

CONSIDERATIONS AND PRACTICES OF AUGUSTINIAN PEDAGOGY

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In attempting to identify the pedagogical themes and practices of Saint Augustine, a good starting point could be his work, *De magistro*. This contains insights and plans for teaching that come from early in his career of writing. Yet, if we look at the life of Augustine there is evidence that his plans changed a number of times when he learned better directions and developed improved insights. In many ways his life is one where plans were interrupted as he found new ways to advance on his learning journey. Perhaps, based on these changes, his *Retractationes* may be a better starting point. In this work Augustine reviews his written work and comments on ways to improve specific pieces of writing. Henry Chadwick believes an accurate translation of *retractationes* may be *reconsiderations* rather than *retractions*. Reconsiderations can be seen as an overarching theme of the way Augustine learned. When we look at the ways Augustine presents his learning development in the *Confessiones* a case can be made that this seminal work of Augustine is a series of reconsiderations. In each of his conversions (philosophical, moral, and religious) Augustine's *Confessiones* present a reconsideration and redirection of himself and his previous understandings. Reconsiderations resulting from his ecclesial conversion are an underlying reason Augustine wrote this work. These reconsiderations are not an aimless wandering. Rather, this is the journey of someone who is intent on a continuous path of learning and responsive to what he learns. Anton Pegis affirms this understanding of Augustine as an ongoing learner when he describes Augustine as "the disciple of the love of God." According to Pegis Augustine's love of God is "not a doctrine but a life, not an abstract analysis but a journey, not a theory but an experience."¹

In his life work Augustine's recurring reconsiderations became considerations for action. In commenting on *De vera religione*, O'Don-

¹ Anton C. Pegis, "The Mind of Saint Augustine." *Medieval Studies* 6 (1944), 8.

nell observes “For Augustine it has *become* obvious that what you do about God must be coordinated with what you say and think.”² In what follows there is a presentation of one fundamental consideration in Augustinian Pedagogy with three more resultant considerations that flow from and expand upon the fundamental one. These considerations are presented in an attempt to connect Augustine with application to current pedagogical practice as O’Donnell suggested when he wrote,

*One cannot read Augustine or other long-dead worthies, I believe, without the most acute sensitivity to the realities of our own age and all the links of imagination and tradition that bind us to our pasts. On the other hand, it is enriching and suggestive to engage in that reading because of the way the study of the past engages so fully our commitments and our opportunities in the present.*³

Unlike Montessori, Augustine does not provide a plan or blueprint for pedagogical practice. To engage our commitments and current opportunities, in an Augustinian manner, the description of the scope of each consideration includes specific pedagogical skills and/or methods to give more clarity to the pedagogical practices one can infer from Augustine’s life and writings.

I. Reflective Learning through Transforming Experiences

In his life of “reconsiderations” Augustine models a primary pedagogical direction or consideration of Reflective Learning through Transforming Experiences. For Augustine transformation came through reflective learning in dialogue with the Inner Teacher. In *De magistro* he introduces this dialogue as a practice of teaching that assists students to understand abstract concepts like signs and symbols. While an Augustinian pedagogy does not demand adherence to Augustine’s thoughts on signs and symbols, it should be animated by practice in reflective thinking, including time and space for reflection. Implementation should involve encouragement of reflective dialogue with the Inner Teacher (Augustinian interiority) as an important means to foster

² J.J. O’Donnell, *Avatars of the Word: From Papyrus to Cyberspace*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998, 140. Italics are from the original.

³ *Ibid.*, 143.

in the learner a Desire for Authenticity, and a Capacity for Discernment and a Sense of Transcendence.⁴

To engage in Augustinian Pedagogy is to model Active Listening and expect it of learners. In Active Listening the hearer attends to the speaker and actively dialogues with the speaker by giving feedback on how the hearer has understood the speaker's message. In the *Confessiones* Augustine is actively listening to the Inner Teacher reflecting on when he understood and when he misunderstood his teacher.

A teacher using Augustinian Pedagogy also needs to engage students in Active Learning rather than acting as an expert doling out information to passive listeners. In *De magistro* Augustine reminds us that no teacher is a real expert. In his words, "What foolish oddity could ever lead someone to send a child to school so that he can learn what the teacher thinks?"⁵ Rather than a lecturer in command of a script, an Augustinian educator is someone who facilitates learning among the students he or she works with. Drucker sees Augustine conveying to us an understanding that "teaching is best understood through a metaphor of pointing."⁶ Here the teacher facilitates a discussion or provides information that points the way to understanding. This is in support of the Inner Teacher accomplishing the real teaching leading transformation or conversion.

In *De Trinitate*, Augustine presents the complexity involved in learning when he describes experiences of knowing through the trinity of memory, understanding and will.⁷ An educator who follows the path of Augustine will be working at enabling learners to triangulate among these aspects of learning. This involves teaching students to see and understand connections. It is not enough to master each of these dimensions separately. In an Augustinian setting committing facts and information to memory through rote learning is only useful when it helps to achieve higher order thinking that involves understanding and/or will. Only if memorization is on the path "through knowledge to wisdom,"⁸

⁴ M.A. Keller, *Human formation and Augustinian Anthropology in Elements of an Augustinian formation*. Rome: Pubblicazione Agostiniane, 2001, 210-211.

⁵ *De magistro*, 45.

⁶ J.P. Drucker, "Teaching as Pointing in 'The Teacher'." *Augustinian Studies* 28-2 (1997), 132.

⁷ *De Trinitate*, XIV, 10.

⁸ *De Trinitate*, XIII, 24.

i.e., moving the learner toward and beyond analysis and synthesis toward an evaluation or a judgment can it be seen as truly useful.

Augustine sees practice in reasoning as crucial to quality learning. He even devotes the *Soliloquiorum libri duo* to a dialogue with Reason. Yet, for him reasoning alone is not sufficient. To that Illumination must be added with the help of the Inner Teacher to reach truth (wisdom). He encourages his followers to seek to expand reasoning with illumination when he says, "Return to yourself. Truth resides inside a person. When you discover that you can change, transcend yourself... Go where the light of reason is illuminated."⁹

Beyond pedagogical dimensions Augustine comments on curriculum and instruction in *De doctrina christiana* where he presents how to educate learners to interpret scripture and use non-Christian learning. In *De catechizandis rudibus* he adds the instructional role of attitudes in successful conversion (transformation). Augustine, in his Sermons and Letters, gives concrete examples of means to impact lives and actions. In these works through his exegesis of Scripture he poses questions that demand response and action by his hearers and readers. In these writings we see him presents models (including himself) of how learning has or has not impacted lives and actions. It can be argued that any of Augustine's writing with the word "*contra*" in the title has the purpose of persuading the reader to make the right decision(s).

Since Augustine expects learning to impact our lives and actions, any curriculum and instruction would need to address such concerns to merit a judgment that it is Augustinian Pedagogy. Following Augustine, Augustinian education involves dealing with important questions in life, learning from models of good living and right actions as well as the skills of and success in making the right decisions.

From Augustine's life of reconsiderations as well as the outlines of the considerations entailed in the primary pedagogical considerations of Reflective Learning through Transforming Experiences, it is easy to see that an Augustinian Pedagogy is not simply a mental exercise. It aims at creating a life changing agenda. It is not about short run training. It is pedagogy for the long run. We can see this when Augustine urges his listeners to "possess wholehearted love (*caritas*), be passionate for truth (*veritas*), desire unity (*unitas*), if you wish to live in the Holy Spirit to reach eternal

⁹ *De vera religione*, 39,72.

life.”¹⁰ Seeking fullness of life through *caritas*, *veritas* and *unitas* leads to three resultant pedagogical considerations that flow out of and reinforce Reflective Learning through Transforming Experiences. In pedagogical language *caritas*, *veritas* and *unitas* can be described as 1) Possessing Wholehearted Love for Learning, 2) Being Passionate for Learning Truth, and 3) Learning to Desire Unity. To amplify our understanding of the considerations (methods and practices) of Augustinian pedagogy we now move to each of these three considerations.

II. Possessing Wholehearted Love for Learning

Animated by *caritas*, an Augustinian educator should model the pedagogical consideration of Possessing Wholehearted Love for Learning as well as teaching learners to strive to possess it. Augustine’s life experiences taught him humility. Augustine saw his plans not providing the results he wanted. Yet, when he learned the right ways of living he received renown and success. In this he learned that the struggle to possess and live by rightly-ordered love was really a struggle within him. As he observed, “The struggle in my heart was solely between myself and me.”¹¹ An Augustinian pedagogy educates the learner that knowing the right thing is not enough. Learners must develop a humility that enables them, paradoxically, to get out of their own way as they strive to act rightly.

The centrality of the will in Augustine’s pedagogy differentiates him from many other pedagogy’s whose centrality is on the mind. In the triad of *memory-understanding-will*, he sees the will as part of the Trinitarian God within us.¹² This is different from an Ignatian approach in which the teacher would work on the learner’s relation to the truth based on experience, reflection and action with attention to context. The will is not unimportant in Ignatian pedagogy. But, it does not have the centrality that it does for an Augustinian pedagogy.

Key to Augustine’s understanding of the will is developing it to act rightly. For Augustine the will is divided. Overcoming a divided will through right actions show possession of a wholehearted love for what

¹⁰ *Sermo 267*, 4.

¹¹ *Confessiones*, VIII, 11.

¹² *De Trinitate*, X, 12,19.

one learns. So strong is the struggle of a divided will, Augustinian pedagogy must include methods and practices that strengthen the habits of the will to act rightly. Augustine sees such education of the will as building character.¹³ Character building and the development of good habits are reinforced through practices of dialoguing with the Inner Teacher and from reasoning which aids us to transcend (climb above ourselves).¹⁴ Any Augustinian education in dialogue and reasoning needs to include education in honest self-evaluation, e.g., regular examination of conscience.

In contemporary times education is often connected to personal advancement, educational programs should also enable learners to question the direction of their wills that underlie ambitions. Even what may seem the best of ambitions may emanate from a wrongly directed will. As Augustine reminds us, "*Pride lurks even in good works in order to destroy them.*"¹⁵

For Augustine, developing a right acting will also involves the development of the desire to search out the unknown.¹⁶ In an Augustinian understanding it is a practical act of courage to overcome a divided will and fear of the unknown.¹⁷ Augustine's understanding comes from the biblical concept, "Love casts out fear."¹⁸ A pedagogical approach that can assist in developing the desire to search out the unknown is Problem Based Learning. In this approach an evident problem is addressed starting from the known and moving to the unknown with the problem under study as a framework making the unknown less intimidating.

Augustinian-style teachers and schools also work at overcoming fear by developing a confident will in timid students.¹⁹ Such learners can find in the study of how other learners throughout history found new insights when they faced the unknown. They can discover when they study these types of new insights how those other learners found ways to reorganize and adapt their knowledge for better understanding and living. Such

¹³ *Ibid.*, X, 17.

¹⁴ *De vera religione*, 39,72.

¹⁵ *Regula*, I, 7.

¹⁶ *De Trinitate*, X, 3.

¹⁷ H. Arendt. *Love and Saint Augustine*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, 35.

¹⁸ 1 John 4:18.

¹⁹ *De catechizandis rudibus*, I, 13,18.

education helps learners to sharpen their mental powers by building chains of reasoning building from what is known to the unknown.²⁰

Augustine cautions that the way teachers present their own reasoning can create confusion and be an obstacle to student learning.²¹ Augustine suggests using knowledge as a kind of scaffolding²² or a ladder of humility²³ to teach and learn. In teaching and learn through written assignments a methodology like Process Writing with its developmental scaffolding can be a support in enabling students to progressively improve their ability to communicate in written forms. Rubrics for evaluating student work can also provide scaffolding or a “ladder” approach to understanding. In Rubrics and Process Writing student not only have a sense of how much they have accomplished but they also have a sense of where their accomplishments sit in the spectrum or levels of accomplishments. In an Augustinian way this provides a sense of what additional educational needs they have as well as how moving further builds on what they have done thus far. Besides scaffolding and ladder methods most schooling is structured with inherent scaffolding or ladders. We speak easily of primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education or elementary, secondary, university. Even within these levels can be sublevels. We can ask the question why students end their education at various levels. Some countries worry about “dropouts” at various levels. An Augustinian education attends to the movement up the structural scaffold or the structural ladder. Programs fostering successful transitions across levels of scaffolding and ladders, including orientations of new students in a school, implement the care for the learner that Augustine advocated.

Teachers can demonstrate the ladders and scaffolding they have used to learn by a humble modeling of the development of their own wills. Rather than being the didactic expert this enables an Augustinian educator to serve as a coach or intellectual and emotional guide. To know when such modeling is appropriate the teacher needs to develop strong skills in observation. Such modeling is best at the “teachable

²⁰ *Soliloquiorum libri duo*, II, 20,34. There are also discussions of honing mental abilities in *De magistro*, 21, *De ordine*, I, 8,25 and II, 5,17 as well as *De animae quantitate*, 25.

²¹ *Sermo* 47, 9.

²² *Epistula* 55, 33.

²³ *Sermo* 96, 3.

moment,” i.e., is the time that students are best ready to receive the instruction. In *De catechizandis rudibus* we see the fruit of Augustine’s strong observation skills. While *De doctrina christiana* is about teaching about the faith to a general audience, *De catechizandis rudibus* is a presentation of what Augustine has observed in teaching the special audience of beginners. He models his own development when he shares with Deogratias his own teaching struggles and the ways he has overcome them. While Augustine knew that Deogratias was a good teacher, he has found the request from Deogratias and the problem presented as the “teachable moment” to help Deogratias move up his own ladder of learning/teaching excellence.

Augustine identifies apathy and boredom as at least two more obstacles to possessing a wholehearted love for learning – two factors supporting a divided will. In contemporary studies of “dropping out” and burnout among teachers and students, two of the early warning signs are apathy and boredom.

Augustine clearly understands that in apathy teachers face a great difficulty, because all they see is an “unmoved hearer.”²⁴ By identifying apathy Augustine reminds teachers that learning is the essential issue. It is not enough for a teacher to have good plans and to be prepared to teach. She or he needs to attend to what is happening for the student. If preparation and delivery were all that mattered student apathy would be irrelevant. This concern about apathy ties back to the earlier observation of the teacher as facilitator. Since Augustine does not see a teacher as the cause or center of learning, but rather as a facilitator, an Augustinian educator must develop methods and skills to deal with the attitudes that students bring to the learning process. To make this truly part of the learning process, Augustinian education programs need to include co-curricular programs for students as well as professional development programs for teachers that enhance skills in developing a cheerful attitude.²⁵

Boredom differs from apathy because the source is familiarity with the topic being taught. Here, Augustine suggests teaching familiar matter

²⁴ *De catechizandis rudibus*, I, 13,18.

²⁵ “Developing a cheerful attitude” is Canning’s translation of Augustine’s expression *de hilaritate comparanda* in *De catechizandis rudibus*. See R. Canning. “Introduction” in *Instructing Beginners in Faith*. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2006, 16.

through review.²⁶ In this insight Augustine reminds us that we often think we know more than we do. Both teacher and student can learn from reviewing past understanding. As the old adage tells us, to teach is to learn twice. Having the students do the presentation of previously taught material is an effective methodology for review. This active involvement of students can enhance the connections as well as uncover the areas of learning that need more work.

Development of the will is not just a one-on-one teacher and student relationship. One can read Augustine's *Rule* as a guide to building the will to act rightly with a community as a support to the development of the will to act rightly. In the group context an Augustinian educational setting must attend to effective school climate and classroom management. In the *Rule* Augustinian not only sets out expectations but also presents means for accountability for ensuring that the desired actions and results are occurring. In a way the *Rule* models learning standards and assessment for community support of the lives of the individual members. The depth of Augustine's insights into the political and authority relations in a community is evident in the *Rule* even though it is a very short work. As Stevenson reminds us, "For Augustine, political authority has a twofold purpose.... It is both a remedy and a punishment for sin, its purposes are both rehabilitative and retributive."²⁷ Any school climate model or classroom management model that is used in an Augustinian setting must deal with both remedy and punishment to reflect an Augustinian accountability. One model of school discipline that engages an ethical approach of remedy and punishment is Restorative Justice. But more than that Restorative Justice places the victim and the offender as having co-responsibility for the healing of the community after an offense. This co-responsibility for rebuilding the community and rebuilding the will of all individuals involved reflects community values evident in the *Rule*. This Augustinian understanding of the larger community and its responsibility can be a means to address the difficulties of bullying and gangs which impinge on many educational settings.

Working to possess a wholehearted love for learning individually and within an Augustinian learning community is then teaching and learning

²⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 8,12.

²⁷ W.R. Stevenson, *Christian Love and Just War: Moral Paradox and Political Life in St. Augustine and his Modern Interpreters*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987, 59.

with a brave heart and right will how to act humbly based on what we know. Augustine prayed for such an attitude, this way,

Say anything you wish but heal my ears so that I may pay attention to what you say. Heal my eyes so that I may see you when you beckon. Heal my stupidity so that I may recognize you when you come. Tell me where to look to see you and then I will hope that I will have the strength to do what you want of me.²⁸

For Augustine working to possess a wholehearted love for learning was always an ongoing project. It is not just about educational processes. It is aimed at truly knowing – which is for him is being passionate for learning truth.

III. Being Passionate for Learning Truth

In attempting to understand Augustine's consideration of "being passionate for learning truth," we must recall his creation of the *Retractationes*. As we have already noted his "reconsiderations" point to Augustine's ongoing journey in learning the truth. He never captured truth once for all. Each new truth moved him forward – lifted him upward in his dialogue with the Inner Teacher. Learning the truth for Augustine was the core of his spirituality, his interiority. Galende summarizes interiority as a four step process that Augustine is inviting us into.

1. Do not be eager to expend all your energy on external things
2. Go within yourself
3. Transcend yourself
4. Now experience all things external from your interior life.²⁹

For Augustine truth not only transcends us but moves us to transcend where we have been. Unlike fundamentalism, traditionalism, scientism, literalism, an Augustinian pedagogy does not convey objective truth as something that can be captured in a frozen way. Rather it supports learning how to move upward on the learning journey pointing beyond ourselves. While we can have knowledge we are always on the

²⁸ *Soliloquia*, I, 3.

²⁹ F. Galende, *Augustinian Interiority in Our journey back to God: Reflections on Augustinian Spirituality*. Rome: Pubblicazione Agostiniane, 2006, 279.

way to wisdom. While we can know our reality in concrete ways, an Augustinian pedagogy is always calling us to wonder beyond what we know. In this way, Augustinian pedagogy can be helpful in a post-modern world which questions all “frozen” truth claims.

This transcending approach to truth also connects well to what Tracy calls “Analogical Imagination”³⁰ and Greeley calls “Catholic Imagination.”³¹ For Tracy and Greeley, Catholic understanding of sacraments has an impact of how people think about the world. In such an understanding Augustine’s teaching on mystery and sacrament should inform our teaching and learning. When Augustine tells his congregation that what you experience in the Eucharist, “You must not attribute it to your own powers, your own merits, your own efforts, this lifting up of your hearts to the Lord, because it is God’s gift that you should have your hearts up above,”³² he is giving an insight into how we should understand the truth we learn from the Inner Teacher. Equally, when he tells his congregation as they prepare to receive the Body and Blood of Christ “If you receive them well, you are yourselves what you receive,”³³ he is giving us insight into how we should learn from the Inner Teacher. Again the *Retractationes* point out to us that this learning of the truth is an ongoing and iterative journey. In some ways the *Retractationes* can be seen as a “portfolio assessment” of Augustine’s work. In this work Augustine models for us how we can review our work over time against real world circumstances to see the development of insight, how we are called to change and how we can assess what we have done. In this work Augustine applied to himself his advice to others about assessing what you have done not just your intentions when he advised them “It is what you are that you reply in saying, “Amen,” and by so replying you express your assent.”³⁴ In such an assessment of our pursuit of the truth we see what Insunza describes as the “grandeur and limits of our humanity”³⁵

³⁰ Tracy, D. *The analogical imagination: Christian theology and the culture of pluralism*. New York: Crossroad, 1981.

³¹ Greeley, A. *The Catholic imagination*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000.

³² *Sermo 227*.

³³ *Ibid*.

³⁴ *Sermo 272*.

³⁵ S. Insunza, *Augustinian Spirituality in the Life of the Laity in Our journey back to God: Reflections on Augustinian Spirituality*. Rome: Pubblicazione Agostiniane, 2006, 407.

True to his understanding of learning as a journey Augustine did not think that we should wait for a final summative evaluation. Rather when he tells us, “Search in ways to make discoveries, and discover in ways to keep on searching,”³⁶ Augustine is reminding us that one point of learning truth builds upon another. It works as a chain of learning and reasoning. Throughout his writings he continues to see the importance of reasoning that he identifies in *Soliloquiorum libri duo*. An Augustinian pedagogy of discovery is one that aims at critical and higher-order thinking. The aims of the curriculum of an Augustinian school should be focused on such critical and higher-order thinking with the inclusion of opportunity for creative thinking as a means to ensure ways to continue discovering. Project Based Learning methods can aid in facilitating these directions.

Augustine found insights into truth when he searched for answers to other people’s questions.³⁷ An Augustinian pedagogy should be one of questions. Both learners and teachers should explore through multiple forms of questions. The questions should include ones that help clarify understanding, that challenge students to move beyond current understanding, that enable students to see discrepancies in what they know as well as to find alternatives to what they know, that help students find solutions as well as help them find that some problems are heuristic, i.e., do not have a single answer. While the Socratic Method may be the most famous of question methods of teaching and learning, an Augustinian pedagogy values any form of question method rather than directing one specific approach.

Through methods of questioning in search of transcendent and transcending truth, Augustine’s pedagogical consideration of Being Passionate for the Truth was for Augustine a “restless” journey.³⁸ With no assurance that we now truly understand the truth, this is a learning journey on which we will make mistakes because Augustine sees us as cracked pots going into the furnace well crafted yet coming out cracked.³⁹ To compensate for our being cracked pots – limited beings – Augustinian

³⁶ *De Trinitate*, IX, 1,1.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 1, 8.

³⁸ *Confessiones*, 1, 1.

³⁹ *Enarrationes in Psalmos 99*, 11. The use of the concept “cracked” extends work on Augustine and the cracked self in Donald X. Burt, “*Let Me Know Myself...*” *Reflections on the Prayer of Saint Augustine*, Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2002.

pedagogy should teach learners to triangulate their learning, i.e., to be sure that our conclusions can be arrived at from different directions and under multiple circumstances. It should also help learners to develop the capability for honest self-reflection and self-regulation. The honesty should come from testing our reflection and regulation against standards beyond our own making. This pedagogy should assist the learner to deal effectively with inferential reasoning as well as factual reasoning.

One family of methods to assist in this would be the use of writing to think and to learn, not just report findings. Augustine can be seen as modeling writing to think and writing to learn when he observed,

We engage in public debates and write books in a very different fashion from writers of holy canonical books. We make progress in our thinking, as we write. We are learning every day. We are engaged in research as we dictate our thoughts. We are knocking at the door of learning as we present our thinking in speech. When I can be useful to the community, both by writing and by speaking, I certainly will not keep quiet, if I can help it.⁴⁰

Among the methods most helpful in developing such a reflective approach to writing is journaling.

Because dialogue/dialectic/discussion is the best Augustinian method⁴¹ for cracked pots to search through knowledge to wisdom,⁴² Augustinian pedagogy should have communitarian approaches to learn how to become passionate for learning truth. Such dialogue should include interchange between teacher and learner. Augustine's dialogue writings also model the need for lively interactive dialogue among learners. In works like *De Trinitate* and *De civitate Dei* Augustine models how he learned through observation in a dialogic fashion with the world and people around him. Augustinian pedagogy for teaching how to dialogue should include learning how to observe well as a form of dialogue. Most importantly, Augustine's own interiority demonstrates the importance of learning to dialogue with the Inner Teacher.

At the same time that Augustine's learning through dialogue demonstrates the importance of illumination (enlightenment from the Inner Teacher) in his search for truth, he also emphasizes how human

⁴⁰ *Sermo 162C*, 15 (Dolbeau 10).

⁴¹ *Soliloquia*, II, 7,14.

⁴² *De Trinitate*, XIII, 24.

reasoning plays an essential role in that search. In Augustinian pedagogy we do not learn by faith alone but also by understanding.⁴³ Learners need to understand how to balance and connect illumination and reasoning. An Augustinian teacher can assist in this development by remembering that he or she does not provide truth but acts as a mirror facilitating the search for insight by their students.⁴⁴ To help us see this, Augustine provided two models – one for poor teaching and one for good teaching. Faustus was a poor teacher because he acted as an authority communicating “truth” externally. He gave answers but they did not really answer Augustine’s questions. So, Augustine did not learn from the ideas of Faustus. In Augustine’s eyes, Ambrose became a good teacher because he pointed to the authority of truth discovered by learners within themselves.⁴⁵ Facilitating, in an Augustinian-style of teaching, demands attention to what the learner understands and to inquiry approaches that address the questions of the learner. Great preparation and attention by the teacher to his or her own reasoning processes are not worth much if the learner does not come to understanding by means of those methods. The difference between teacher and student and from one learner to another can be addressed by responding to the learning style of each learner. Good Augustinian teachers as facilitators should see themselves as coaches, intellectual and emotional guides as well as models for learning in their relations with their students.

An Augustinian educator should not make the mistake of seeing pedagogy as simply processes. Augustine models the importance of attention to good content in his insights on Scriptural interpretation⁴⁶ and the value of liberal education⁴⁷ as aids in our search for truth. In his interpretation of scripture and his evaluation of liberal education Augustine places importance on teaching how to learn to read difficult texts. This part of Augustinian pedagogy militates against only extracting

⁴³ *Contra Academicos*, III, 20.

⁴⁴ *Sermo 306B*, 4.

⁴⁵ R. M. Jacobs, O.S.A. *Augustine’s Pedagogy of Intellectual Liberation: Turning Students from the “Truth of Authority” to the “Authority of Truth”* in K. Paffenroth and K. L. Hughes, *Augustine and Liberal Education*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2000, 117.

⁴⁶ *De doctrina christiana*.

⁴⁷ *De ordine*, I, 8,24 and *Retractationes*, I, 3,2.

information and ideas from great texts for students. It advocates aiding students to develop the ability over time to learn from great writing directly on their own.

For Augustine, illumination, reason, and great writings are means to truth. Yet, in his understanding of the search for truth as a restless journey he also leaves room for doubt, development and change. These are not always problems or difficulties for him. For Augustine change and development can be the active exercise of good reasoning.⁴⁸ Doubt can be evidence of a desire or readiness to learn.⁴⁹ For the Augustinian educator practices of planning and implementation as well as testing hypotheses thorough experimentation can lead students to learn when change and development are healthy ways to construct understanding. Teaching students that “practice makes perfect” and learning from insolvable paradoxes are ways to educate when doubt can be an effective spur to the next stage in an Augustinian learning journey.

While doubt is part of Augustine’s understanding of learning, there can be no doubt that Augustine thinks that we travel with others on our learning journeys. Whether it is with the Inner Teacher, human teachers or other learners we are on the road learning with others. Augustine sees communion and community as part of the successful learning process. This aspect is best fostered when we undertake the third Augustinian Pedagogical Consideration – Learning to Desire Unity.

IV. Learning to Desire Unity

For Augustine learning is not individualistic. He sees us going beyond ourselves when we find unity in community/communion with others. Community as a place for learning can be found in the *Rule*, *De opera monachorum*, *De civitate Dei*, his Sermons and his Letters. Augustine tells his community in the *Rule*, “Live harmoniously in your house, intent upon God in oneness of mind and heart.”⁵⁰ Augustine’s emphasis on the importance of community as a means of learning distinguishes his pedagogy from some others. In Ignatian pedagogy the

⁴⁸ *Epistula 138*, 4.

⁴⁹ G. Howie, *Educational Theory and Practice in St. Augustine*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969, 148.

⁵⁰ *Regula I*, 2.

emphasis is on learning to be a “man for others.” But, in Augustinian pedagogy learning “with” others is a primary concern. As we have noted learning with others can be seen in Augustine’s emphasis on dialogue as the best way to learn. Learning with others shows up in Augustine’s life when we see that all of the important events in his life occurred in the company of others. We can see the influence of his friends at school, his conversion with Alypius, his experience of spiritual ecstasy with his mother Monica. Even the learning triad of memory-understanding-will is a learning community reflecting the life of the Trinity within us. Insunza observes that “interiority and communion are the principle categories of Augustinian thought.”⁵¹ Learning with others for Augustine is part of the search for communion.

While Augustine experienced the major events of his life in the company of others, friendship was not always an easy experience. Augustine knew the difficulties of community life. His reflections on what he has learned from difficult community experiences can evidence disenchantment,⁵² even pessimism. Even his teaching, through writing, placed many annoying and distracting demands on him.⁵³ He became weary from the scandals of the world,⁵⁴ the divisions of the Church in Africa⁵⁵ and his community at Hippo⁵⁶ as well as his own bad decisions.⁵⁷

Paradoxically these troubles were also liberating. They were liberating because they led him to insights about right relations and right order needed for concrete circumstances. Difficulties enabled Augustine to see that right order and justice in the community always needed to be restored. Thus in an educational setting the Restorative Justice model of school climate and discipline spoken about under the consideration of Possessing Wholehearted Love for Learning comports well with Augustine’s understanding and experience of learning with others. This model also strives to build the desire of unity, being one with others,

⁵¹ S. Insunza, *op. cit.*, 405.

⁵² R.A. Markus. *Conversion and Disenchantment in Augustine’s Spiritual Career* (Saint Augustine Lecture Series 1984). Villanova, PA: Villanova University Press, 1989, 39.

⁵³ *Epistula* 23A, 4.

⁵⁴ *Epistula* 73, 10.

⁵⁵ *In Evangelium Ioannis tractus centum viginti quatuor*, 13, 13.

⁵⁶ *Sermo* 355 and *Sermo* 356.

⁵⁷ *Epistula* 270 and *Epistula* 20.

among the members of a learning community. As Augustine challenged an Augustinian community in Carthage,

*“You all say, ‘The times are troubled, the times are hard, the times are wretched.’ Live good lives and you will change the times. By living good lives you will change the times and have nothing to grumble about.”*⁵⁸

Just as Augustine sought peace in both the larger Church and his own community at Hippo, our thinking about the concerns for building a desire for unity in the learning community should not be limited to the macro-level of the harmony of Right Order and Right Relations in the school. To be effective it must also be reflected in the micro-level of classroom management and physical arrangements within the individual classroom.

Augustine complained about the troubles and distractions he experienced in the demands of writing. Yet, he tells us how he learned from his own writing.⁵⁹ Through writing Augustine built and maintained a larger community of learners. His communications with his audiences were also means for him to learn by dialoguing with others. His writing was iterative and in a way interactive. An Augustinian pedagogy should follow Augustine in the use of iterative writing methods and interactive communication to assist learning, particularly as it fosters and enhances peer support in a learning community.

Augustine’s own learning taught him how to build a structure of cohesive interdependence (unity) among the elements and methods of knowledge. As he tells us,

*“Reason is the faculty that enables me to analyze and synthesize the things that ought to be learned... Both in analyzing and in synthesizing it is a unity that I seek, a unity that I love. But when I analyze, I seek a homogenous unity; when I synthesize, I look for an integral unity.”*⁶⁰

This understanding encourages a pedagogy of “multiple intelligences” in which good reason and good thinking occur in varieties of forms and through different frameworks of logic and reasoning.

⁵⁸ *Sermo 311*, 8.

⁵⁹ *Sermo 162C*, 15 (Dolbeau 10).

⁶⁰ *De ordine*, II, 18,48.

Beyond the forms of reasoning, Augustine expects the learning community to attend to varying levels of development and pace of learning when he advises us:

*“Let those quicker in understanding show that they walk along the road together with those who are slower. When one is faster than a companion, he has the power to let the slower one catch up, not vice versa. If the faster walks as fast as possible, the slower will not succeed in following. The faster one must slow the pace to avoid abandoning the slower companion.”*⁶¹

This type of understanding implies that Augustine’s advice to Deogratias (reviewed above) about readiness for learning in *De Catechizandis Rudibus* should not be taken only as advice to individual teachers. It should also be seen as guidance for the overall Augustinian approach of an educational center.

From the varying perspectives of reason, development, pace, readiness, etc. one can see Augustinian pedagogy as having an inclusive thrust to aim to teach ALL learners as a mutual responsibility of an Augustinian learning community. As Augustine challenges us to remember,

*“Love empowers us to support one another in carrying our burdens. When deer need to cross a river, each one carries on its rear the head of the one behind it while it rests its head on the rear of the one in front of it. Supporting and helping each other, they are thus able to cross wide rivers safely, until they reach the firmness of the land together.”*⁶²

Some of the practices that advance Augustinian pedagogy can be as simple as Think-Pair-Share dyads, where the individual learners think initially alone, then pair with another learner and in the sharing of their thoughts learn from each other. In a broader way Collaborative Learning and Cooperative Learning with their own methodologies can be used as frameworks for shaping learning activities that reinforce the communitarian dimensions of an Augustinian pedagogy. Likewise, team approaches whether game-based, group achievement, individual mastery or jigsaw format can assist in developing belonging to the

⁶¹ *Enarrationes in Psalmos 90, 2,1 and 17.*

⁶² *De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus liber unus, 71,1.*

learning community. But, in team approaches Augustinian educators need to attend to the competitive aspects so that they do not undermine the mutuality by an overemphasis on the value of “winning.”

The friendship aspects of community are well known through Augustine’s insights such as, “We need our companions to be ourselves”⁶³ and “Life without friends is an exile.”⁶⁴ Yet one of the seminal thoughts of Augustine is actually formulated in the context of a learning community, as he remembered,

My soul found all manner of joy when I was in their company — to talk and to laugh and to be kind to each other — to read engaging books together, to go from the lightest joking to talk of the deepest things and back again — to differ without discord, as I might differ with myself, and when on the rarest occasion disagreement arose, to find it highlights the sweetness of our normal agreement — to teach and to learn from each other — to be impatient for those absent and welcome them with joy when they return — these and similar things, emanating from our hearts as we gave and received affection, shown in our faces, our voices, our eyes, and a thousand other gratifying ways, ignited a flame which fused our very souls together and made the many of us one.⁶⁵

Here we can see that an Augustinian pedagogy is learning to desire unity – a unity that fuses the souls of the members together. This mutual love has a strong element of reciprocity. As van Bavel notes about this passage of the *Confessiones*,

*“Here we see what Augustine liked in his friends. He felt guilty if he was unable to love anyone who loved him or if love went unrequited. To love and to be loved, to bestow love and to receive love – reciprocal love, in other words, is Augustine’s definition of friendship.”*⁶⁶

Since friendship is a means to advance learning for Augustine, practices of reciprocal love should be part of the pedagogy of an Augustinian learning community.

⁶³ *Enarrationes in Psalmos 125*, 13.

⁶⁴ *De fide rerum quae non videntur liber unus*, 1,2.

⁶⁵ *Confessiones*, IV, 8,13.

⁶⁶ T. J. van Bavel, *The Spiritual Legacy of Saint Augustine in Our journey back to God: Reflections on Augustinian Spirituality*. Rome: Pubblicazione Agostiniane, 2006, 26.

Community then is a school for dialoguing with the Inner Teacher. It assists us to experience Augustinian interiority in the 4 step process outlined by Galende and noted above. It also is a venue calling us to “experience all things external from your interior life” in Galende’s description of the 4th step. Yet, in an Augustinian sense the learning community should do more. It should also be a venue for us to meet Christ in His Fullness (*Totus Christus*) as Augustine describes a major way he experienced Christ in addition to his experience of Christ as the Inner Teacher. Encountering Christ in His Fullness has implications for an Augustinian pedagogy of Social Justice, Social Interdependence and Social Responsibility. According to van Bavel,

Augustine refers time and again to Mt. 25:40 “*Anything you did to the least of mine, you did it to me*” and Acts 9:4 “*Saul, Saul why are you persecuting me?*” Augustine says: “*He too is us. If it were not him, the sentence ‘Anything you did to the least of mine, you did it to me’ would not be true. If it were not him, the sentence ‘Saul, Saul why are you persecuting me?’ would not be true. Consequently, we are him, for we are his members, we are his body, for he is our head, for the whole Christ is head and body.*”⁶⁷ This idea confers a special dignity on every human being, whoever he or she may be. It emphasizes the universality of Christian love. At the same time, it is a summons to take care of the suffering, the hungry, the thirsty, the imprisoned, and the dying neighbor. It is an appeal to solidarity, to world consciousness, to common responsibility, to a more united humanity, and consequently to a more united world.⁶⁸

In applying implications of experiencing Christ in His Fullness to Augustinian pedagogy we are teaching and learning not only the love of God but also the love of neighbor. Augustine sees love of neighbor, according to van Bavel, as the “double face of love,”⁶⁹ that is love of God and love of neighbor united together. Augustinian pedagogy in this aspect is learning and teaching what van Bavel terms, “the practical primacy of

⁶⁷ *Sermo 133*, 8.

⁶⁸ T. J. van Bavel, *Augustine’s spirituality for the Church in the modern world in The Augustinian Family Prepares for the Third Millennium*. T. Cooney (ed.) Rome: Pubblicazione Agostiniane – Curia Generalizia Agostiniana, 1986, 57. The italics are van Bavel’s.

⁶⁹ van Bavel, T. J. *The Double Face of Love in Augustine*. *Augustinian Studies*, 17 (1986), 169-181.

love of neighbor”⁷⁰ Burt speaks in similar ways in what he calls “practice in loving God.”⁷¹

In an Augustinian pedagogy we can be guided by Canning’s understanding of the unity of the love of God and love of neighbor in Augustine. He reminds us that Augustine sees the works of mercy as the “crucial criterion”⁷² for testing our love of God and love of neighbor. On the importance of love of neighbor through works of mercy, Augustine interprets the Letter to the Galatians in these words,

*“Since the love of God is not so frequently put to the test, people can deceive themselves about it. In love of neighbor, however, they can more easily be convinced that they do not possess the love of God, if they are unjust towards other people.”*⁷³

Besides reminding us of the “crucial criterion,” Canning follows the direction of Augustine’s use of the expression in Matthew 25, “one of least of mine,”⁷⁴ which gives us additional understanding of an Augustinian approach to humility as a communitarian method of learning. With love of neighbor connected to love of God, the vulnerability of the poor and needy is an experience of the humility of God.⁷⁵ Through pedagogy that fosters the works of mercy and an experiencing in the “least of mine” the humility of God we can learn in community the humility that Augustine sees as necessary for true learning.⁷⁶ For the teachers community can be framework for learning the Augustinian value of a humility that understands teaching is service not status.⁷⁷

Beyond humility, practice of the love of neighbor fosters solidarity. This is a pedagogical solidarity that Augustine implies when he adds to the words of Jesus “When one of the least of mine learns, I learn.”⁷⁸ This solidarity places learning from cultural diversity as a means to

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 171.

⁷¹ D. X. Burt. *Reflections on a Dying Life*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004, 24.

⁷² R. Canning. *The Unity of Love of God and Love of Neighbour*. Heverlee-Leuven: Augustinian Historical Institute, 1993, 353.

⁷³ *Commentary on the Letter to the Galatians*, 45.

⁷⁴ Canning, *op. cit.*, 331-420.

⁷⁵ See, *Sermo 113*, 1,1.

⁷⁶ *Sermo 198*, 13.

⁷⁷ *Sermo 242*, 1.

⁷⁸ Tractate on the Gospel of John 21,7,2.

achieve an Augustinian desire for unity. For teachers it is challenge to employ culturally relevant methods of teaching to ensure that the entire learning community, even the marginalized “least of mine,” is invited into the fullness of the learning community.

To humility and solidarity Burt would add freedom as something we gain through “practice in loving God.” As he understands Augustine,

In this life, as in the next, the foundation is love. (*Commentary on Psalms 33/2*, 19) Thus, when we are sick and it seems that our desire for a healthy *life* is frustrated, there can be some peace from knowing others are sorry for our troubles. Even though we are failures in the eyes of a world that sees no *meaning* in our lives, we can still feel important if we are loved by someone. Our desire for *love* is indeed central to our lives, and luckily, it can be nourished by even the least bit of affection expended and received. Though a fervent love that binds us tightly to another may seem to the outsider to threaten our desire for *freedom*, we know that it does not. Indeed, it fulfills the desire. No one is more free than those who are “imprisoned” in the arms of their beloved.⁷⁹

When Augustinian pedagogy provides the means to learn freedom, as well as the community, friendship, right relations, interdependence, reciprocity, love of God through love of neighbor, humility and solidarity we have reviewed, it is not difficult to see the value of implementing practices of the Augustinian Pedagogical Consideration of Learning to Desire Unity. When we look at these virtues we may even understand Augustine as teaching emotional and social intelligence.

V. Implementing Practices of Augustinian Pedagogy

In the primary Augustinian Pedagogical Consideration of Reflective Learning through Transforming Experiences as well as its 3 resultant Augustinian Pedagogical Considerations of Possessing Wholehearted Love for Learning, Being Passionate for Learning Truth, and Learning to Desire Unity we have seen there are many pedagogical practices that foster Augustinian pedagogy. While the interrelation of the considerations is unique to Augustine, the practices identified here are not uniquely Augustinian. Thus, there is no blueprint for implementing

⁷⁹ Burt, *op. cit.*, 55-56.

Augustinian pedagogy. But, Augustine in his *Retractationes* can provide us an additional insight – an insight on implementation.

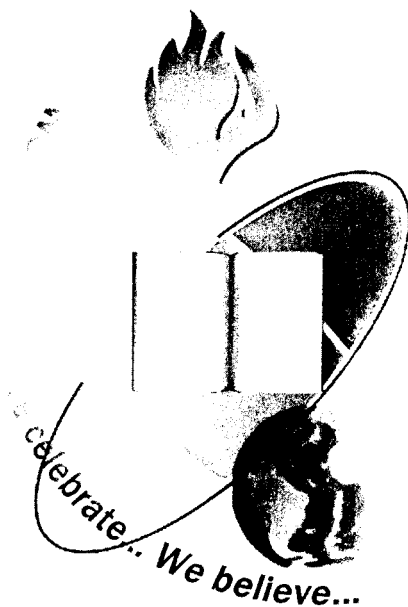
An effective way to go about implementation may be through a process of reconsideration. In such a process, the learning community or the individual teacher or learner considers their learning and teaching in light of practices of Augustinian pedagogy like those identified here. In such a review successful practices can be identified as well as practices that can bring improvement in areas where growth in Augustinian teaching and/or learning is needed. A method for review could be the strategic planning practice SWOT analysis. This is a method where institutions or programs identify their Strengths as well as Weaknesses. Alongside these analyses strategic Opportunities for improvement as well as external factors that are Threats to improvement are identified. From these factors a plan is developed to move forward. The SWOT method can provide not only consideration of the reality of an educational situation but also help to identify areas needing reconsideration to improve learning and teaching in more Augustinian ways.

Whether it is through the SWOT method or another form of analysis, in our implementation through reconsideration Augustinian teachers and learners, like Augustine, should find hope in always needing to travel ahead on our learning journey and in our pedagogical practices. As he tells us “Always add something more. Keep on walking. Always forge ahead.”⁸⁰

⁸⁰ *Sermo 169*, 18.

Basic Elements of Augustinian Pedagogy

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**PUBBLICAZIONI AGOSTINIANE
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BASIC ELEMENTS
OF AUGUSTINIAN PEDAGOGY

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