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# AUGUSTINE ON ANGELIC KNOWLEDGE

## INTRODUCTION

The word used for investigation in Greek is *skepsis*. Those who investigated the possibility of the knowledge of anything referred to themselves as sceptics in ancient times. They sometimes also address themselves as *ephektikoi* which means ‘people who suspend’ and by suspension, they meant the suspension of epistemological judgment of any investigative action carried out by them. They refrained from propounding theories of knowledge or denying the possibility of knowledge being found. The main tenets of ancient sceptics are investigation, belief, suspension of judgment, appearances and criterion of truth. Philosophical concepts like doubt, knowledge, certainty, justified belief were of less significance to them. For these ancient sceptics nothing can be known (Lee 2005). To claim that nothing can be known is in itself a demonstration of certainty, that is why Bett asked “[How] can the sceptics say anything meaningful about their philosophy without asserting anything about how things are” (Bett 2013)? Castagnoli said that the sceptics are self-refuting, inconsistent, and self-contradictory (Castagnoli 2010). No matter how well sceptical arguments are rehearsed and structured, real-life adherence to these sceptical arguments always prove unsuccessful (Johnson 2001).

After the ancient or pre-Socratic sceptics, there is another group called the *Academic Scepticism*. This is Plato’s academy which was now headed by Arcesilaus who reintroduced the old Socratic axiom of examining everything in order to uproot falsehood from our belief system (Cicero, Acad. II.74, I.46). This sceptical school was dedicated to a lifestyle guided by reason (Cooper 2004b, Vogt 2013). The Academy is known for three philosophical methods: firstly, *The Method*

which scholars often refer to as *The Dialectical Method* (Couissin 1929). This method which draws its inspiration from Socrates, usually begins by asking someone a question, and then the person's answers or premises are further used to examine the person's views on the subject matter. Phrases like: "so, such-and-such is not so-and-so" or "according to *your* premises, such-and-such follows" are often found in this method. Secondly, the *Criterion of Truth* which was a major point of disagreement between Arcesilaus and Zeno. For Zeno, knowledge and virtue are attainable with the use of reason and intellect which are part of our human nature. For Zeno, knowledge is ultimately within the reach of human beings. Arcesilaus of the *Academy* accused Zeno of his overwhelming optimism about the human ability to acquire knowledge (Frede 1983). This disagreement between Arcesilaus and Zeno led the *Academy* to the question of the criterion for reaching truth or establishing knowledge. The words *kanôn* meaning (measuring stick) and *kritêrion* were introduced in establishing what can be considered truth or knowledge. In this context, criterion is the yardstick used for testing against the non-existence or unattainable claim of truth about reality. For the Stoics represented by Zeno, they argued that the criterion of truth is a certain kind of impression called cognitive impression (*phantasia katalêptikê*)— this is the norm that is innate in the practice of believing that only the truth should be believed. Zeno argues that there are many impressions but only some are cognitive impressions (the truth). The *Academy* questioned the possibility of this kind of cognitive impression. For the *Academy*, all impressions could be phenomenologically indistinguishable from cognitive impressions, thereby creating room for the misrepresentation of impressions that are not cognitive as cognitive impression. Thirdly, the *Action*, which results from the Stoics' accusation of the *Academy's* inability to act due to their suspension of epistemological judgments. For the Stoics, the mind has three possible movements namely: impression, assent, and impulse (Plutarch, *Col.* 1122a-d). Impression is assented to by an agent that *D* is a must-do and this assent is an impulse for an action to be carried out on *D* and in the absence of no external interference, this action is executed (Inwood 1985). The Stoics' philosophy holds that assent is the bedrock of every action and without assent there can be not action. There is no room for determinism of an action by the Stoics (Bobzien 1998). Arcesilaus and the sceptic *Academy* argued to the contrary that there can be an action without assent (Plutarch, *Col.* 1122A-d), and so you do not have to belief that the action done is *to be* done. This is like saying rational beings act like irrational animals.

Plotinus, on the contrary, differed from the *Academy*, he believed in the possibility of knowledge and in his theory of knowledge treated perception and memory. In treating perception and memory, Plotinus, started by stating what per-

ception and memory is not. Perceptions are not imprints or seal-impression on the soul or mind. Likewise, memory is not the retention of information or impression on the mind or soul. For Plotinus, perception is grasped when the object of perception is in the direct line of vision. For perception to happen, there must be a vision and for vision to happen there must be a distance between an agent who sees and the object seen. In like manner, in the vision of the mind, there is a distance between the mind and the incorporeal object seen by the mind, therefore the perceptions are not imprinted on the mind because distance is needed for vision to take place (*Ennead* 6.I). Impression is not made on the mind because it will mean the mind is not active in the process of knowing but to the contrary the mind is active therefore the mind seeks for vision and not the impression of the object made on the mind. Intellectual knowledge, comes from the soul not by impression but from within and not from without.<sup>1</sup>

It is on this background of the sceptics' denial of knowledge, truth and certainty that Augustine began his thoughts on knowledge. For Augustine, knowledge, truth and certainty are attainable to humans. He demonstrated his counter-argument through his treatment of three types of visions: corporeal vision (*visio corporalis*), spiritual vision (*visio spiritualis*), and intellectual vision (*visio intellectualis*), fundamental for the processes of knowledge acquisition of a created rational being.

## THE TRUTH, THE MIND AND THE INTELLECT

For Augustine, truth is contained within itself and every intellectual being's intellect has the capacity for knowing the truth.<sup>2</sup> Augustine asked a question that if two persons say two things and they both recognised that what they said is true, how did they arrive at that knowledge of the truth? The truth of what they both expressed is not in the persons who expressed them, but in a higher Being who afforded them the truth.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the truth is not originated in any created being but

1 See Plotinus, *Ennead* VI.2 γνώση των πραγμάτων που ανήκουν στον Διανοούμενο δεν συνοδεύεται σε κανέναν τέτοιο βαθμό από αντίκτυπο ή εντύπωση: έρχονται μπροστά, αντίθετα, ως εκ των έσω, σε αντίθεση με τα αισθητήρια αντικείμενα που είναι γνωστά ως από έξω: έχουν πιο εμφανικά τον χαρακτήρα του πράξεις? είναι πράξεις με την αωστηρότερη έννοια, γιατί η προέλευσή τους βρίσκειται στην ψυχή, και κάθε έννοια αυτής της Διανοητικής τάξης είναι η ψυχή για την Πράξη της.

2 See Augustine, *De Trinitate* XIV.VII.9 "[Veritas inveniri potest] in ipsa veritate, lux mentis", *De civitate Dei* XII.3 "est enim mens intellectualis luminis capax, qua discernimus iustum et iniustum".

3 See Augustine, *Confessiones* XII.XXV.35 "Si utrumque videmus verum esse quod dicis, et verum est etiam quod dico; ubi si quaeram, hoc videmus? Non video in te, nec tu in me, sed utrumque videmus in incommutabili veritate, quae est altior mentibus nostris ... lucem a Domino Deo nostro", *De magistro* XII.40 "Ea quae mente cernimus, recta in ipso veritatis lumine interiori praesentia percipimus, si quid verum cernitur, docetur, ipsas res ab intus Dei illustratione manifestatas".

can be attained by a created being through divine aid. In the process of acquiring truth, it is not the light or the truth that the mind beholds that is responsible for the errors that the mind may make about the truth. Our cognitive process occurs in this manner: just as the bodily eyes need light to be able to see corporeal things clearly, so also does the eyes of the mind need divine Light to be able to perceive intelligible realities. The bodily eyes are designed to see material objects, while mental eyes are design to see intelligible things. Without the divine Light or illumination, the mind cannot attain the truth.<sup>4</sup> Certainty in the truth in out the created mind and intellect has ascertained is only possible with the grace of divine illumination.<sup>5</sup>

### AUGUSTINE ON THE THREE TYPES OF VISIONS

Augustine in his *De genesi ad litteram*, discussed three types of visions, namely: *visio corporalis* (corporeal vision), *visio spiritualis* (spiritual vision), *visio intellectualis* (intellectual vision). Simply put, *visio corporalis* is the physical image or sight we have of corporeal objects. *Visio spiritualis* is the incorporeal image or sight we have of things that have images or shapes. *Visio intellectualis* is the sight of those things without images, knowing things as they really are without the aid of an image. To further explain what these visions mean, Augustine, quoted Matthew “You shall love your neighbour as yourself” (Matthew 22:39). The visible alphabets and words forming the quote are the *visio corporalis*, the image of a neighbour is the *visio spiritualis*, and vision love which is without an image is *visio intellectualis*.<sup>6</sup> The highest form of vision, in this case, knowledge, is the *visio intellectualis*. This is the kind of knowledge possessed by the angels. The true knowledge of things free from the aid of images. It is the kind of knowledge that guarantees correct interpretation of things, it is the knowledge per true definition.<sup>7</sup> This *visio intellectualis* does not begin with the senses but it begins in the intellect, and seeks to contemplate things in their truest form. Augustine, further gave two instances from

4 See Augustine, *De magistro* XI.38 “*Qui nos docet, id est Christus, est sapientia, quam quidem consulit omnis anima rationalis. Si autem anima quandoque fallitur, hoc non fit propter defectum veritatis consulentis, sicut non ex aliquo defectu lucis extra nos oculi corporis falluntur*”, *De Trinitate* XII.XV.24, XV.XXVII.50

5 Ibid. XV.XXVII.50 “*Lux illa interioribus oculis nostris patefacta est haec et alia quae similiter certa sunt*”.

6 See Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram* XII.XI.22: *cum enim legitur: diliges proximum tuum tamquam te ipsum, corporaliter litterae videntur, spiritaliter proximus cogitatur, intellectualiter dilectio conspicitur. sed et litterae absentes possunt spiritaliter cogitari et proximus praesens potest corporaliter videri, dilectio autem nec per substantiam suam potest oculis corporis cerni nec per imaginem corpori similem spiritu cogitari, sed sola mente, id est intellectu, cognosci et percipi* (cf. also 12.VI.XV).

7 Ibid. XII.XI.22 and XII.XIV.29: *intellectualis autem visio non fallitur; aut enim non intellegit, qui aliud opinatur quam est, aut, si intellegit, continuo verum est; 12.XXV.52: at vero in illis intellectualibus visis non fallitur.*

the scriptures to substantiate his thought on intellectual vision. Paul's rapture to the third heaven (2 Corinthians 12, 2-4; *De Genesi ad litteram* 12, 1, 1- 12, 5, 14) and Moses's face-to-face encounter with God (Exodus 33, 11-23; Numbers 12, 8; *De Genesi ad litteram* 12, 4, 9; 12, 27, 55-12, 28, 56). For Augustine, there were no images involved in these experiences, so that they meet the basic criterion for intellectual vision.

The intellectual vision, though it deals with things without images, celestial things as already mentioned, it also has another function which is related to images. When the vision of corporeal objects meets the physical sight, an image of the physical object is formed in the spirit of the agent with the vision. If the agent of the vision is irrational (beasts), the image formed, does not ascend further from the spirit of the agent but if the agent is rational, the image formed in the spirit of the agent of the vision, ascends to the intellect of the agent. The intellect immediately seeks the understanding of the image formed.<sup>8</sup> The intellectual vision gives the truest meaning to the image of the spiritual vision. The knowledge of intellectual vision is infallible. This may lead one to conclude that, the angels possessing intellectual vision through divine illumination, possess infallible knowledge of things made known to them by God. This is the background that led to Augustine's thought on knowledge in general but in this paper, we will concern ourselves with Augustine's theology on the knowledge of the angels.

## DIVINE ILLUMINATION

Divine illumination will help us to understand the knowledge of the angels as treated by Augustine. What then is divine illumination? Divine illumination is the process of knowledge assisted by the divine grace. It is the divine that aids the intellectual created being to attain certain knowledge and certainty of knowledge. The attainment of this kind of knowledge is not from anything without but from the divine who is within. Socrates said "I have a divine or spiritual sign which Meletus has ridiculed in his deposition. This began when I was a child. It is a voice, and whenever it speaks it turns me away from something I am about to do, but it never encourages me to do anything" (*Apology* 31.d). This is Socrates talking about how he receives divine illumination on what to do and things to avoid from a divine being.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. XXI.XI.22: *nam cum aliquid oculis cernitur, continuo fit imago eius in spiritu. ... et siquidem spiritus irrationalis est, veluti pecoris, hoc usque oculi nuntiant; si autem anima rationalis est, etiam intellectui nuntiatur, qui et spiritui praesidet, ut, si illud, quod hauserunt oculi atque id spiritui, ut eius illic imago fieret, nuntiaverunt, alicuius rei signum est, aut intellegatur continuo, quid significet, aut quaeratur, quoniam nec intellegi nec require nisi officio mentis potest.*

Plato also favours the concept of divine illumination when he spoke about the soul recollecting things about the world of Forms, suggesting that there is some form of divine deposit of knowledge that comes in the form of recollection. Aristotle likewise echoed this concept when he said “This intellect is separate, unaffected, and unmixed, being in essence activity [...]. It is not the case that it sometimes thinks and at other times not. In separation it is just what it is, and this alone is immortal and eternal” (*De anima* III 5, 430a17–23). Plotinus, is not excluded from this line of thought. For him, his theory of divine emanation where the One begets Intelligence, Intelligence begets, Soul and Soul, begets souls demonstrates the sharing of divine light from the One to the Intelligence, and the Intelligence in turn shares the light with the Soul etc. The truth which the divine light brings is from itself and not from any other being (Ennead I.II.I.4, I.IV.XVI.10-13).

Augustine was a great proponent of divine illumination, for him the mind is sometimes enlightened by the divine Light which is not the mind itself, and in this way, the mind participates in the truth, because the mind is not the truth itself. “You will light my lamp, Lord. None other than you is teacher of the truth, wherever and from whatever source it is manifest” (*Confessiones* IV.XV.25, V.VI.10). This means that angels and humans can participate in the truth when the divine Light shines truth in their minds. Augustine mentioned something similar to Plotinus and Socrates’ experiences about the knowledge received from the divine Light assisting the mind to know what is good which should be pursued and what is evil which should be avoided. The good angel’s reception of divine illumination helped them to turn towards God who is the supreme Good. Augustine said “Truth [or knowledge], when did you ever fail to walk with me, teaching me what to avoid and what to seek [...]. Without you I could discern none of these things” (Ibid. X.XL.65).

The big question about divine illumination with regards to the angels would be, how does divine illumination influence the independent minds of the angels? This may happen in two ways: first, the angels know themselves and other creatures by looking at them and knowing them (*visio spiritualis*) and when they turn to God, He shows them how they and other created things really are in the beatific vision (*visio intellectualis*), this will be a direct knowledge from God to them about themselves and other created things. The second way in which the divine Light impresses upon the angelic intellect is by God not directly providing them with the direct truth, but He gives them insight into the truth, thereby leading them to arriving at the truth. This is how the angels enjoy divine illumination. This instance cited by Augustine further expresses the second point on how the angels are enlightened. “If we both see that what you say is true, and we both see that what I say is true,

then where do we see that? Not I in you, nor you in me, but both of us in that unalterable truth that is above our minds” (Ibid. XII.XXV.35).

Augustine says only God can teach the angels the truth. The angels may learn things by themselves or be told things by higher angels but if they do not understand what they are told it remains only a belief, truth is reached when they understand what has been communicated to them. “When I speak the truth, I do not teach someone who sees these truths. For he is taught not by my words but by the things themselves made manifest within when God discloses them” (*De magistro* XII.40). Whether the angels knew something by turning to themselves or had been told by higher angels, this part is not irrelevant in this process of arriving at knowledge. This first part in the process of knowledge is only but an idea that is only verifiable in light of God’s illumination. Therefore, Illumination is that which aids the angelic epistemological process from just an idea or a belief to true knowledge. Illumination provides justification (Stanford.edu 2020). This invariably means that the evil angels lack true knowledge because they do not have access to divine illumination for the verification of their ideas or beliefs. For Augustine, the fallen angels have bodies and he says that true knowledge transcends knowledge gained through the body.<sup>9</sup>

### **VESPERTINE (COGNITIO VESPERTINA) AND MATUTINE (COGNITIO MATUTINA) ANGELIC KNOWLEDGE**

By vespertinal and matutinal angelic knowledge we mean evening and morning knowledge of the angels. Where does this idea come from? What do we mean by vespertine and matutine knowledge of angels? To begin, let us first see some verses from Genesis 1 about creation:

And God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day. And God said, “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” And God made the firmament and separated the waters which

<sup>9</sup> See Augustine, Eighty-three Different Questions, q.9. *omne quod corporei sensus attingunt, quod etiam sensibile dicitur, incessanter mutatur... Quod autem non est, percipi non potest; Percipitur enim quod in scientia comprehenditur. Sed id quod continue mutatur, comprehendi non potest. Ergo non est expectanda pura veritas a sensibus corporis.*

were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament. And it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day (Genesis 1:3-8).

From the text above, we can see the mention of the creation of light on the first day of creation but sun and moon as we know it were created on the fourth day of creation, so what light was created on the first day? Again, how can the author of Genesis keep talking about evening and morning coming when sun and moon were not yet in existence? And further, why is it that the author of Genesis does not talk about night, why from evening he skips to morning when we know that after evening comes night before morning comes?

Let us first attempt to answer the question about the light that was created on the first day of creation before the creation of sun and moon on the fourth day of creation. Augustine puzzled over what this light on the first day could mean. What could this light be and how light would possibly be circling around the earth that was still at this time formless (*De Genesi ad litteram*, V.1)? Augustine knew that no explanation of a physical light would be sufficient enough because how can we explain its periodic movement, so he said that this light is spiritual. This light are the angels, the holy city of God composed of the angels and blessed spirits. It is the city that the Apostle Paul spoke of when he said, '(that) Jerusalem which is above is our eternal mother in heaven' (Galatians 4:26); and in another place, 'For ye are all the children of the light and the children of the day' (1 Thessalonians 5:5)" (*De civitate Dei* XI.7). The angels appear in Scripture as luminaries of light, wisdom, and reason. Thus, light is primarily the brilliance of reason and wisdom at the beginning of creation which permeates through all crevices of the creation itself (*Confessiones* XIII.III.4).

To answer the question about what we mean by vespertine and matutine knowledge, and the movement of evening to morning during the days of creation, let us analyse what Augustine thinks about this. For Augustine, the movement of evening to morning is not simply the movement of light, but the movement of angelic knowledge. Evening in the context of the Genesis' creation account means the angels' knowledge about themselves and other created things. It is evening because this knowledge is limited, imperfect, beclouded by the changeability of all created things, obscure and they arrive at this knowledge only with their intellectual abilities. Morning in the light of Genesis account is the knowledge of the angels about themselves and about other creatures as they are in the mind of God (*De Genesi ad litteram*, IV.21.). It is morning knowledge because it is the knowledge not about a particular creature but the essence of creatures and themselves, it is a perfect or

true knowledge, beclouded by nothing and they arrive at this morning not by their intellectual abilities but by the grace of God. Morning knowledge is divine illumination, the knowledge impressed on the minds of the angels by divine Light, it is outside the angelic intellect yet enriches the angelic intellect with authentic knowledge. “If we both see that what you say is true, and we both see that what I say is true, then where do we see that? Not I in you, nor you in me, but both of us in that unalterable truth that is above our minds” (Ibid. XII.XXV.35).

Now that we understand what light is, the meaning of evening and morning, the meaning of vespertine and matutine knowledge of the angels, let us attempt an answer to the question why “night” was skipped in the movement of days from evening to morning without night in Genesis 1. To understand why night is skipped, let us examine Augustine’s understanding of night in the context of Genesis 1. The angels are the created light, God is the uncreated Light. The angels so long as they are participating in the uncreated and unchanging Light – God, they remain light. John says “the true Light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world” (John 1:9). But when some of the angels decided to turn away from the true, uncreated and immutable Light, they became impure, they “are no longer light in the Lord, but darkness in themselves, having been deprived of participation in eternal light” (*De civitate Dei* XI.7). The fallen angels are no longer light but darkness and night. Peter says, that certain angels sinned and were thrust down to the lowest parts of this world; they are called darkness (2 Peter 2:4).

Wherefore, though light and darkness are to be taken in their literal meaning in these passages of Genesis, ..., yet, for our part, we understand these two societies of angels, ... the one dwelling in the heaven of heavens, the other cast thence and raging through the lower regions of the air. ... For, though it is the material works of God that are spoken of, they have certainly a resemblance to the spiritual (*De civitate Dei* XI.33).

Having now understood that night or darkness means for Augustine the rebellious angels who deserted the true Light, we can now discuss why night was skipped in the movement of day from evening to morning. The angels are light and evening is their natural knowledge while morning is their supernatural knowledge. The movement of day – the angels’ movement from evening to morning is simply an epistemological movement from their natural knowledge (vespertine knowledge) to their supernatural knowledge (matutine knowledge) through the grace of God. Since this is the case, it makes sense as to why night was skipped because night which represents the fallen angels is not part of the epistemological process of the

knowledge of the angels. Light also means knowledge and night or darkness means nothing or ignorance (*De Genesi ad litteram* IV.23). So, night which means nothing or ignorance cannot be included in the movement of the day from evening to morning, because the evening knowledge of the angels is their natural knowledge of themselves and other created things and morning is the upgrading of their natural knowledge of themselves and other creatures. In other words, to move from vespertinal knowledge to matutinal knowledge it makes no sense to have night before morning because that will mean that, the angels lose their natural knowledge or become ignorant of their natural knowledge before gaining supernatural knowledge which is an upgrade of their natural knowledge, so how can there be an upgrade of nothing or ignorance when it has been lost in the night? This is the reason why there is no night but simply from evening to morning. The process of knowledge is usually from ignorance (night) to natural knowledge (evening) to supernatural knowledge (morning). This process is true for humans but for the angels it is from natural knowledge (evening) to supernatural knowledge (morning). To think that there should be night before morning, will mean the process of angelic knowledge will be like: natural knowledge (evening) to ignorance (night) to supernatural knowledge (morning). How absurd that will be? The angels do not forget so they cannot lose their natural knowledge meaning night before gaining morning knowledge. This movement from evening to morning is so because the angels made proper use of the evening knowledge.

So, what constitutes evening knowledge for the angels? To fully comprehend Augustine's thoughts about the vespertine knowledge of the angels, we have to understand how he is influenced by the platonic epistemology on knowledge of the material world and the world of Forms. Evening knowledge will be for platonic philosophy, knowledge of the material world while morning knowledge will be knowledge about the world of Forms. For Plato, the material world's knowledge is like people who are in a cave and seeing the shadow of things casted on the walls of the cave by the sun but those shadows are not the real things, if the same persons in the cave, leave the cave, they will see things as they really are because the sunshine aiding their sight. So also, for the angelic evening knowledge, their natural knowledge is imperfect, changeable, a shadow of the real thing. The angelic intellect is like the human eyes, though it can see, the eyes need the aid of light to see clearly. For whatever the eyes see in the dark, we are not sure of it unless there is sufficient light to see it clearly. The angelic mind is like the human eyes that needs the light to see clearly, and the light is the divine illumination. Therefore, the evening knowledge of the angels is stained with obscurity. Only God is the true source of knowledge, Augustine says "You will light my lamp, Lord. None other

than you is teacher of the truth, wherever and from whatever source it is manifest” (*Confessiones* IV.XV.25, V.VI.10).

Thomas Aquinas explained Augustine’s evening knowledge interpretation of Genesis 1, as the knowledge of the created being as existing in its own nature, in the consciousness of themselves. It is the essence subjected to the vicissitudes of existence, which results from the interaction of the principle, the idea, the form, with the world, reality or matter (*Summa Theologiae* I.LVIII.6). In normal day, it begins with morning and ends in the evening but in the Genesis account, the day begins in the evening and ends in the morning. Evening is the beginning of the process of angelic knowledge and morning ends the cycle of angelic knowledge (Ibid.). If there is evening knowledge, morning knowledge, and as we have said earlier that there is no night knowledge because night means ignorance and ignorance cannot be qualified as “night knowledge”, the next question is, is there noonday knowledge? Aquinas says that: “Noonday is comprised under the name of day, as the middle between the two extremes. Or else the noon can be referred to their knowledge of God Himself, Who has neither beginning nor end” (Ibid.).

The next important question about the evening knowledge is whether there is falsehood in the evening knowledge of the angels. Aquinas interpreting Augustine’s evening knowledge, began first by citing Aristotle who said that the object of the intellect is always true (*De Anima* iii, text. 26). Aquinas categorically stated that there is no falsehood, error or deception in the mind of the angels; that is, the evening or natural knowledge of the angels. He further added that error might accidentally slip into this kind of knowledge but it does not happen as we understand error happen to us mortals (*Summa Theologiae* I.LVIII.5). Again, this evening knowledge lacks no natural knowledge of anything created. In other words, anything created celestial or mortal, all the natural knowledge due to these things is knowable to the angels, there is no natural knowledge of a thing that is lacking in this evening knowledge of the angels (Ibid.). This does not mean that the angels are omniscient, there are things not knowable to them because this knowledge (divine mysteries) are supernatural and they only know what God grants them to know.

So, what constitutes morning knowledge for the angels? Borrowing Platonic language, morning knowledge is the knowledge of things as they are in the world of Forms. For instance, when we see the shape of a square, we know that this shape is a square and this is evening knowledge. But morning knowledge is the squareness of the square shape. Morning knowledge is the knowledge of that which makes a square to be a square. A square is not simply the lines or the shape but the squareness imprinted on the lines or shape. That squareness is what morning knowledge is. It is the knowledge of the squareness that makes us to recognise square shapes

wherever we see them. Morning knowledge is the knowledge of the primordial being of things, things as they exist in the Word (*Summa Theologiae* I.LVIII.5).

The morning knowledge is unchanging, devoid of uncertainty, pure, and the highest form of knowledge about created things. This knowledge is not communicated to the angels by audible words but by their presence in the beatific vision which is the immutable truth – the only-begotten Word of God. The angels come to know the members of the holy Trinity: The Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit. They know that the Trinity is undivided, three persons of one substance, one God and not three Gods (*De civitate Dei* XI.29). The morning knowledge affords the angels to know creatures not in themselves but by a better way – in the wisdom of God. They know themselves better in God than in themselves (morning knowledge), while still having the knowledge of themselves in themselves (evening knowledge) (*Ibid.*).

Morning knowledge is a medium of angelic knowledge through which the divine Word makes known to the angels, the divine essence (*Summa Theologiae* I.XXXIX.1). This supernatural knowledge obtained in the beatific vision, affords the angels access to the knowledge of the divine essence itself (*Ibid.* I.LVIII.6-7, I.LXII.1).

Aquinas, still on his commentary on Augustine’s matutinal knowledge, maintained that, there is a relationship between the vespertinal knowledge and the matutinal knowledge of the angels. For Bonaventure, the natural or evening knowledge of the angels can only be called evening knowledge, when the angels use this knowledge rightfully by not clinging to it, but in reference to their natural knowledge of creatures and especially the knowledge of themselves lead them to the praise of God (*In Sent.* II.IV.III.1 co., *Opera omnia* II: 140). So, for Bonaventure, evening knowledge necessarily leads to the praise of God (morning knowledge), if it does not then it is not an evening knowledge. The appropriate use of angelic intellect and natural knowledge, aided by the grace of God, will lead the angels to gain God’s gift of supernatural morning knowledge (*De veritate* VIII.17, *Summa theologiae* I.LXII.4). This is why in the creation account in Genesis 1, morning is not mentioned on the first day, because it was the day, the angels were created. The moment the angels were created (“Let there be light ...”), and at that same instance, the angels knew themselves by natural knowledge (“there was evening ...”). At the next moment, with the help of grace, good angels used the appreciation of their self-knowledge to praise God in beatific vision (“...and the morning was”). On the other hand, demons did not return to God, but remain clinging to created reality, especially themselves, and denying the final end of God.

The angelic matutinal knowledge does not come before the vespertinal knowledge rather the opposite is the case. The vespertinal knowledge necessarily leads to the matutinal knowledge. Though the angels may have both evening

and morning knowledge about themselves and other things, these two knowledges are not one and the same. For Augustine says “there is a vast difference between knowing anything as it is in the Word of God, and as it is in its own nature; so that the former belongs to the day, and the latter to the evening” (*De Genesi ad litteram* IV.24). The angels use both evening and morning knowledges simultaneously. The fact that they are in heaven, in the beatific vision does not mean they do not use their evening knowledge. Evening knowledge is referred to the morning knowledge in the angels hence there is nothing to hinder both from being at the same time in the angels (Ibid.).

### THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE FALLEN ANGELS

Knowledge without love is of no use. The fallen angels do not use whatever knowledge they possess in a charitable manner. To explain this point Augustine quoted St Paul saying: “... all of us possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up”(1 Corinthians 8:1). The purpose of knowledge is to build up or improve the one who possesses it and all around the person. The true purpose of knowledge is achieved when it is used charitably but the absence of love makes the possessor of knowledge proud, arrogant and foolish. This is exactly what the evil angels are, they are proud, arrogant and foolish. Instead of these rebellious angels to let their knowledge of God and of themselves lead them to love God, their knowledge made them proud and full of themselves making think they deserve to be worshipped like God is worshipped (*De civitate Dei* IX.20). They use their knowledge to deceive humans to worship them instead of leading humans to worship God, this act of deception is an abuse of knowledge (Ibid. IX.18, IX.20). Knowledge appropriately used in love necessarily leads to St Paul’s definition of love:

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

The lack of love blended into the knowledge of the bad angels went a long distance to determine the extent of these rebellious spirits’ knowledge about the salvific mission of Christ on earth. They knew about Jesus and His redemptive mission but to what extent was this knowledge? Augustine began by quoting Mark 1:24 “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.” From this text Augustine remarked

that they knew who He is and about the redemptive mission but their knowledge was tinted with the absence of love, because they knew of His power to punish them but they do not know the power of His love and they do not love the power of His holiness (*De civitate Dei* IX.21). Jesus allowed them the knowledge of only what He was pleased to let them know about His mission and He revealed to them all but only what He deemed necessary for them to know (Ibid.). The nature of the knowledge they had about His mission, was not like the knowledge the blessed angels have about this same mission, which is the Word of God, who brings about rejoicing and eternal life. What they knew was Jesus is the One who will strike with terror all those who rebel against Him and set free all those, these demons have kept under their tyrannical slavery (Ibid.). He did not reveal Himself to the devils in the manner of divine illumination but through some temporal effects of His power. The content of this knowledge given to the devils, does not contain Christ as the eternal Life, and immutable Light which illuminates the soul but patches of evidences of His mysteries which are discernible to all angels including the evil ones and even humans. This knowledge possessed by them does not need divine illumination or special revelation but it is a knowledge available to the common senses of both human and angelic (good and bad). Even this knowledge made attainable to their intellect can also be denied of them or made vague when Christ sees it fit. The knowledge of mission of Christ becomes obscure and doubtful to them. An instance of this obscurity and doubtfulness is when the prince of darkness tried to ascertain if Jesus is the Messiah by tempting Him in the wilderness:

And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."... Then the devil took him to the holy city, and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, 'He will give his angels charge of you,' And 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'" Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Begone, Satan! for it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'" Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and ministered to him (Matthew 4:3-11).

The ministrations of the blessed angels to Jesus revealed to the sinner angels that He is truly the Son of God. This the holy angels already knew of Christ in the flesh but the evil angels did not until after the temptation (*De civitate Dei* IX.21).

To clearly state Augustine's epistemology of the evil angels, he is arguing that the sinner angels can acquire and possess knowledge. The kind of knowledge they have is only vespertine knowledge and not vespertine and matutine knowledges because God is the only source of matutine knowledge and they have turned away from God thereby denying themselves matutine knowledge (*Confessiones* IV.XV.25, V.VI.10). They do not enjoy the grace of divine illumination (which is how matutine knowledge is acquired) on their corrupted intellect unlike the blessed angels and humans who enjoy the free gift of divine illumination (*De magistro* XII.40). Even the vespertine knowledge possessed by the demons is not open-ended, the extent of the knowledge they can acquire is greatly regulated by God, he only allows them to know what He wants them to know according to His infinite wisdom and providence (*De civitate Dei* IX.21).

The acquired vespertine knowledge of the rebellious angels is used for the sole purpose of destruction, theft, deception and death. Just as Jesus said in John 10:10: "the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." They use their knowledge to deceive mortals from following the true path that leads to God and lead them astray to worship themselves the demons (*Ibid.* IX.2). The knowledge they possess makes them proud, arrogant and foolish because they see themselves as omniscient while in reality even the vespertine knowledge they possess is greatly limited when compared to the vespertine knowledge of the glorious angels (*Ibid.* IX.21).

The evil angels are incapable of knowing the future or do not have knowledge about the future. For Augustine, the devils do not have the knowledge of the future because they were not aware of their future fall else, they would not have fallen (XI.13). In fact, Augustine argued that the blessed angels were aware of their preservation in the eternal blessedness and the evil angels were unaware of their eminent fall, this shows that they do not have knowledge about the future (*Ibid.*). This argument though weak because it makes the evil angels treated as second-class citizens of heaven even before they fell but at least it shows they were not aware of their fall else they would not have fallen (*Ibid.*). Again, if the evil angels knew their future, they would not have tempted Jesus to be sure of who He is and they won't have tempted Judas to betray Jesus (*Ibid.* IX.21).

## THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE GLORIOUS ANGELS

The holy angels, unlike the evil ones have possession of both vespertine and matutine knowledges. The vespertine knowledge they gained is through the use of their intellectual powers when they turned to themselves, they knew themselves and other created things (*De Genesi ad litteram*, II.14). They understand themselves and other created things with the natural use of their intellect. Matutine knowledge is not gained by the use of their natural intellectual powers. This knowledge is communicated to them by God, not by audible words, but by their presence and the participation of their souls in the unchanging Truth – the only-begotten Word of God. They come to know the eternal Word of God Himself, the Father creator of all things, and the Holy Spirit. They acquire matutine knowledge through their participation in the beatific vision, they come to know that the divine persons are Trinity – indivisible, of a single substance, and that these persons are not three Gods but one God. Their understanding of mystery of the Trinity and other divine mysteries are higher than any evil angels' understanding and human understanding of these mysteries (*De civitate Dei* IX.21).

The matutine knowledge of the angels is not just the revelation of divine mysteries to them but also the improvement of the vespertine knowledge of the blessed angels. The improvement of the vespertine knowledge happens in this manner: all the created things that the angels know as they are in themselves is improved because in the matutine knowledge, they know these things better by knowing them as they are in the wisdom of God. For to know things as they are in the mind of God is better than knowing things as they are in themselves (*Ibid.* XI.29). They also, in the matutine knowledge, better their knowledge of themselves by knowing themselves as they are in the mind of God (*Ibid.*). Another implication of the matutine knowledge is that in the vespertine knowledge, the blessed angels know the fallen angels as the fallen angels know themselves but with the possession of the matutine knowledge, the blessed angels not only know themselves more than the evil angels know them but also the blessed angels know the sinner angels more than they know themselves.

In themselves, they have evening knowledge but in God, they gain morning knowledge. How God created the world and what He had in mind is made known to the good angels. The creation of the firmament that is the water between the one above and the one below, which was called the heaven was made known to them (*Ibid.*). The gathering of the waters below, the laying bare of the dry land, the creation of vegetation, the creation of the heavenly bodies: sun, moon, and stars, they understand it all because of the beatific vision (*Ibid.*). The creation of animals out of the waters, fowls, fish, and monsters of the deep; and of everything that walks

or creeps on the earth, and of man himself, who excels all that is on the earth – all these things are known in one way by the angels in the Word of God, in which they see the eternally abiding causes and reasons according to which they were made, and in another way in themselves (Ibid.). In their evening knowledge they knew these things but it was tinted with darkness “*eveningness*”. The morning knowledge gives highest clarity to their understanding of these things.

## THE ANGELS’ KNOWLEDGE OF CREATION

The holy angels have divinely illuminated knowledge about created things. We relate to created things and our acquisition of wisdom from these things, lead us to the knowledge and understanding of the invisible things of God, but the angels from the moment of their creation enjoy the eternal Word Himself in holy and loving contemplation. As they look down then on our world, they judge all by what they see interiorly, approving virtue and condemning sin (*De Genesi ad litteram*, II.VII.17). Though the angels are finite, they do not know God through creatures, they know God directly. Though it is true that the final effect is not just a complete erasure of the human’s participation in God as a creature, but it is more than that. To the contrary, angels know God, and in him, they see creation.

The angels are created wisdom, who were created to constantly behold the co-eternal Word, and through their contemplation of the Word and His *rationes* for all creation, as they are ineffably in the Word, and so they become the first of all creation to know the whole of creation (Ibid. IV.XXIV.41). “Let there be made” is a reference to the eternal presence of all things created in the Word of God (Ibid. III.XX.31). So, Genesis continues with “and thus it was made,” which signifies that spiritual creation contemplates in God’s word what it is about that God said “let there be made.” These created minds are where the thing receives its first form: the Word, who is Form itself in whom all things have form, enters the angels’ minds through their eternal contemplation of him, so that the thing becomes more directly knowable in their minds, an idea of the thing, through their contemplation of him.

## THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE BLESSED ANGELS’ KNOWLEDGE AND THE EVIL ANGELS’ KNOWLEDGE

Having discussed at some length the knowledge of the good and evil angels, it is fitting to differentiate the knowledge of the good and evil angels. To differentiate their knowledge, Augustine began by identifying the object of their knowledges. The object of the fallen angels’ knowledge is firstly themselves and other temporal

and changeable things. While the object of the knowledge of the blessed angels is solely God – the unchangeable Truth (Ibid. IX.22). The demons strive after knowledge that is inferior, mutable, material and transitory, created things are the object of their knowledge. The holy angels turn to the knowledge that is eternal, divine, supreme, immutable – God. The object of their knowledge is also the object of their love. The fallen angels love themselves above God (pride), while the glorious angels love God above themselves (humility). The blessed angels hold the object of the sinner angels as cheap knowledge though they are not ignorant of these transitory things. While the fallen angels are truly ignorant of the object of the blessed angels' knowledge which is divine mysteries (Ibid.).

The evil angels can be said to have *scientia* knowledge which is a lower level of knowledge according to Augustine as we have discussed above. This is an indirect access to knowledge because it is knowledge gained from created things as they are in themselves. The glorious angels have access to *sapientia* knowledge which is the higher level of knowledge because this level of knowledge can only be accessed through the Wisdom of God (*De Genesi ad Litteram* III.XX.30). The sinner angels' knowledge is vulnerable to errors, falsehood and doubts (just like the devil was doubtful about who Jesus is and that led him tempt Jesus in other ascertain who Jesus is). Sinner angels' knowledge is open to errors and falsehood simply because they do not abide in the eternal Truth and therefore, they do not have access to the wisdom of God which is true knowledge. The glorious angels' knowledge about themselves and other things, is immune from error, falsehood and doubts. Their knowledge is absolutely certain because they gained it from the eternal Truth, the Word of God – Knowledge itself (*De civitate Dei* IX.22). It is only the knowledge received of the Wisdom of God that is only free from error, falsehood and uncertainty.

The angels whether good or evil, do have complete knowledge about the future of things. For instance, Jesus said “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only” (Matthew 24:36). This is to portray that the angels in heaven do not have all the knowledge about the future of things let alone the fallen angels. The blessed angels know only what has been revealed to them by God about future things. For Augustine, the rebellious angels though they may have certain knowledge about the future of things more than mortals, this knowledge is mostly vague and based on wide guesses (*De civitate Dei* IX.22). According to Augustine, they predict the future based on how they wish things happen, they predict their own intentions (Ibid.). But reality does not unfold base on the wishes on the evil angels but solely according to the providence of God.

The demons can be deceived and they also deceive, while the holy angels cannot be deceived and they do not deceive (Ibid.). The demons are deceived be-

cause their knowledge is based on temporal and transitory things. Their knowledge of things is transitory, temporary and open to error and inaccuracy, this is the reason why deception is possible for the demons. The good angels' knowledge is not based on temporary and mutable things but eternal and immutable things. Their knowledge is not based solely on the knowledge they gained with the use of their intellect, but more based on the divine illumination they received from God. This is the sole reason why they cannot be deceived; their knowledge is always certain. And they do not deceive because, they use their knowledge only to love, unlike the evil angels who never use their knowledge to love but only to deceive, steal and destroy (John 10:10). The changing of times, seasons and things is constantly happening and to modify one's knowledge and will to meet up with these changes is open to fallibility. This is what the fallen angels experience. The upright angels are permitted to participate in the wisdom of God with holy discretion to know the changing of times, seasons and creatures even before they happen, this is the reason for their infallibility (Ibid.).

## CONCLUSION

We began the discussion about Augustine's theology of angelic knowledge by first of all looking at the circumstances that led to Augustine's treatment of knowledge in general. There were sceptics who challenged the possibility of knowledge; that it was not possible to know anything or to arrive at truth. *Academic Scepticism* was one of the major sceptics Augustine confronted about the possibility of knowledge. Augustine argued that acquiring knowledge and knowing the truth is possible. We went on to discuss the issue of divine illumination as posited by Augustine, how we not only use our intellect to acquire knowledge, but also, how we reach the truth through divine illumination. We then looked at how Augustine outlined the process or stages of acquiring knowledge: perception, imagination, thinking and then *scientia* or *Sapientia*.

Augustine acknowledged that the angels are intellectual beings, capable of acquiring knowledge and knowing the truth. The angelic knowledge can be divided into two: the vespertine (evening) knowledge and the matutine (morning) knowledge. The evening knowledge is the knowledge the angels (good and evil) know about themselves and other things. This is the knowledge of things as they are in themselves and this knowledge they arrive at with the sole use of their intellectual faculty. This knowledge is not the perfect knowledge of reality, it is fallible, tinted with doubts and errors, and it is transitory. The morning knowledge on the other hand, is the blessed angels' participation in the eternal wisdom of

God who gives them know that is truly perfect, immune to error, uncertainty, eternal and immutable.

The knowledge used for everything but good purpose is an abuse of knowledge. Such is the knowledge of the evil angels. The bad angels use their knowledge only to kill, steal and destroy. They have knowledge but only angelic natural knowledge (evening knowledge) and they do not have supernatural knowledge (morning knowledge). These rebellious angels possess only the knowledge of things as they are in themselves. Their knowledge does not make them wise; it rather makes them foolish, arrogant and proud. There is vagueness, uncertainty, doubt and falsehood in their knowledge. The natural angelic knowledge possessed by these foul angels is regulated and suppressed by divine discretion which means that these bad angels have limited evening knowledge in comparison to the holy angels.

The good angels have not just natural angelic knowledge but also supernatural knowledge. They know things not just as they are in themselves but also as they are in the mind of God. God communicates this knowledge to them not by the use of audible words but by their participation in the glory of His divine wisdom. Their vespertine knowledge is not suppressed by divine discretion. They understand the mystery of the Trinity more than humans and the fallen. Their knowledge is not vague, transitory or filled with uncertainty. They understand created things more than the evil angels. They understand the mystery of the creation of the heavens and earth more than the sinner angels.

Augustine compared the knowledge of the evil and holy angels. While the fallen angels' knowledge is opened to errors, doubts and falsehood, the knowledge of the holy angels is certain, immune to errors, eternal and immutable. The fallen angels do not know the future, they only predict the future based on their intellectual power but most times they actually predict what they only wish to happen in the future which is not true because their wishes do not influence future events which is only determined by divine providence. The bad angels can be deceived and they also deceive. This is deception to the evil angels is because their knowledge is entirely dependent on transitory things and they use this uncertain knowledge of theirs to deceive mortals as if they have certainty of knowledge. The reverse is the case of the blessed angels which cannot be deceived and they do not deceive because God is their source of knowledge and the knowledge they receive from God is true.

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# AUGUSTINE ON ANGELIC KNOWLEDGE

## SUMMARY

Angelic beings are spiritual intellectual beings. They possess knowledge; however, they are not omniscient. They are spiritual beings with limited knowledge in comparison to God, which means they are not like God who is the fullness of knowledge, they acquire knowledge. So, how do angelic beings acquire knowledge? What is the source of their knowledge? What is the nature of the angelic beings' knowledge? What can angelic beings know and not know? What do these spiritual beings do with their angelic knowledge? Is there any difference between the fallen angels' knowledge and the upright angels' knowledge? What is the object of these spiritual intellectual beings' knowledge? Augustine answered these questions in his theology of angelic knowledge. Augustine treated the nature of the knowledge the angels can acquire with their natural angelic faculty and the nature of the knowledge they acquire through the grace of God. Divine illumination is equally enjoyed by the angels and even more than humans do. The angels are lovers of the truth and they seek the truth either with the appropriate or inappropriate use of their will. The kind of knowledge they pursue determines their relationship with the creator. Augustine outlined how knowledge separates the good angels from the bad angels. These and more are what this paper seeks to explore.

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