service: the law demanding that a soldier (which under a draft could mean almost any citizen) must risk his own life in order to protect his country ([3], 1.5.11.33). The first of these two laws—as John Locke would later make very clear—seems to suggest that the fundamental purpose of law as such is to protect our rights, especially our rights to life and bodily security, so that if the law cannot so to speak get there fast enough to protect those rights for us, we are justified in bypassing the whole legal system and taking the law into our own hands (see [7]). The second law, however—as Aristotle had argued just as forcefully—suggests rather that the purpose of law is to enforce our obligations, including above all our obligation to our country, and that these obligations even trump our individual rights since, in their name, we can rightly be required to give up our own life and bodily security (see [8]). By forcing Evodius to explain how both these laws can be justified, Augustine in effect demands to know which of these two basic moral-political phenomena are truly primary: our rights or our duties.

The dialogue to this point already provides ample material for discussion in the modern classroom. I believe that many students even in our modern liberal democracy, whether Christian or non-Christian, would sympathize with most or all of the positions Evodius has taken up to now, and those who do not would at least find in them a springboard for discussion of these issues with their classmates. At this point in the conversation, though, Evodius's answers may begin to seem somewhat more foreign. For he does not here put forth any view of government as a mere social contract aimed at protecting rights that no duty can ever require us to lay down. But the reason he does not adopt such a view is one with which many of our students would have some sympathy: he refuses to abandon that aspect of his moral experience according to which we have a genuine and compelling duty to fight and die for our country when it asks us to (see [3], 1.5.12.35–37, esp. line 43, *cogit*). This is an experience that centuries of liberal political theory have famously had trouble making sense of, and students would undoubtedly benefit from reflection on whether such experiences, which surely are still common to many Americans today, can be reconciled fully with the Lockean terms in which we are used to discussing questions of political legitimacy.

In any case, Evodius does believe that the protection of his own political community is in principle worth both killing and dying for, and even that he is morally obligated to do as much when that community requires it of him. But to understand this obligation, we would then have to ask what defines his political community. And his statements here turn out again to be taking something for granted, namely what we would call the constitution or regime of that community (see [3], 1.5.12.34–36, esp. lines 40–41). Soldiers die, not just to defend their fellow citizens as individuals, but more fundamentally to defend the “freedom” of their entire political community, and hence especially its legal order or constitution; our own American soldiers take an oath that makes this explicit (see [3], 1.5.11.32, line 6, *libertate*; [3], 1.5.12.35, lines 28–29, with 1.7.16.52, lines 2–3; [9]). What then would make that constitution so worth defending? This is the implicit question that leads at last to Augustine's fourth set of dilemmas. Here he now encourages Evodius to imagine himself raised from the level of a legislator to that of a revolutionary, *i.e.*, a person who effectively tears up an old constitution and writes a new one. On what basis can such a person rightly take such an action? What makes a constitution good or just? To help Evodius with this question, Augustine suggests two examples of apparently just constitutions. The first is written for a morally virtuous and public-spirited populace, and it allows them to rule themselves in a democratic republic. Evodius immediately agrees that this is a just constitution ([3], 1.6.14.45). (This is also interesting from a historical point of view, since republicanism might be thought to have been dead in Rome for over 400 years, but somehow Evodius agrees to this point without hesitation even in A.D. 388.) On the other hand, in the second example, that same populace has undergone dramatic moral degeneration and has corrupted the democratic process to elect criminals who both perpetrate and permit moral atrocities. Is there some point, Augustine asks, at which they lose the right to govern themselves, and at which then a revolution could be justified, where a few people or even one person would seize power out of that populace's hands? (The classic example today would of course be Germany in the 1940s.) This too, Evodius grants with equal readiness, would be just ([3], 1.6.14.46). And if we agree with him, as it seems to me most of us would find ourselves forced to at some point, then we have made a morally important claim. For to accept the justice of this example is to agree that there is some moral standard in the name of which a number of other morally binding political principles that we normally claim to

accept—whether government by consent of the governed, respect for existing legal authorities and structures, or even the illegitimacy of extralegal force against one’s fellow citizens—can all in certain extreme circumstances be ignored. Augustine calls this moral standard the “eternal law” ([3], 1.6.14.47–15.49). So according to the reasoning sketched in the conversation to this point, which I believe Augustine himself accepts in its essential points, it would seem that all earthly laws are justified only to the extent that they promote the moral common good of their citizens under this eternal law ([3], 1.6.15.50–7.16.52).

Now, this conclusion sounds like a far cry from the assertion that cities are all hardly more than gangs of robbers, and anyone familiar with Augustine’s political writings may well wonder how a conclusion like this could have anything to do with his famous so-called pessimism or realism about the limits of earthly politics. But it is in fact only a small step from the one to the other. Evodius himself had admitted, although it is not clear that he ever sees the full significance of this, that he expects even a revolutionary to promote this moral common good only to the extent that this is actually possible for him (see [3], 1.6.14.46, line 31, *si...possit*). And for reasons that come out both in this text (see esp. [3], 1.15.32.108–33.112) and in other writings of his, Augustine’s own judgment seems to have been that all the political laws we see around us do at best a very mediocre job of promoting such a common good. Yet precisely because our political communities always have been and always will be so mediocre at performing their highest task, any attempts at radical political reform will fail, in almost all and perhaps even all cases, to bring about real improvement in the lives of those communities’ citizens. We are therefore almost always better off, in Augustine’s view, when we try to make no more than minor improvements to our earthly cities—as Augustine himself often did as a bishop, and as for example his great student Thomas More would do many centuries later as a politician. Hence Augustine turns out to have arrived at his famously “realistic” view of politics, which he presents in pithy summary form at the end of this dialogue in a manner that strongly anticipates the “two cities” doctrine he would later develop more fully (*ibid.*), not by contemptuously ignoring ordinary moral-political experience but through sympathetic engagement with that experience: he uncovers the limits of politics when he judges it by precisely the high moral standard which that ordinary experience, upon examination, turns out to presuppose. Whether or not students end up accepting Augustine’s “realistic” conclusions, it seems to me in principle preferable than they think through his own reasons for them than that they merely confront them without seeing those reasons, as a superficial acquaintance with excerpts from *City of God* might well encourage them to.

3. Concluding Remarks

One fascinating aspect of this text that I have not discussed here is the way in which Evodius, the character, embodies the difficulty that Augustine sees in convincing Christians to have such a moderate view of the limits of politics as I have just attributed to Augustine himself. Evodius, who is I think a kind of typical Christian citizen, vacillates visibly over the course of the dialogue between tendencies toward an apolitical despair or pacifism on the one hand, and a hyperpolitical moralism or even revolutionarism on the other. Both of these are errors that the author seems to think represent dangerous and typically Christian tendencies, both in different ways are traceable to unrealistically high expectations from politics, and both are tendencies that, by the end of this book, Augustine has

successfully combatted in Evodius, as indeed he would go on to try to combat them in millions of his fellow Christians [10]. By the end of the book, Evodius is a better educated Christian citizen. His conversation with Augustine has given him a stronger sense of how far all temporal laws necessarily fall short of the moral standards prescribed by the eternal law, and of why the temporal law nonetheless should not be held in contempt for the limited but important work it can do ([3], 1.15.32.108–112). But I have not dwelt on this aspect of the dialogue here because, although I do think that Augustine intended to have just such an effect on his broader audience as he had had on his friend Evodius, I do not think that what is most valuable in this book is its portrait of Augustine's pedagogical rhetoric, as beautiful as that portrait is. Because to a significant extent, it does remain rhetoric: Evodius is not all that promising as a student, he does not turn out to be interested in thinking through the questions that Augustine has pushed on him, and Augustine ends up having to persuade him of views that approximate his own without ever really taking him through the arguments for those views. And my own experience leads me to think that concentrating on this rhetoric of Augustine's is not the most helpful way to approach this text. When I first began studying it four years ago, I was mainly concerned to show what silly mistakes Evodius made on almost every page of the conversation, and how far he was from grasping what I assumed to be Augustine's own views; this led me to write many pages of interpretation that I now find embarrassing to read. I only really began learning from this book when I stopped trying to show how much Augustine sees that Evodius does not, or for that matter how much I see that Evodius does not, and went to work instead on uncovering what Evodius sees that I had not previously seen. I believe it is a great and rather painful secret of the book that we all have more in common with him than we would like to think. Even Augustine, after all, says that he himself had to struggle for some time (probably years) with the very questions that Evodius here finds so difficult (see again [3], 1.2.4.10–11). And Augustine is able to teach us more when we make that struggle our own rather than look down on Evodius for failing to reach its conclusion—as indeed few if any of us can claim to have done.

The most valuable aspect of this book, then, for ourselves and our students alike, is the introduction that it offers to the difficult questions of moral and political philosophy that Augustine wishes his readers to grapple with. For the book shows that Augustine regarded this grappling—with our own elementary moral experiences as individuals and citizens—as by no means something that Christian faith has freed anyone of the need for. Rather, he saw it as the starting point of his own understanding of politics, and indeed of self-knowledge more generally. And I believe we will offer our students the best possible introduction to Augustine's reflections on politics when we allow him to introduce them to that difficult but ultimately rewarding experience to which he tried, with only limited success, to introduce his friend Evodius.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to Kimberley Burns, Erik Dempsey, Heather Pangle, and the three anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on this paper; to the Thomas Jefferson Center for the Study of Core Texts and Ideas at the University of Texas at Austin for supporting me while I wrote it; and to Robert Bartlett, Nasser Behnegar, Christopher Bruell, Robert Faulkner, Christopher Kelly, Joseph

MacFarland, Pierre Manent, and Susan Shell for helping me with generous criticisms of my doctoral dissertation, without which help I would have been in no position to write this paper.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

1. Augustine. *De Civitate Dei*. Edited by B. Dombart and A. Kalb. Stuttgart: Teubner, 1993, 2 vols.
2. Vatican II. *Gaudium et Spes*. In *Sacrosanctum Oecumenicum Concilium Vaticanum II: Constitutiones, Decreta, Declarationes*. Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1966, pp. 681–835, section 43.
3. Augustine. *De Libero Arbitrio*. In *Contra Academicos, De Beata Vita, De Ordine, De Magistro, De Libero Arbitrio*. Edited by W.M. Green and Klaus-Detlef Daur. Turnhout: Brepols, 1970, pp. 210–35.
4. Peter King, trans. and ed. *Augustine: On the Free Choice of the Will, On Grace and Free Choice, and Other Writings*. New York: Cambridge University, 2010.
5. Augustine. *Epistulae*. In *Patrologia Latina*. Paris: 1841 vol. 33, Letter 162, section 2.
6. Peter Burnell. “The Problem of Service to Unjust Regimes in Augustine’s *City of God*.” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 54 (1993): 177–88.
7. John Locke. *Second Treatise of Government*. In *Two Treatises of Government*. Edited by Peter Laslett. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp. 267–428, sections 18–19.
8. Aristotle. *Politica*. Edited by W.D. Ross. New York: Oxford University, 1957, Book 5, chapter 1.
9. Oath of Enlistment. Available online: <http://www.army.mil/values/oath.html> (accessed on 31 October 2014).
10. Daniel Burns. “Saint Augustin et les fondements rhétoriques de la démocratie chrétienne.” *Revue Électronique de l’Université de Nice*, March 2013. Available online: <http://revel.unice.fr/symposia/rhetoriquedemocratie/index.html?id=610> (accessed on 12 January 2014).

© 2015 by the authors; licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).