

Free Will and Eternity in the Old English Poem *Soul and Body*

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Introduction

During the Middle Ages the focus of Christian faith was not on this world so much as on the next world, since the earthly life was merely regarded as the preparation for a more enduring one (Gatch 198). Hence Old English literature offers a variety of reflections on the period between death and Judgement Day (Gatch 207), for instance in the poem called *Soul and Body*, which survives in two versions.

The poem forms part of the literary tradition known as the Body and Soul Legend, which was influenced by the *Apocalypse of Paul* (Silverstein 12), in the West also known as *Visio Pauli* (Jiroušková 4–5). The vernacular texts influenced by the *Visio* often consist of a soul's address to its body after death (Gatch 207), as do the versions of the *Soul and Body* poem. The shorter of the Old English poems, surviving in the Exeter Book, is comprised of the damned soul's address only, whereas the longer one, contained in the Vercelli Book, additionally presents the address of the saved soul (Jones, "Introduction" xxx). The latter version forms the basis of this paper.

In its depiction of the conflict between the will of the damned soul and the will of its body, the poem follows the bipartite anthropology often found in the Latin tradition, which assumes that a human being consists of body and soul only (Lockett 17). However, most Old English texts, poems especially, rely on a

fourfold anthropology, containing body, mind, life-force and soul (18). *Soul and Body* may therefore be regarded as a special case.

The poem illustrates how man's earthly conduct affects the afterlife. Although it distinguishes between the will of the body and the will of the soul, this paper will suggest a reading that complies with the Augustinian understanding of free will, according to which a human being only has one will. The doctrine of St Augustine was among the most influential ones during the Middle Ages and was to a certain extent influenced by the Neoplatonic tradition of later Greek philosophy. In order to interpret the poem within an Augustinian framework, therefore, this paper will examine the theory on free will by the Neoplatonist Plotinus as well as Augustine's own thoughts on the matter. For a general underlying definition of free will, the paper draws on Eleonore Stump: "an agent acts with free will, or is morally responsible for an act, only if her own intellect and will are the sole ultimate source or first cause of her act" (Stump 126). Besides, the agent has to have at least one alternative action available to him (125). In addition to the theories on free will, both the Plotinian and the Augustinian theory on the soul will be considered. Furthermore, medieval notions of eternity need to be examined in order to analyse the effect of free will on eternity. All in all, this paper aims to show that although the poet of *Soul and Body* distinguishes between the will of the soul and the will of the body, the poem's understanding of will nevertheless matches Augustinian doctrine.

Free Will

Free Will According to Plotinus

Plotinus's view of free will differs a great deal from the general modern understanding inasmuch as his concept of freedom is closely linked to necessity. This connection is established by the soul. The Plotinian notion of freedom may best be understood as a circle that begins and ends in the One. The One causes itself and thereby constitutes the preeminent form of necessity since "that being is necessary which could be no other than it is and which owes its existence only to itself" (Leroux 293). This form of necessity may be equated with freedom. The One, also called the Good, is not a being, because a being "for Plotinus is always limited by form or essence" (Armstrong 237). It rather constitutes "the supreme reality" (238), which produces Intellect as its first product (236).

Intellect, in turn, produces the so-called World Soul (Armstrong 240), which functions as the unifying principle of the cosmos (Clark 286). An individual soul is a "particular version of the Soul (or else the Soul itself is present in all its temporal manifestations), but it is not therefore derived from the soul of the cosmos" (287). Nevertheless, the individual soul only comes into existence when it descends into

the body (Leroux 298), constituting a human being. Thus the descent or self-abasement of the soul is necessary, but it also “results from a guilty will to be itself” (296). Accordingly, the soul’s individuation is characterised by “two inescapable demands: the necessity of wishing for inferior existence and the impossibility of remaining in the realm of the intelligible” (297).

Once soul and body are united, they form a human being. As the human body is the origin of desire (Leroux 301), the soul must needs become subject to desire, too, due to its conjunction with the corporeal (297). Desire involves failure, and thus soul and body in interaction with each other as well as in interaction with matter “are ... coextensively responsible for that which is to become evil” (297). However, the soul in itself “is unable to exercise freedom contrary to the Good” (301). It is important to note here that in the thought of Plotinus the same individual soul exists at two different levels at the same time, namely in the body and in the World Soul (299). The descended soul feels the desire originating in the body that may lead to evil, but only its non-descended equivalent “determines whether the desire will be satisfied” (Leroux 302) and is therefore free to will (304). Thus “freedom exists only on the higher plane of the soul” (304), whereas the responsibility for evil lies with the descended soul exclusively (300). The soul is fully responsible for good and evil actions alike, in spite of the involuntariness of evil deeds (311).

The aforementioned circle is completed by the soul’s ascent, which leads to its reunion with the One. By achieving this reunion, the soul also regains purity, but its ascent is not necessary in the same way as its descent. In order to ascend, the soul must make an effort and discipline its passions, and thus has to struggle to regain purity. Ascent also means liberation from desire, but not all souls will ascend, since not all are able to free themselves (Leroux 298–99). Ascent, therefore, “expresses the freedom of risk-taking, the sense of choosing” (299) and is not in itself necessary, but derived from the necessity of descent (298). The conception of freedom to ascend resembles the general modern notion of free will and corresponds to Stump’s notion of an available alternative to the respective choice, although it depends on necessity. According to Plotinus, there are thus two kinds of freedom, which can be traced back to the fact that humans are dual beings (302). “[T]his duality brings with it a double liberty: the sovereign freedom of the perfect soul and the empirical freedom of the self existing in action” (302). Freedom in general can be regarded as “liberation from manifold existence” (Leroux 304), since the ascended soul ceases to exist on different levels. Thus “[f]reedom is in fact a predicate belonging to the human soul, insofar as it maintains its spiritual origin within itself and fulfills its destiny in the ascent and union with the One” (299).

Taken as a whole, freedom and necessity are not mutually exclusive in the thought of Plotinus, but free will is contained in necessity (Leroux 299). The will can be regarded as free according to Stump because it leads to the action of

ascent, which is not caused by necessity but by the soul itself. However, human freedom can merely be regarded as a faint shadow of the freedom of the One (293–94).

Free Will in Augustinian Doctrine

Scholars differ on the reconstruction of Augustine's views on free will. Some reject the notion of free will in his doctrine, arguing that men's destinies are predetermined by God so that human will has no influence on them at all (Rist 420). The more relevant opinion for this paper, however, is the one that includes both predestination and free will. According to Augustine, faith depends on God's call: "No one ... believes who has not been called, but not all believe who have been called" (Burleigh 393). By mercifully calling men, God also bestows will on the ones he calls because "will is given with the mercy itself" (394). God calls many people in the same way, but only the chosen ones are able to follow the call (395). Those are the ones who actually believe in God and by virtue of their faith receive God's grace (386).

All human beings are free, but they do not enjoy freedom. To be free needs to be understood as being free from virtue and free to sin (Rist 424). Freedom, by contrast, means "obedience to God, the choice and performance of good works under the guidance of God's grace. It is freedom from the necessity of sin" (424). Thus human beings are free to do evil, but unable to perform good deeds without the help of God. Augustine states that no one could "have done good works unless he had received grace through faith" (Burleigh 386). The chosen ones, therefore, who receive God's grace due to their faith, are able to perform good deeds; the ones who are called but not chosen are bound to do evil. Consequently, "[s]in cannot be overcome without the grace of God" (377). But God's grace does not have to be persevering, therefore "no one can know that he is saved and even those who are saved do not lead perfect lives" (Rist 428).

As outlined earlier, human will is given by God. But in fact, "[t]here are two different things that God gives us, the power to will and the thing that we actually will" (Burleigh 393). As Markus puts it: "Human nature embraces a multitude of desires, impulses and drives ... and often they are in serious and sometimes agonizing conflict" (Markus, "Human Action" 381–82). This introduces a hierarchy of wills that Eleonore Stump divides into a so-called first-order volition and a second-order volition. The first-order volition is the will that leads to action, whereas the second-order volition describes a will to will something (Stump 126). According to Augustine, "[t]he power to will he [i.e. God] has willed should be both his and ours, his because he calls us, ours because we follow when called. But what we actually will he alone gives" (Burleigh 393). Thus human beings only have one will. The first-order volition is determined by God, whilst the ability to will on the level of second-order volition lies with man. However, in Stump's interpretation of Augustine, this ability is sufficient for a human being "to form

the first-order volition to ask God to strengthen his will in good; and when he does, God gives him the strength of will he wants and needs. In this sense, even a post-Fall human being *is* able to will not to sin” (Stump 133). Hence the human will is able to change that which is willed with the help of God and can therefore influence its God-given will, which offers an alternative to every first-order volition. Thus a particular volition is caused by the human being itself, corresponding to Stump’s general definition of free will. Stump’s interpretation of Augustine’s hierarchy of wills therefore also explains why human beings are responsible for their choices and actions despite their dependence on God in order to do good.

Free will is closely linked to action, but not a prerequisite for acting. Augustine distinguishes voluntary action as “the range of actions for which a man can be held responsible” (Markus, “Human Action” 383–84) from natural action, which is “the kind of activity or states of mind and feeling which are not in his control” (384). Thus man cannot be held responsible for his feelings and other states of mind, but for what he makes of them by either encouraging them and turning them into actions or restraining them (385). Man, therefore, freely chooses which natural actions cause voluntary action.

As this explanation has shown, Augustine leaves room for free will and voluntary action as well as predestination in the sense of calling and choosing. This paradox resembles Plotinus’ notion of necessity containing free will. Both in Plotinian and Augustinian thought human beings must necessarily sin but are nevertheless responsible for their actions. The dependence of good deeds on God and the implied predetermination of salvation in Augustinian doctrine furthermore resemble Plotinus’ notion of the soul’s ascent depending on the fulfilment of desire which is itself determined by the superior soul. Thus there is free will in either school of thought, but it never exists on its own.

The Soul

Plotinus’ Theory on Soul and Body

As has already been delineated, there are different kinds of soul in Plotinian theory. Individual souls and the World Soul are different from each other and yet the same in the sense that the World Soul is present in all individual souls (Clark 287). Simultaneously, each individual soul exists on the level of the World Soul as well as on the level of a human being at the same time (Leroux 299). These different levels of existence are what Plotinus calls the eternal and the temporal self, and they also form the paradox of his theory on the soul. The eternal self is indivisible, whilst the temporal self is both indivisible and divisible. It is indivisible because the entire soul directs the whole body (which is not a contradiction to its simultaneously existing on two levels) and divided in the sense that it is present in every

part of the body (Clark 284). This can be regarded as the essential thought of Plotinian theory on the soul, for it both explains the aforementioned duality of a human being and constitutes the crucial difference between soul and body.

Keeping in mind that the soul is both the eternal and the temporal self, human beings are dual in the sense that they are comprised of the unity of soul and body, but at the same time their self is the soul (Clark 276). Accordingly, the human self exists on different levels, but it only is the human self by virtue of its unity with the body.

Indivisibility is also the feature that distinguishes the soul from the body. In Plotinian thought, “bodies are always composites” (Clark 277) and depend on a soul: “Without soul there could be no bodies—and therefore no body separate from soul” (276). A body cannot be alive by its own nature because all corporeal elements that might constitute a body are lifeless (277). The soul, by contrast, is indivisible and “essentially alive” (277) because it is not corporeal. It functions as the unifying principle of the composite body and by making “it a unity also makes it alive” (278). The soul’s indivisibility and incorporeality are thus mutually dependent and distinguish the soul from a body.

The unity of soul and body is essential for the body. For the soul, on the other hand, the life of compound is evil, so that it eventually has to separate itself from the body (Clark 275–76). Due to the soul’s simultaneously being inside and outside the body, most souls are not fully in power while in the body (288–89). As Clark explains, “[b]y its involvement with corporeal ... being, the soul may lose touch with its own noncorporeality” (280). This is what subjects the soul to desire.

The soul experiences what affects the body, but is not itself affected by it (Clark 280). Nevertheless, “[b]odily affections may encourage us to make poor judgments” (281) and judgement as well as memory and self-awareness are predicates of the soul (280) since souls are part of the Intellect (Leroux 295). Thus bodily affections do not directly influence the soul, but due to the soul’s engagement with the body may cause the soul to react. Memory, judgement and self-awareness, however, may remind the soul of its incorporeality and thus its connection with Intellect may lead the soul back to good if it manages not to live the life of compound (Clark 275). This means that the soul remains in power while in the body and thereby disciplines the bodily desires. Thus the soul may detach itself from the evils that originate in the unity of body and soul, even during its involvement in the body (275).

The soul’s ability to govern the body determines its fate after the separation of soul and body. Those who do not ascend become men again, or if they lived by sense alone they become animals. Some who additionally possess a passionate temper are even degraded to wild animals (Clark 281). Thus each soul descends into a body that fits its disposition (Clark 288). Whilst descending, the soul “passes through the heavens, and has a celestial body before it reaches” (287) the human body. This is the Plotinian explanation why “what we are and do is figured

in the heavens” (287), but thereby he also makes clear that in spite of the heavenly prefiguration the self is responsible for its earthly conduct (287). Thus the self, meaning the soul, chooses its way of life even before its descent and gives life to an appropriate body. Desires and evil therefore originate in the body, but the soul determines whether the human being will actually indulge in earthly pleasures. Hence the soul also determines whether it will react to bodily affections.

Augustine’s Theory on the Soul

In his theory of man, Augustine abides by the bipartite anthropology and thus regards both soul and body as essential constituents of a human being (Markus, “Man” 355). His definition of man follows the Platonic tradition, describing a human being as a rational soul which uses a mortal earthly body (357). Thus reason is ascribed to the soul. It is important to note that in Augustinian thought all living beings have a soul, but only the human soul is capable of reason (Teske 116). Augustine differentiates between two kinds of reason, namely higher reason and lower reason. The only difference between them is the object they are concerned with, since higher reason deals with eternal truth, whereas lower reason focusses on the corporeal and temporal (Markus, “Reason” 363). Together, higher and lower reason constitute “man’s rational mind” (363). As reason determines knowledge, there are also two kinds of things known (362–63). The mind can either perceive things by itself or through the bodily senses (363). Knowledge of eternal truth means “the mind’s participation in the Word of God” (366) and is obtained “independently of sense-experience” (366), whilst the mind only acquires knowledge of the temporal and corporeal via the body. Since reason is a predicate of the soul, but in its different forms also constitutes the human mind, the soul can be said to imply the mind.

Augustine, like Plotinus, asserts the immateriality and immortality of the soul (Markus, “Man” 360). Unlike Plotinus, however, he draws a connection between the soul’s immortality and the resurrection of the body (Teske 122). As previously shown, he furthermore denies the soul’s immutability as stated by Plotinus and instead stresses that the soul “shares the essential instability of all created beings” (Markus, “Man” 360). It is itself “liable to all the vicissitudes of change and living, to sin and repentance, and is ever in need of God’s grace” (360). Thus the soul itself can change and therefore sin.

Moreover, Augustine firmly distances himself from the Plotinian notion of two kinds of self and insists on a single human self, “which is the subject and the agent of his empirical career” (Markus, “Man” 360). Before his conversion to Christianity, however, he himself believed in a soul in the flesh and a godly soul both belonging to the same human being and equalling each other (Teske 117). Additionally, he followed the idea of the soul being divine in his earlier writings and was consistent with the notion of a universal or World Soul (117–19). But his view changed and he “came to the conviction that the soul is not what God is, but

a creature made by God, made not out of God, but out of nothing” (118). Hence there is no room anymore in later Augustinian doctrine for an equivalent to the Plotinian eternal self.

Despite his disagreement with Plotinian theory in this respect, Augustine remains in accordance with him regarding the notion of the whole soul being present in all parts of the body at the same time (Teske 119). He denies “that the soul is merely one” (119) and states that it “is both one and many” (119), resembling Plotinus’ notion of the temporal self being both indivisible and divisible.

By and large, the human being according to Augustine consists of both body and soul, but the soul can be regarded as the more important constituent. It corresponds to the human self and as the seat of reason it distinguishes man from beast and moreover functions as the willing instance. As Stump puts it, “[a] person who wills has to will something ... and unless this something were suggested by the bodily senses or arose in some way in the mind, the will wouldn’t will it” (132). What the mind perceives itself as well as what the body feels is ultimately processed in the mind. Hence will is closely tied to the mind (132). Due to the mind’s involvement in the soul, it may be regarded as a predicate of the soul as well.

Medieval Notions of Eternity

Neither medieval nor modern philosophy provides a proper definition of eternity, but it generally denotes either “timelessness or everlastingness” (Kukkonen 525). For the purpose of this paper it is sufficient to equate eternity with the afterlife and understand it in a broader sense as the time after death or in a narrower sense as the time following Judgement Day. In both of these understandings eternity possesses a starting point, but it can be understood as everlastingness from that point on.

As has been outlined, the main feature that distinguishes the soul from the body is its immortality. The soul leaves the body at death because it is “destined to outlive that union” (Clark 276). Death, therefore, is defined as the separation of soul and body (Gatch 205). According to Augustine, the immortality of the soul is paralleled by the resurrection of the body. In Anglo-Saxon England it was commonly believed that their joint life on earth prepares man for a more enduring life (198), which begins on Judgement Day, when “the beings judged would be not just spirit or soul but embodied creatures” (204). The time between death and Judgement Day, however, was of comparative indifference during the Middle Ages since all hopes were concentrated on Doomsday (204).

The prevailing notion of the body’s fate after death was natural decay and resurrection on Judgement Day, when it would somehow be restored to its former state. Thus the body dies, but its death is not final. Opinions on the fate of the soul, on the other hand, are less consistent. Occasionally, being was thought to simply stop for the period between death and Judgement Day (Gatch 205). The

Augustinian view is that “souls are in a state of rest, or possibly of purification, until the resurrection, when the good will rise to beatitude and the evil to everlasting punishment” (Teske 122). The damned would suffer an infinite state of dying, meaning that they would be neither dead nor alive for eternity. The saved ones, by contrast, would be perfected after the resurrection, but they would never reach the nature of God due to the fact that they were created by him (Pelikan 33).

Although the period between death and Judgement Day was of less importance in medieval thought than Judgement Day itself, Old English literature offers a variety of accounts on the afterlife before Judgement Day, which were primarily written in the vernacular. Hence they could function as a means of edification for the less educated people who did not know Latin (Gatch 207). The purpose of the texts consisting of a soul’s address to its body “is not to spell out doctrine so much as to admonish the audience to live well in view of the eternal consequences of temporal behaviour” (208). Souls in this kind of Old English literature “usually describe themselves as helpless victims of their bodies’ thoughts and desires” (Jones, “Introduction” xxx), but as the following analysis will show, this is not the only possible reading of a poem such as *Soul and Body*.

The Relationship of Soul and Body in the Poem

Soul and Body I, which survives in the Vercelli Book, comprises two accounts of the fate of soul and body after death and thereby follows the bipartite anthropology. Both in the account of the damned soul and in the account of the saved soul, the soul is characterised by its yearning for God (40–41, 143–44), who joined it with the body (46).¹

The poem’s division into the account of the damned soul and the account of the saved soul serves the didactic purpose of vernacular literature dealing with soul-body addresses, namely to demonstrate the importance of preparation for the afterlife in preference to earthly pleasures: “Ne synt þine æhta awihte / þe ðu her on moldan mannum eowdest” (74–75).² Other characteristics of this tradition featured in the poem are the soul’s utter helplessness and the corresponding supremacy of the body.

In the account of the damned soul, the body’s supremacy is depicted by the contrast of the will of the soul and the will of the body:

¹ References to and translations of *Soul and Body* follow the edition by Christopher A. Jones throughout.

² “Those possessions of yours that you displayed before others here on earth amount to nothing” (197).

Wære þu þe wiste wlanc ond wines sæd,
 þrymful þunedest, ond ic ofþyrsted wæs
 Godes lic-homan, gastes drynces (39–41).³

The soul's will is subjected to the will of the body and hence the body determines their fate after death. Whilst both bodies inevitably die and afterwards decay until their resurrection on Judgement Day (100), the fates of the damned soul and the saved soul during the period between death and Judgement Day differ a lot.

The damned soul is obliged to seek out its body every seventh night for three hundred years (10–12), “butan ær þeod-cyning, / ælmihtig God, ende worulde / wyrcean wille.”⁴ It is “synnum gesargod” (“wracked with sins,” 197) and has to leave the body again “on han-cred, þonne halige men / lifendum Gode lof-sang doð.”⁵ Thus it has to stay remote from God even after its separation from the body. It moreover dwells in an “arlesan eardung-stowe” (“merciless abodes,” 197), whereas the saved soul already lives in the kingdom of God, “fægere gefrætewod” (“beautifully adorned,” 201) and “arum bewunden” (“wreathed with honors,” 201). This depicts a strong contrast between the fates of the damned soul and the saved soul, which matches the Augustinian notion of punishment and beatitude. The damned soul's obligation to seek out its body against its will (63) may furthermore be regarded as the process of purification in the Augustinian sense.

During their earthly life, the damned soul was longing for its separation from the body (37–38). It may even be said to regret that it was sent into the body at all because it wishes that the body had never been endowed with *snyttro* (“reason,” 197), which according to Augustine belongs to the soul itself. Furthermore, the poem concurs with the Augustinian and Plotinian notion of the soul being present in all parts of the body, as may be derived from the following lines:

þonne ne bið nan na to þæs lytel lið on lime aweaxan,
 þæt ðu ne scyle for anra gehwylcum onsundrum
 riht agildan, þonne reðe bið
 dryhten æt þam dome (96–99).⁶

Since the damned soul knows of all the deeds of every bodily limb, it must be present in all parts of the body simultaneously. As the quotation shows, the body's deeds will be judged in their entirety on Doomsday and the body will have to

³ “You were flushed with food and sated with wine, you were puffed up with grandeur, and I was thirsting after God's body, after drink for the spirit” (195).

⁴ “Unless the king of nations, almighty God, ... wills to make an end to this world before then” (193).

⁵ “At the cock's crow, when the holy offer their hymn of praise to the living God” (197).

⁶ “No member that has grown on a limb of your body is so small that you will not then be obliged to give an account for every single one individually, when the Lord is angry in that judgment” (199; square brackets by the translator have been omitted.).

answer for both its own and the soul's conduct on earth (87–88), for they will then jointly be reborn (99–100). The body's sole responsibility for their shared fate afterwards is also emphasised by the damned soul's accusation: "sculon wit þonne eft æt somne siððan brucan / swylcra yrmða, swa ðu unc her ær scrife!" (101–02).⁷ The saved soul, on the other hand, is looking forward to Judgement Day because they will afterwards jointly be rewarded for the body's pursuit of the soul's needs (139–45): "moton wyt þonne æt somne syþþan brucan / swylcra arna swa ðu unc her ær scrife" (160–61).⁸ Thus the saved soul is subjected to the body as well. But given the body's good conduct, it regrets its decay (154–56), whereas the damned soul uses the body's transiency as a means of insulting it, as at the beginning of its address: "to hwan drehtest ðu me, / eorðan fulnes eal forwisnad, / lames gelicnes?"⁹ The damned soul's attitude towards its body may therefore be regarded as despising and reproachful, whilst the saved soul's relationship to the body is characterised by sympathy and gratitude.

Taken as a whole, *Soul and Body* complies with Augustinian doctrine in its differentiation between eternal punishment and beatitude as well as in its connection between the soul's immortality and the resurrection of the body. In the poem, the relationship of the two human constituents is characterised by the soul's lack of power. The soul was sent into the body by God and is from that point on entirely subjected to it. Hence it has no influence on its own fate after death, whilst the body bears the sole responsibility for both the soul's fate before Judgement Day and their common fate thereafter. Albeit united during the earthly life, both soul and body seem to have individual wills, but the will of the soul is ruled out by the will of the body when it comes to action. Thus the poem appears at first glance to be at odds with the Augustinian doctrine on free will.

The Problem of Two Willing Instances

Notwithstanding the ostensible will of the body, the soul can be regarded as the sole willing instance in the poem, opening up a reading of the poem's understanding of the will compatible with both Augustinian and Plotinian thought. As previously delineated, free will is a predicate of the soul in both of these schools of thought. According to Augustine, it belongs to the mind, which itself is a property of the soul, so that the body cannot have a will of its own. This hypothesis is also supported by Plotinus, who asserts that the body is not even alive without a soul, so that the soul functions as a necessary condition for the existence of a live body. Nevertheless, that which is willed can be either suggested by the mind itself or by

⁷ "Then, brought together once more, we will have to experience from that point on such miseries as you have previously ordained for the two us [sic] here" (199).

⁸ "Then the two of us will afterward be able to enjoy together such graces as you previously ordained for us" (203).

⁹ "Why did you torment me, you wholly corrupt filth of the earth, you likeness of mud?" (193).

the body. The soul's yearning for *gastes drync* ("drink for the spirit," 195), for instance, derives from the mind itself, whereas the desire for earthly pleasures originates in the body. In order to be capable of reacting to bodily suggestions, the soul must be present in all parts of the body simultaneously, and this is true of the soul in the poem. It knows about all deeds of every single limb of the body (96–97), in addition to its own desire for God. Hence it complies with Augustinian and Plotinian doctrine in that respect. This also matches the Augustinian doctrine of natural and voluntary action inasmuch as natural action can be caused both by the mind itself and by bodily affections. Thus the mind and thereby the will determine which natural action influences voluntary action, suggesting that the man constituted by the damned soul and its body has chosen the feelings caused by the body as a basis for his voluntary actions, while the man comprised of the saved soul and its body has turned the natural action determined by the mind itself into voluntary action. Since will according to both Plotinus and Augustine is a predicate of the soul, the soul can be held responsible for man's voluntary actions. Its choice of voluntary action on the basis of natural action also complies with Stump's notion of there being an alternative to an action that is caused by free will.

The opposing kinds of will governed by soul and body can either be read as distinct wills, as the poem suggests, or as two volitions on different levels in a hierarchy of wills of the same willing instance, as in Stump's understanding of Augustine. This also matches the notion of human desires and drives being in conflict with each other, although they belong to a single human will. According to the damned soul's account, the body's desire is dominant and hence may be regarded as the first-order volition according to Stump. The soul's yearning for God would then occur on the level of second-order volition. Applying Augustinian doctrine to the poem, the soul may be regarded as the sole willing instance, which itself wills on the first-order level to indulge in earthly pleasures, as suggested by the body, although it wills to seek God on the second-order level.

According to Augustine, the first-order volition is determined by God, whereas the ability to will on the second-order level lies with the soul. In Stump's interpretation, the second-order volition suffices to attain the first-order volition of requesting God's assistance in refraining from sinning. Accordingly, the damned soul of the poem must have proved unable to form that volition. There is both an Augustinian and a Plotinian explanation for this. The Augustinian solution refers to the mutability of the soul as well as to predestination. The soul itself is liable to sin due to its mutability, but since the damned soul of the poem is conscious of its sins, the human being to which it belonged must have been called by God. However, it was not chosen; otherwise it would have been able to follow the call by resisting bodily desires. Thus the human being comprised of this particular body and soul remained free to sin and was not freed by God. Even if it might have been able to honour God's call for a while, this does not guarantee salvation, since God's grace need not last. Hence the soul's mutability as well as

God's predestination may affect its ability to form the requisite volition. The explanation according to Plotinus, on the other hand, is concerned with the soul's involvement in the corporeal. Due to its unity with the body, the soul is not fully in power during its earthly life, but is subjected to bodily desires. Accordingly, these desires constitute the first-order volition.

The man constituted by the saved soul and its body, by contrast, must have been both called and chosen by God, according to Augustinian doctrine, and is therefore freed from sin during its earthly life. He has followed God's call and hence the soul has been able to restrain bodily desires. The soul's will to seek God and refrain from sinning must have been either given by God as first-order volition, which would only lead to its salvation if God's grace has persevered, or the soul itself must have been strong enough during its union with the body to form the second-order volition—which then becomes the first-order volition—of asking God to change its first-order volition. But even in that case the volition is God-given in a sense, since “any goodness in the will . . . is a gift of God” (Stump 131). This is also the reason why the second-order volition can become the first-order volition. Thus the saved soul is able to will good by virtue of God's mercy, as is the damned soul, but unlike the damned soul, the good soul has also received the grace required in order to obtain the first-order volition to actually do good. It has achieved this state of its own free will, since its second-order volition is decisive in order to attain God's grace. Thus the soul's will during its life in the body prompts God's assistance in controlling the body's desires.

This analysis of *Soul and Body* from an Augustinian and Plotinian point of view shows that the damned soul may be regarded as the victim of the body's sinfulness, as the poem suggests at first glance. In addition, it can be understood as the sole willing instance of the poem and thereby may itself be held responsible for the conduct of man on earth as well as for the fate of soul and body after death.

The Effect of Free Will on Eternity

Interpreting the poem in a way that conceives of the soul as the only willing instance, the following section delineates to what extent this entails the soul's responsibility for the fate of both soul and body after death.

As has been outlined, *Soul and Body* depicts how man's conduct on earth influences the fate of the soul after death and the fate of both soul and body after Judgement Day. According to the account of the damned soul, indulging in earthly pleasures and forgetting to provide for the afterlife leads to damnation. During life, the human being constituted by the now-damned soul and its body committed the sin of gluttony, being “wiste wlanc ond wines sæd” (“flushed with food and sated with wine,” 195), and amassed earthly goods (57–60), additionally indulging in the sin of greed. Due to this bad conduct, the soul is *synnum gesargod* (“wracked with sins,” 197) after death and has to dwell in an *arleas eardung-stowe*

(“merciless abodes,” 197) until Judgement Day, followed by each individual’s account of their deeds:

Ðonne wyle dryhten sylf dæda gehyran
 hæleða gehwylces, heofena scippend,
 æt ealra manna gehwam muðes reorde
 wunda wiðer-lean (91–94).¹⁰

Soul and body will then be “geedbyrded oþre sipe” (“brought ... to life a second time,” 199) and they will have to suffer such miseries as fit their past conduct (101–02).

The account of the saved soul, on the other hand, explains how abiding by the needs and wants of the soul instead of pursuing bodily desires leads to salvation. After death, the soul lives on in the kingdom of God (137) and, addressing its body during a visit, describes the body’s conduct during life:

Fæstest ðu on foldan ond gefyldest me
 Godes lic-homan, gastes drynces.
 Wære ðu on wædle, sealdest me wilna geniht.
 ...
 Bygdest ðu þe for hæleðum ond ahofe me
 on ecne dream (143–53).¹¹

The soul is therefore looking forward to its reunion with the body on Judgement Day since the body’s fate of decaying in its grave will then be over and they will jointly be rewarded for their past conduct:

Moton wyt þonne ætsomne syþþan brucan
 swylcra arna swa ðu unc ær scrife,
 ond unc on heofonum heah-þungene beon.
 Ne þurfon wyt beon cearie æt cyme dryhtenes,
 ne þære andsware yfele habban
 sorge in hreðe, ac wyt sylfe magon
 æt ðam dome þær dædum agilpan,
 hwylce earnunga uncre wæron (160–67).¹²

¹⁰ “Then the Lord himself, the creator of the heavens, will hear the deeds of each and every man, hear in speech from the mouth of every single person his recompense for Christ’s wounds” (199; square brackets by the translator have been omitted).

¹¹ “You fasted on earth and filled me with God’s body, with the drink of the spirit. You were in poverty and gave me abundance of joys ... You made yourself low in men’s eyes and raised me up to everlasting joy” (201–03).

¹² “Then the two of us will afterward be able to enjoy together such graces as you previously ordained for us, and be utterly perfected in heaven. We will not need to be worried at the Lord’s coming and have anxious care at heart concerning our response. Rather the two of us will be able to exult there about our deeds and what merits were ours” (203).

Although both of these accounts ascribe the actions during earthly life to the body, the soul can be regarded as the sole willing instance. Since will leads to action and hence also to sinning, the soul can thus be held responsible for either fate after death. As has been explained by the hierarchy of wills, action, in Augustinian thought, is freely chosen by the soul in spite of God's predestination.

This idea is supported by Plotinian doctrine, according to which desire and evil originate in the body, whilst the non-descended soul decides whether to give in to them. Furthermore, the soul itself decides upon a way of living before its descent and in consequence of its decision descends into a suitable body. Following these notions of Plotinian thought, the damned soul of the poem can be held responsible for the body's actions by virtue of its choice of lifestyle. Thus it would have descended into a body that was less inclined to sin, if it had really been as innocent as it claims after the death of its body. Hence the damned soul bears the responsibility for the body's sinful behaviour, although it becomes subjected to the bodily desires on the descended level, and thereby also determines their fate on Judgment Day. The saved soul, on the other hand, must have chosen a good life and consequently descended into a body less inclined to sin.

In Plotinian thought, the soul must make an effort during its descended life, for instance by restraining the bodily desires, in order to ascend. Depending on its choice of lifestyle, it may either be able to do so—and hence liberate itself from its existence on two different levels—or not. Applying this thought to the poem, the soul would thus have to prove itself by resisting the body's desire for food, drink and earthly riches in order to be admitted to its *fader rice* ("kingdom of my father," 201). This resembles the Augustinian notion of predestination to salvation in that the earthly conduct and the consequential fate after death are already determined before the soul's union with the body. However, in a Plotinian reading of the poem, both the earthly lifestyle and the afterlife are the responsibility of the soul exclusively. In an Augustinian interpretation, by contrast, they are determined by the soul's free will as well as by God's mercy. Accordingly, the saved soul must have been given God's grace either as a good first-order volition or as an answer to a second-order volition and hence it was able to resist the bodily desires and instead followed God's law.

Since free will leads to action, both in the Augustinian sense of asking God to change one's first-order volition and in the Plotinian sense of choosing a way of life beforehand, the soul can be held responsible for the human conduct during life as well as for the fate of soul and body after death, which is determined by one's previous lifestyle. Free will can therefore be said to have significant influence on the fate of body and soul in eternity.

Conclusion

By and large, *Soul and Body* forms part of the Body and Soul Legend by virtue of the soul's address to the body and its conveyed didactic purpose, which relies on the differentiation between the will of the soul and the will of the body in order to illustrate the effects of man's earthly conduct on the afterlife. Due to its depiction of the soul as a helpless victim of the body's desires, this tradition contrasts strongly with both Augustinian and Plotinian doctrine on free will and the soul since in both of these doctrines free will is ascribed to the soul only. Nevertheless, the preceding analysis has shown in how far the souls in the poem can be regarded as the sole willing instances of the soul-body compounds as well, following the logic of Augustine and Plotinus. Especially relying on Augustine's hierarchy of wills, it has been shown that the will of the body and the will of the soul can be interpreted as different levels of volition of the same willing instance, which due to the will's connection with the mind can be identified as the rational human soul. Since the second-order volition, which is caused by the soul itself, determines whether the first-order volition will be altered, both the damned soul's and the saved soul's actions during earthly life correspond to Stump's general definition of free will.

In general, the poem complies with Augustinian doctrine in several respects. Thus it mirrors Augustine's link between the soul's immortality and the resurrection of the body as well as his juxtaposition of punishment and beatitude in the afterlife. Furthermore, the damned soul's obligation to seek out its body at night may be regarded as a process of purification, which according to Augustine characterises the period between death and Judgement Day.

Plotinian thought, on the other hand, has pre-eminently been applied to the poem in order to demonstrate the soul's responsibility for man's earthly conduct, since the soul chooses a way of life prior to its descent and accordingly descends into an appropriate body. Following Augustinian doctrine, it has furthermore been shown that the soul's free choice of a natural action as the basis for voluntary action always leaves an alternative to the respective voluntary action due to the variety of natural actions that can either be suggested by the body or the mind itself. This notion is supported by the Plotinian view that the soul chooses an earthly lifestyle even before its descent.

As the poem shows, man's conduct on earth determines the soul's fate after death as well as its joint fate with the body after Judgement Day. In an Augustinian and Plotinian interpretation of the poem, the soul can therefore be held responsible for its own and the body's fate in eternity. Its accusations of the body may hence be regarded as self-accusations.

This analysis of *Soul and Body I* has shown an alternative to the poem's default interpretation. Although the reading that distinguishes between the will of the soul and the will of the body is more straightforward, it has been demonstrated that the soul can also be understood as the sole willing instance in the Augustinian sense,

freely choosing man's earthly conduct and hence responsible for the joint fate of soul and body on Judgement Day. As such, *Soul and Body I* is fully compatible with Augustine's teachings on free will.

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