

***Augustinian Learning in a Technological World:  
Social and Emotional Applications***

**by**

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## **Abstract**

Cognizant that Saint Augustine's world of Latin Antiquity is foreign to a technological world and technology is not ethically neutral, this essay explores application of the 2 principle categories of the thought of Saint Augustine (Interiority and Communion) to practicing Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in a technological world. In particular, an Augustinian Reflection Circle is provided for practicing Augustinian Interiority as well as engaging our brokenness, practicing humility, strengthening courage and cheerfulness, as well as working with diligence as practices of Augustinian Communion. These practices together with SEL in a technological world can give us an Augustinian Hope in our Information Age.

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### **Keywords:**

Augustinian Communion

Augustinian Interiority

Augustinian Pedagogy

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

Information Age

Learning Practices

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## **Augustinian Pedagogy Practitioner Impetus**

One can easily respond to the connection of Saint Augustine of Hippo to contemporary technology with the question: “Really???” In her book, *Lurking: How a Person Became a User*, Joanne McNeil identifies the primary concerns of people online as Search, Anonymity, Visibility, Sharing, Clash, Community, and Accountability.<sup>1</sup> These categories can be seen as categories related to the life of Saint Augustine, particularly aspects leading to his conversion. But rather than a “person becoming a user,” it can be argued that through his conversion a “user became a person,” namely an authentic person as a Christian.

This paper continues my work of responding to questions from educators from 5 schools sponsored by the Order of Saint Augustine in the Philippines. After presentations on Augustinian Pedagogy as moments of interpersonal encounters in 2018, educators at each of the schools where I presented asked about relating Augustinian Pedagogy to the use of technology. These Filipino teachers have been practicing the Values of Augustinian Pedagogy as the ethos of their schools.

As an initial response (based on my Augustinian Pedagogy work as well as my training and work as Instructional Technologist) I presented a paper on “Augustinian Learning Practices for a Technological World”<sup>2</sup> at an Augustinian Education Conference in Bogotá, Columbia in April 2019. I followed up that first essay with a Closing Address on “Augustinian Learning in a Technological World: Social and Emotional Learning” in the Philippines at the Asia Pacific Augustinian Conference’s Augustinian Family Educator’s Congress 2019.<sup>3</sup> This paper refines that work, particularly incorporating feedback and insights from the 2019 Filipino Congress related to aspects of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). Participants in the Congress were practitioners of Augustinian Pedagogy at schools of the Order of Saint Augustine and other Augustinian Religious Congregations throughout the Asia Pacific region.

### **Two Notes of Caution**

Before describing the social and emotional application of Augustinian Pedagogy values to our technological world, I want to provide an initial note of caution related to applying the ideas of Saint Augustine to contemporary issues. I agree with Professor Robert Dodaro, O.S.A.,

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<sup>1</sup> McNeil, J. *Lurking*. Table of Contents.

<sup>2</sup> McCloskey, G.N., O.S.A., (2019a) “Augustinian Learning Practices for a Technological World.”

<sup>3</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ . (2019b) “Augustinian Learning in a Technological World: Social and Emotional Learning.”

the eminent scholar of the thought of Saint Augustine, when he observed:

The more I read Augustine and read studies about him and about his time, the more I come to two conclusions, apparently disjunctive. They continue to strike me forcefully. First, I find it increasingly difficult to domesticate Augustine, that is, to make him appear at home in our times. Secondly, I find his theology and approach to various pastoral issues increasingly more relevant for our times. On the one hand I am saying that Augustine's Church and the times in which he lived, late Roman antiquity, have to be seen as strange even alien to our own times, between his Church and our Church and secondly, in spite of the fact that I continue to reach this difficult conclusion, I continue to see the urgency of Augustine's theology and his pastoral responses for the Church in his times.<sup>4</sup>

While Dodaro's observation leads me to move cautiously, my own work as an Instructional Technologist with more than 30 years of practice has given me a vantage point from which to approach the technological aspects related to practicing Augustinian Pedagogy. My technology work has covered the gamut from computing with punch cards in the 1970s, instructional technology studies at Columbia University in New York in the 1990s, coding my own web pages before current computer programming was available, and securing government grants to bridge the digital divide experienced by the poor. Even though these experiences represent much success, I have been guided by a second note of caution that I have found in the work of the educational philosopher, C.A. Bowers. He has identified the non-neutrality of technology<sup>5</sup>, i.e., that it is not ethically neutral. How can technology use be neutral when the computers and peripherals we use are made from toxic materials that are fairly impossible for us to dispose of and thus fraught with environmental issues? As part of this, Bowers sees the use of technology as involving moral double binds, i.e., communication dilemmas arising from conflicts among various messages. In moral double binds no matter what you do leads to choices that include negative ethical implications. Bowers reminds us, that as technology enables us to communicate with one another across cultures, its non-neutrality brings homogenization resulting in the loss of indigenous wisdom.<sup>6</sup> Further, the "binariness" of the non-neutrality of

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<sup>4</sup> Dodaro, R. "The Courage to Be Intolerant," 76.

<sup>5</sup> Bowers, C. A. *The Cultural Dimensions of Educational Computing*.

<sup>6</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ . Culture Diversity and the Ecological Crisis: Addressing the Double Binds in Teacher Education, in \_\_\_\_\_, *Critical Essays on Education, Modernity, and the Recovery of the Ecological Imperative*, 163-178.

computer technology casts realities into binary frameworks as well as reducing situations into data alone.<sup>7</sup> Bower aptly captures this reduction in the title of one of his works, “Let them Eat Data.”<sup>8</sup> In response to this, as noted above, my technology work has been cast in appreciation of ecological issues related to technology use<sup>9</sup> and teaching with technology,<sup>10</sup> as well as who is “left out” in digital divides.<sup>11</sup>

### **Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)**

In recent years, the social and emotional aspects of learning and their impacts on overall learning, including in the use of technology in learning have become increasingly issues we need to address. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) identifies the 5 core competencies of SEL as:

Self-awareness—accurately assessing one’s feelings, interests, values, and strengths; maintaining a well-grounded sense of self-confidence.

Self-management—regulating one’s emotions to handle stress, control impulses, and persevere in overcoming obstacles; setting and monitoring progress toward personal and academic goals; expressing emotions appropriately.

Social awareness—being able to take the perspective of and empathize with others; recognizing and appreciating individual and group similarities and differences; recognizing and using family, school, and community resources.

Relationship skills—establishing and maintaining healthy and rewarding relationships based on cooperation; resisting inappropriate social pressure; preventing, managing, and resolving interpersonal conflict; seeking help when needed.

Responsible decision-making—making decisions based on consideration of

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<sup>7</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ . *Elements of a Post-Liberal Theory of Education*, 164-166.

<sup>8</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ . *Let them Eat Data: How Computers Affect Education, Cultural Diversity and the Prospects of Ecological Sustainability*.

<sup>9</sup> McCloskey, G.N., O.S.A. “Curricular Reform for Spirituality and Sustainability.” “Knowledge of Place As Part of a Curriculum for Ecological Studies,” “Thomas Berry in Italy: Relationship, Place & Story,” and “Reflective Thinking About Place as Part of a Curriculum for Ecological Studies.”

<sup>10</sup> Provenzo, E.F, Jr., Brett, A., and McCloskey, G.N., O.S.A., *Computers, Curriculum and Cultural Change: An Introduction for Teachers*. (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Editions).

<sup>11</sup> McCloskey, G.N., O.S.A. *Strengthening Academic Programs through Faculty Development, Infrastructure Development/ Distance Learning for Saint Thomas University in Miami, FL*. In 1999 as Project Designer and Director of a US Department of Education Strengthening Institutions – Hispanic-Serving Institutions (Title V) Program Grant, I secured an initial award of \$417,353. Subsequent years of the program were funded for a total of \$2.1million.

ethical standards, safety concerns, appropriate social norms, respect for others, and likely consequences of various actions; applying decision-making skills to academic and social situations; contributing to the well-being of one's school and community.<sup>12</sup>

### **Augustinian Thought: Interiority and Communion**

If we assume with Santiago Insunza that interiority (dialogue with the Teacher Within) and communion (friendship and community) “are the principle categories of Augustinian thought,”<sup>13</sup> we may see these categories relating to the core competencies of SEL. Augustinian interiority can connect to the SEL competencies of Self-awareness and Self- Management while we can make connections of Augustinian communion to the SEL competencies of Social awareness, Relationship skills, and Responsible decision-making. But the Augustinian categories of interiority and communion lead us to deeper understandings than the SEL competencies might. Relationships for Saint Augustine are, in the terms of Martin Buber; “I-thou” rather than purely transactional “I-it” relationships<sup>14</sup>. Reflecting on these Augustinian categories can lead us beyond simple SEL transactional skills to join Saint Augustine in the quest for the *Sapientia Sacra* (Holy Wisdom) that Eguiarte describes when he relates Augustinian Pedagogy to the pedagogy of Multiple Intelligences.<sup>15</sup>

The Augustinian categories of interiority and communion can help us approach Social and Emotional Learning in a technological world with depth and calmness in the face of the transactional speed and efficiency as well as the rampant, even radical, exteriority that technology has brought to us in the last several generations. Technologists describe the growth of the speed and efficiency of technology as “Moore’s Law.” This “law” posits that the number of transistors on a computer microchip doubles every two years at the same time as costs are halved. Gordon Moore, the Intel computer chip manufacturer co-founder, originally made this observation in 1965.<sup>16</sup> This greater speed and efficiency in technology has expanded to the expectations of workers and learners in the accomplishment of their tasks. Within this expansion

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<sup>12</sup> Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). “Core Competencies for Social and Emotional Learning (SEL).”

<sup>13</sup> Insunza Seco, S., 405.

<sup>14</sup> Buber, M. *I and Thou*. New York: Macmillan, 1923.

<sup>15</sup> Eguiarte Bendímez, E.A., O.A.R., “*Sapientia cordis*: Inteligencias y competencias según San Agustín.

<sup>16</sup> See Moore, G.E. “Cramming More Components onto Integrated Circuits.”

we find the phenomenon of multitasking. This multitasking during work time has bled into the time outside of work. *A National Study of the Impact of Electronic Communication on Canadian School Leaders*<sup>17</sup> found in 2017 that Canadian School Leaders, who participated in the study, attended to, on average, 111 e-mails during work time as well as attending to 27 work emails at home. The stress relating to this additional off-the-clock work has led those surveyed to feel they have less control over their lives. So much information coming in upon users leads to intellectual anxiety created by information overload.<sup>18</sup> At times, this overload is described in online conversations as TMI (Too Much Information).

Alongside of the advancement of speed and efficiency, Internet technology has moved to a broader social/participatory experience that has been termed, Web 2.0,<sup>19</sup> as well as to Web 3.0 (Semantic Web)<sup>20</sup> through which our internet interactions become machine readable. In such an atmosphere we can have global notoriety through our mobile devices. It is possible for us to share all we do and see, as well as who we are with. Here people can measure who they are by the number of Internet friends, fans, likes, and badges they have. In various platforms being used, posts can “go viral” while the domination, offensiveness, and deception of cyberbullying is experienced widely along with the multiplication of fake news by bots, blurring the ability to distinguish authentic vs. false engagement.<sup>21</sup> Users are seen as objects where their information is bought and sold by the platforms they use. Here they are targets for purveyors of products and opportunities and at times fools to be duped. The impulse to view a latest item on cellphones can be seen as evidence of a restlessness that results from these technological “advances.” Such factors create distractions, restlessness, and increased “exteriority” that Cal Newton feels needs to be overcome through “deep work,” i.e., “professional activities performed in a state of distraction-free concentration that push your cognitive capabilities to their limits.”<sup>22</sup> To engage in this deep work, Newport calls for a practice of “Internet Sabbath”<sup>23</sup> reiterating an idea popularized by the journalist, William Powers.<sup>24</sup> This would be moving what in some English-

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<sup>17</sup> Lanctôt, A. and Duxbury, L., 35.

<sup>18</sup> Domingo, A. *Digital Families: Tips and Guidelines for a Living in an Online Society*, 70.

<sup>19</sup> The naming is attributed to Darcy DiNucci, "Fragmented Future," *Print*. 53. No.4 (July/August 1999), 32.

<sup>20</sup> The Semantic Web extends the World Wide Web via the standards of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C).

<sup>21</sup> Kolb, L. *Learning First, Technology Second*, 1.

<sup>22</sup> Newport, C. (2016) *Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World*. London: Piatkus, 3.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>24</sup> Powers, W. *Hamlet's Blackberry*, 223 ff.

speaking countries are termed as “bidding prayers” into “breathing prayers.” Thus, people are pushed and pulled in ways that are not providing real depth. The depth of *Sapientia Sacra* in Augustinian Interiority and Communion can help them in their SEL technological work.

### **Augustinian Interiority**

Among the most famous spiritual thoughts of Saint Augustine is his prayer to God, “You have made us for yourself and our heart is restless until it rests in you.”<sup>25</sup> Saint Augustine’s restlessness and the interiority can be used to move into doing the deep work identified by Newton. Central to contemporary understandings of Augustinian Interiority is Saint Augustine’s observation in *On True Religion*, “Do not stay outside yourself but enter within since the truth dwells in the interior person.... Therefore, step to where the light of reason is lit.”<sup>26</sup> More than technological connectivity in learning, Augustinian Interiority gives us a depth to approach the SEL categories of Self-awareness and Self-management. In developing their understandings of the processes of Augustinian Interiority Keller<sup>27</sup> and Galende<sup>28</sup> each translate this observation in *On True Religion* into their own 4-step process where a participant moves into contemplation and back to action and interaction.

Guided by the work of Keller and Galende, I have connected the processes of Augustinian interiority to the Augustinian Pedagogy approach of reflection that I have found in the genres of writing employed by Saint Augustine. This has resulted in what I term an “Augustinian Reflection Circle (L-O-R-D Approach).” (See Figure 1.) In Saint Augustine’s use of the various genres in his *Soliloquies*, *Retractationes (Reconsiderations)*, *Confessions*, and his *Dialogues*, *Sermons and Letters* we find him using the elements of learning via reflection, i.e., Listen to Lived Experience, Organize/ Reorganize Findings, Refine Results for Sharing, and move to further Dialogue with Others and World. We can use the acronym, L-O-R-D to capture the 4 reflection elements. Also, this can be visualized in this way:

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<sup>25</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, I,1.

<sup>26</sup> Augustine, *On True Religion*, 39, 72.

<sup>27</sup> Keller Perez-Herrero, M.A., O.S.A., “Human Formation and Augustinian Anthropology,” 210.

<sup>28</sup> Galende Fincias, F., O.S.A., “Augustinian Interiority,” in *Our Journey Back to God: Reflections on Augustinian Spirituality*, ed. Miguel Angel Keller, O.S.A. Rome: Pubblicazione Agostiniane, 2006, 278-279.



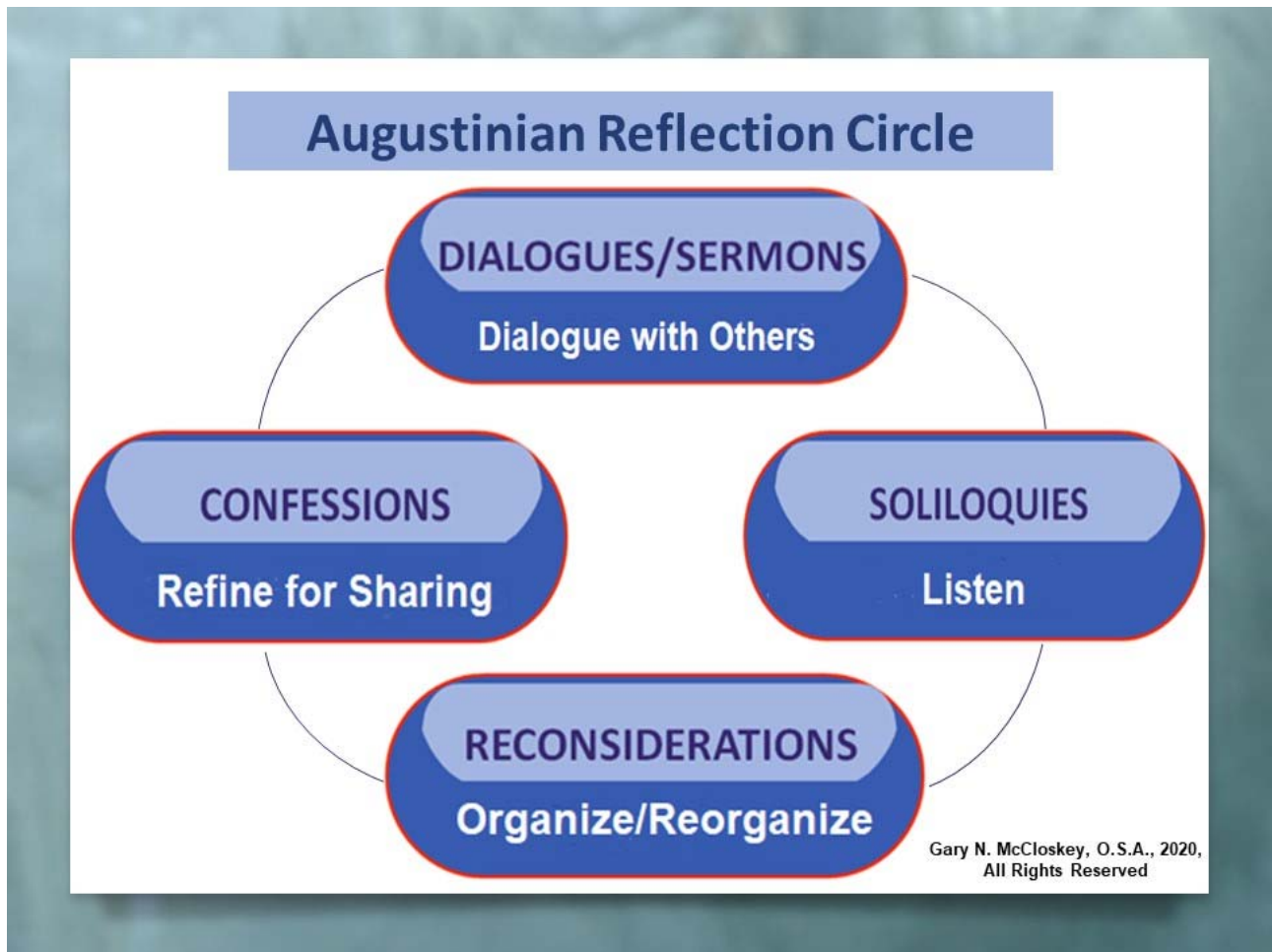


Figure 1: Augustinian Reflection Circle (L-O-R-D Approach)

**Reflection and Self-awareness: Insights from Saint Augustine’s *Soliloquies* (Listen)**

The SEL Competency of Self-awareness can be termed “accurately assessing one’s feelings, interests, values, and strengths; maintaining a well-grounded sense of self-confidence.”<sup>29</sup> Saint Augustine was working on accurately attuning his self-awareness when he prayed in his *Soliloquies*, “Let me know myself. Let me know You.”<sup>30</sup> In the *Soliloquies* we can see Saint Augustine modeling listening in order to achieve that self-awareness. We also see him recognizing his self-awareness as residing in a larger context. (“Let me know You”). In our technological world we need to step back from “noise” of speed and efficiency of technology, and even our participation in the social web, to listen in order to achieve grounded self-awareness. We can hear Saint Augustine

<sup>29</sup> Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). “Core Competencies for Social and Emotional Learning (SEL).”

<sup>30</sup> Augustine, *Soliloquies*, II, 1, 1.

stepping back and listening for self-awareness when he observed:

I pass over the lawns and spacious structures of memory where treasures of all the images the senses have stored there.... Some things summoned from memory are instantly available while others require a longer search of recesses less penetrable. During such summoning jumbled memories flit out on their own, interrupting the search for what we want. It is like they are, pestering you, saying: "Aren't we what you were seeking?" My heart draws the strength to wave these interruptions off from my memory's gaze until the dim thing I sought arrives at last, from fresh depths.<sup>31</sup>

In our technological world this may involve an Internet Sabbath of the type I have noted that Powers and Newport recommend.

In this listening in the Augustinian Reflection Circle we are also stepping away from the messages of unworthiness, especially cyberbullying, which social media has become a gateway to, as well as from competitions for numbers of "likes." Self-awareness more than a narcissism of numbers invites us to go beyond the superficial and move from our outer dialogues and with Saint Augustine "Listen to the voice of truth in reflection and in silence so that you are able to understand it."<sup>32</sup> In this we should find the gift that comes with listening as Saint Augustine describes it, "Those who listen are luckier than those who speak. The learner is humble, but the teacher must work hard at not being proud."<sup>33</sup>

### **Reflection and Self-awareness: Insights from Saint Augustine's *Reconsiderations***

#### **(Organize/Reorganize)**

In the move to the *Reconsiderations* aspect of the Augustinian Reflection Circle we continue our work in what the SEL Categories term as Self-awareness. *Reconsiderations* comes from the reflection that Saint Augustine models in his work, *Retractationes*. I use the term *Reconsiderations* to translate *Retractationes* following the observations of Henry Chadwick.<sup>34</sup> I find *Reconsiderations* a better translation of *Retractationes* than the New City Press title,

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<sup>31</sup> Augustine, *The Trinity*, XIII, 24.

<sup>32</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *Sermon 52*, 19, 22.

<sup>33</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *Expositiones on Psalms*, 50, 13.

<sup>34</sup> Chadwick, H. *Augustine of Hippo: A Life*, 167.

*Revisions*.<sup>35</sup> In *Retractationes* when Saint Augustine reviewed his booklet, *De Magistro*, he revised nothing.<sup>36</sup> So, not all parts of the text are revisions. I see James O'Donnell seeing this text as an organizing/reorganizing (retrospection) when he notes, "The *Reconsiderations* of the 420s that gave his reputation weight and staying power came from a period of retrospection in Augustine's life rather than of fresh achievement."<sup>37</sup>

Here we can see Saint Augustine incorporating what he has found in his listening into what he has already known. He is organizing and reorganizing new findings and past knowledge to reflect his current place in knowing. In building our knowledge Saint Augustine reminds us, "For greatness, use the ladder of humility"<sup>38</sup> and do not hold on to the past as we learn new things. In organizing our knowledge, Saint Augustine challenges us to "use knowledge as a kind of scaffolding."<sup>39</sup> Our knowledge and self-awareness are always foundations we are building on.

*Reconsiderations* is also a phase for some intellectual gardening in developing our self-awareness. In our technological world we are often viewed as customers and are being groomed to act and buy in ways others would like. We need to "weed out" images that give us a false self-awareness, for Saint Augustine gardens were important aspects of his spiritual development.<sup>40</sup> In the "gardening" of his conversion Saint Augustine uncovered a self-awareness of his true gifts. In his conversion:

His false gift of An Ear for Eloquence became a self-awareness of his true gift of  
a Search for the Truth with Christ the Inner Teacher.

His false gift of A Passionate Curiosity became a self-awareness of his true gift of  
a Pursuit of Right Love/Will with Christ the Physician.

His false gift of A Genius for Friendship became a self-awareness of his true gift  
of a Quest for Community with the Whole Christ (*Totus Christus*).

Reflection, like the type Saint Augustine engaged in, should lead us to an always improving self-

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<sup>35</sup> Augustine, *Revisions (Retractationes)*, trans, Ramsey, B. and ed. Teske. R., S.J. Hyde Park, New York: New City Press, 2010.

<sup>36</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *Reconsiderations*, I, 12, 11.

<sup>37</sup> O'Donnell. J.J. *Augustine: A New Biography*, 143.

<sup>38</sup> Augustine. *Sermon 96*, 3.

<sup>39</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *Letter 55*, 33.

<sup>40</sup> I have come across the importance of gardens for Saint Augustine's spiritual development in an unpublished essay by George Lawless entitled, "Augustine's Journey and Signposts Along the Way." In it he identifies as a resource: George Tavard, *Les jardins de Saint Augustin: Lectures des Confessions*. An audio version of Lawless's ideas was published as Lawless, G., "Augustine's Journey and Signposts Along the Way" (1996).

awareness and a more accurate identification of the gifts we possess moving us closer to *Sapientia Sacra* (Holy Wisdom).

### **Reflection and Self-management: Insights from Saint Augustine’s *Confessions* (Refine for Sharing)**

The SEL Competency of Self-management entails “regulating one’s emotions to handle stress, control impulses, and persevere in overcoming obstacles; setting and monitoring progress toward personal and academic goals; expressing emotions appropriately.”<sup>41</sup> The Augustinian Reflection Circle phase of *Confessions* captures the element of refining for sharing what we have found in our reflection. In his *Confessions*, Saint Augustine presents salient points of his life offered to help others to live well. He also shares Scripture and ways to understand Scripture to model for other people ways to hear the voice of God in their lives. Further, he shares his own prayers to God inviting others to enter into his reflection and dialogue with God. In this he models his own call to “Search in ways by which we can make discoveries and discover in ways by which we can keep on searching.”<sup>42</sup>

Saint Augustine’s ongoing searching may be seen even in the *Retractationes* which he crafted late in life. In our lives, such searching takes us deeper than any surfing of the Web can. It takes us deeper than Facebook posts, true or fake, as well as to a depth greater than limits on the number of characters of tweets may block. Saint Augustine’s approaches to reflection press us to search and discover in more and more meaningful ways meeting Pahomov’s criteria for meaningful reflection, namely, it must be metacognitive, applicable, and shared with others.<sup>43</sup>

### **Reflection and Self-management: Insights from Saint Augustine’s *Dialogues/Sermons/Letters* (Dialogue with Others)**

The SEL Competency of Self-management leads into the SEL Categories that are more relational/inter-personal. In coming out of the interiority of the Augustinian Reflection Circle, any Self-awareness and Self-management that have been developed should prepare users to deal with the speed and efficiency and the restlessness engendered by the participatory/social web of technology. The use of Saint Augustine’s styles of reflection should enable users to be better prepared for the technological world than they were before they engaged in these forms of

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<sup>41</sup> Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). “Core Competencies for Social and Emotional Learning (SEL).”

<sup>42</sup> Augustine, *The Trinity*, IX, 1, 1.

<sup>43</sup> Pahomov, L. *Authentic Learning in the Digital Age: Engaging Students Through Inquiry*.

reflection. Saint Augustine's *Sermons, Letters, and Dialogues* give us ways to see into his dialogues with his congregation and friends. At times, we hear him responding to conversations that have been lost in history. Saint Augustine wrote his books in response to requests from people he dialogued with through conversation or writing. I have wondered what Marcellinus who asked him to write *The Trinity*, and others who were asking him to finish it,<sup>44</sup> thought when they read it and encountered his deep thinking. We can find another important point within Saint Augustine's relationships around his writing. We can learn the importance of listening to one another, to nature, and the larger world. In a technological world where we are largely talked at by others, we can learn through Augustinian styles of reflection to listen to others for our own sake as well as the betterment of others.

Using the Self-awareness and Self-management prepares us to approach our use of technology with a view toward a unity that can be heard in Saint Augustine's recollection of dialoguing with friends.

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 or 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, voices, eyes, and a thousand other gratifying ways, ignited a flame which fused our very souls together and made the many of us one.<sup>45</sup>

Beyond interpersonal unity, Augustinian styles of reflection can prepare us to understand that in our dialogues Truth is not relative, but communally discovered. As Saint Augustine notes,

This is why we chose this method of discussion. There is no better way of seeking truth than through the method of question and answer. But rare is the person who is not ashamed of being proved wrong. As a result, a good discussion is often spoiled by some hard-headed outburst with its frayed tempers, generally hidden but sometimes

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<sup>44</sup> Augustine, *Letter 143*.

<sup>45</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *Confessions*, IV, 8, 13.

evident. We planned to proceed peaceably and agreeably in our search for truth. I would ask the questions and you would answer. If you find yourself in difficulties, do not be afraid to go back and try again.<sup>46</sup>

In using this Augustinian Reflection Circle (L-O-R-D Approach) for learning with a deeper “I-thou” grounding, the teaching work of Carole Rogers may be very helpful for practical direction.<sup>47</sup> In her work she describes connecting being mindful and practicing presence,<sup>48</sup> teasing out the relationships among I, Thou, It, and Context in learning and teaching settings,<sup>49</sup> as well as providing a very useful “Teaching Triangle” for interconnecting I, Thou, and It.<sup>50</sup>

In our Dialogues with Others in an Augustinian-style reflection we approach the “friends” we have gathered and who have gathered us, with a deeper attitude of friendship which in Saint Augustine’s life had grown into the communion category we find in Augustinian thought and spirituality. Saint Augustine’s sense of this deeper experience of friendship may be heard in these words of his, “I do confess I find it easy to give myself entirely to the love of those who are my intimate friends... In this love I am completely at ease, because I believe that God is there, on whom I cast myself confidently and in whom I take my rest.”<sup>51</sup>

### **Augustinian Communion**

Before proceeding to connect Communion, as the second principle category of Augustinian thought, to SEL in a technological world, it is good to provide a short summary of Saint Augustine’s notion of Communion. This clarity will help in the expansion of thought that an Augustinian understanding of Communion can bring to SEL and engaging in the technological world.

Augustinian Spirituality is, according to Gabriel Quicke, essentially a Spirituality of Togetherness<sup>52</sup> “with others.” This distinctive Augustinian characteristic, when applied to learning and teaching, can be contrasted with a “for others” approach of Ignatian Pedagogy. Pedro Arrupe, S.J., the Superior General of the Jesuits from 1965 to 1983, identified that in Ignatian Pedagogy the “prime educational objective must be to form men-and-women-for-

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<sup>46</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *Soliloquies*, II, 7, 14.

<sup>47</sup> Rogers, C.A. *The Art of Reflective Teaching: Practicing Presence*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2020.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 3

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>51</sup> *Letter 73*.

<sup>52</sup> Quicke, G. *"Come Love With Me": Augustine As Spiritual Guide*, xi.

others.”<sup>53</sup> Distinct from such an Ignatian approach Saint Augustine emphasizes a “with others” approach which can be understood through his observation that,

My place as your head frightens me, but what I share with you comforts me. I am a bishop set over you, but together with you I am a Christian. The first is the title of the office I have assumed, the second is a grace; the first is a danger, the second is salvation. The office seems like a storm tossing us about in a raging sea. But when we remember who redeemed us by His blood, it seems we enter the safety of a harbor in the stillness of that thought. Even though this office is personally hard work, the common benefit gives me rest.<sup>54</sup>

This “with others” direction is grounded in his experience of Christ as *Totus Christus*. Rowan Williams has interpreted this dimension of Augustinian thought in these words, “Augustine is the first to use the expression *totus Christus*, ‘the complete Christ’, to denote the complex unity that is not only the Word and Jesus but Jesus and the members of his Body, understood as making up together a single *persona*, a single acting and speaking subject.”<sup>55</sup> In particular in his *Sermons 227 and 272*, Saint Augustine describes the Eucharistic implications of participating in *Totus Christus* by being the Body of Christ for others in the larger world. He preaches about our responsibility to unite with others in the world having Christ as the Head of our Body. In this understanding, in any foray into cyberspace we are taking Christ with us and are meeting him there. Being the Body of the “complete Christ” we are acting *in loco Jesu*, in the place of Jesus when we are in cyberspace. In *Acts 4:32-35*, a fundamental text for Saint Augustine’s *Rule* for religious living, Margaret Scott sees Christians as Table-People,<sup>56</sup> taking this togetherness from the altar table to the dining table. A further dimension of this Augustinian togetherness can be found in Carmen Caltagirone’s conception of *Friendship as Sacrament*.<sup>57</sup> Saint Augustine adds to this sacramental sense of friendship the biblical notion of “bearing one another’s burdens” (*Galatians 6:2*). In one instance he vividly captures bearing the burdens of others in the image of deer aiding one another to ford rivers.<sup>58</sup> Saint Augustine even embodied

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<sup>53</sup> Arrupe, P., S.J. “Men and Women For Others.”

<sup>54</sup> Augustine, *Sermon 340*, 1.

<sup>55</sup> Williams, R. *Christ the Heart of Creation*. London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2018, 74.

<sup>56</sup> Scott, M. *The Eucharist and Social Justice*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2009, 6.

<sup>57</sup> Caltagirone, C.L. *Friendship As Sacrament*. Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1988.

<sup>58</sup> Augustine, *Eighty-three Diverse Questions*, 71, 1.

this notion of friendship in the depth of his dialoguing with others in his *Letters*, his *Sermons*, and other writings. This might be termed an “Apostolate of Friendship,” as Thomas Merton described his own letters and other writings for others.<sup>59</sup> In such a spirituality, other people are more than Human Resources to be used in transactional ways, but rather we are in communion with persons who are valued and with whom our connections are more than networking. We meet others in deep encounters. This perspective gives greater depth to understanding the SEL Competency of Social awareness i.e., “being able to take the perspective of and empathize with others; recognizing and appreciating individual and group similarities and differences; recognizing and using family, school, and community resources.”<sup>60</sup>

### **Communion in a Faceless Virtual World**

Juxtaposed to the positive aspects of Saint Augustine’s category of communion we come up against the negative aspects of cyberspace. Peter Townsend reminds us of the dark side of cyberspace in his observation that, “Computer and communication advances are unquestionably beneficial, but they have opened up opportunities for cybercrime, malicious access to electronically stored data, lack of privacy, and a powerful weapon for warfare and terrorism.”<sup>61</sup> In such a reality we can see throughout cyberspace evidence of what Frederick Lewis Donaldson termed, “The Seven Social Sins”<sup>62</sup> which are:

- Wealth without work.
- Pleasure without conscience.
- Knowledge without character.
- Commerce without morality.
- Science without humanity.
- Worship without sacrifice.
- Politics without principle.

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<sup>59</sup> Merton, T. “Letter to Pope John XXIII,” 482.

<sup>60</sup> Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). “Core Competencies for Social and Emotional Learning (SEL).”

<sup>61</sup> Townsend, P. *The Dark Side of Technology*, 1.

<sup>62</sup> From a sermon given by Frederick Lewis Donaldson in Westminster Abbey, London, on March 20, 1925. These thoughts were published by Mohandas Karamchand (Mahatma) Gandhi in the October 22, 1925 edition of his *Young India* leading many people to attribute them to Gandhi. In publishing them, he noted that a “fair friend” from whom he received them “wants readers of *Young India* to know, if they do not already, the following seven social sins.” Gandhi added that “Naturally, the friend does not want the readers to know these things merely through the intellect but to know them through the heart so as to avoid them.”



Carole Eipers goes further and identifies this list as the “Roots of Violence.”<sup>63</sup> If her observation is true, then the appellation of “roots of violence” need to be added to the Social Sins naming of Townsend’s list.

Townsend, himself, adds to his description of aspects of the dark side the isolating realities of technologies when he notes:

For the young, the primary villain in my accounting scheme is our fixation on constant communication with mobile phones and computers. This is not real human contact, as the electronics do not provide tones of voice that distinguish between threats, affection, irony, humour, or puns, any of which might have been implied with the same set of words. Therefore, misunderstanding can easily be triggered by prejudice, a misreading of the text, or reading into it what we want to hear.<sup>64</sup>

A world of communication limitations, meeting avatars rather than people, cyber shaming, and reinforcement of feelings of unworthiness limit effectively living out the SEL Competency of Social awareness, and they challenge our living according to Saint Augustine’s category of Communion.

### **Practices of Augustinian Communion: Insights for SEL in a Technological Context**

In the face of these negatives in our technological world we could throw up our hands in despair. However, through the deeper view of Saint Augustine’s category of Communion we can gain insights for approaching the use of technology from a positive, but not naïve, vantage point in order to transform the ill will of cyberspace. From Augustinian Communion we can glean ways of engaging our brokenness, practicing humility, strengthening courage and cheerfulness, as well as working with diligence. Through this work and these practices, we can move further toward Eguiarte’s *Sapientia Sacra* (Holy Wisdom). We will now look at these 4 aspects and their implications for SEL in technological realities.

#### **Communion: Engaging our Brokenness**

In his description of how we engage in our thinking Saint Augustine includes a discussion of what he calls the “Passions of the Intellect.”<sup>65</sup> He names these passions: Joy,

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<sup>63</sup> Eipers, C.M. Facing Difficult Social Issues in the Parish, 22.

<sup>64</sup> Townsend, 230-231.

<sup>65</sup> Augustine, *Confessions* X, 14.

Desire, Sadness, and Fear. These passions, for Saint Augustine, impact and color intellectual things providing an emotional aspect to our thinking. Such an emotional aspect is so fundamental to good human living he puts it at the center of his *Rule* for living in community which he sees as being of “one mind and one heart intent upon God.”<sup>66</sup> In recognizing these passions, Saint Augustine was following the thinking of the Greco-Roman world. In contemporary approaches to learning there has been a bias toward the cognitive with a practical absence of affective “heart” dimensions. In setting learning objectives there is often an emphasis on Bloom’s Taxonomy<sup>67</sup> of the cognitive dimension of learning. While Krathwohl<sup>68</sup> has provided us with a Taxonomy of the affective side of learning as part of the Bloom Handbooks, there is little use of it in education in proportion to the use of Bloom. Any affective dimensions in education often rely on the Maslow Hierarchy of Needs,<sup>69</sup> which is a personality rather than intellectual approach. This cognitive bias relates to how we view knowledge and even how we relate to dialoguing with others. Some proponents of SEL have become strong proponents of Maslow over Bloom, even calling for “How to Maslow Before Bloom, All Day Long.”<sup>70</sup>

The SEL Competency of Relationship skills involves “establishing and maintaining healthy and rewarding relationships based on cooperation; resisting inappropriate social pressure; preventing, managing, and resolving interpersonal conflict; seeking help when needed. To demonstrate these skills, practitioners need to take into account emotional and affective realities.”<sup>71</sup>

In *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World), the Second Vatican Council of the Catholic Church also identified the importance of passions/emotions of the intellect, akin to Saint Augustine, when it proclaimed, “The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ... That is why this community realizes that it is truly linked with humankind and its

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<sup>66</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *Rule*, I, 1.

<sup>67</sup> *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*.

<sup>68</sup> Krathwohl, D.R., Bloom, B.S., and Masia, B.B. *Taxonomy of educational objectives: Handbook II: Affective domain*.

<sup>69</sup> Maslow, A.H. *Motivation and Personality*.

<sup>70</sup> Berger, T. How to Maslow Before Bloom.

<sup>71</sup> Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). “Core Competencies for Social and Emotional Learning (SEL).”

history by the deepest of bonds.”<sup>72</sup> In an Augustinian context this affirms that our difficulties, our brokenness, are part of what links us together and colors our relationships. In short, our brokenness is constitutive of all of our human interactions, even our interaction with cyberspace.

A most striking image used by Saint Augustine to describe our brokenness is humans as “Cracked Pots.” As he notes, “Many people promise themselves that they will live a holy life. But they fail because they go into the furnace and come out cracked.”<sup>73</sup> Donald Burt extends this thought into a description of the “cracked self.”<sup>74</sup> This image is grounded in the prophetic image in the Old Testament, especially in Jeremiah and Isaiah, of the Potter and Clay as well as the New Testament image of Treasures in Earthen Vessels of *2 Corinthians* (4:7).

From Augustinian Communion we gain the perspective that we are all broken, cracked pots. We should use this brokenness to empower us, as strange as it seems, in practicing our SEL Relationship skills, with heart, in technological circumstances.

### **Communion: Practicing Humility**

In his *Habits of a High-Tech Heart*, Quentin Schultze observes, “Rather than marching proudly ahead with our minds in celestial dreams, we fall back to earth, to the dirty lifegiving soil, to *humus*. We should fear the information age because it lacks humility; it puts in the business of authoring paeans to efficiency and control rather than admitting our foolishness.”<sup>75</sup> For him humility is honestly facing limitations rather than foolishly pursuing the unattainable. He also observes, “Information technology cannot transcend the gap between expansive human hopes, on the one hand, and the moral limits of actual knowing, on the other hand.”<sup>76</sup> Humility helps us temper the unrealistic hopes in an information age. Or as Schultze notes, “The virtue of humility directs us away from selfish cyber-desires and toward the needs of our neighbors.”<sup>77</sup> Andy Crouch affirms this thinking by seeing humility as giving us the power to put technology in its proper place.<sup>78</sup>

Humility is a fundamental aspect of Saint Augustine’s thinking. It is critical to his relationship with Christ, who “emptied himself taking the form of a slave, coming in human

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<sup>72</sup> Vatican Council II. *Gaudium et Spes* §1.

<sup>73</sup> Augustine, *Expositions on the Psalms* 99, 11.

<sup>74</sup> Burt, D.X.. O.S.A “*Let Me Know Myself...*” *Reflections on the Prayer of Saint Augustine*, 20-24.

<sup>75</sup> Schultze, Q.J. *Habits of a High-Tech Heart: Living Virtuously in the Information Age*, 106.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>78</sup> Crouch, A. *The Tech-Wise Family: Everyday Steps for Putting Technology in Its Proper Place*, 20-21.

likeness,” (*Philippians 2: 6-8*) and was “meek and humble of heart.” (*Matthew 11:29*). Saint Augustine tells us that, “Christ’s humility is the remedy for our pride.”<sup>79</sup> Prior to his conversion Saint Augustine was a man of pride who used relationship skills in the field of persuasion. He taught it in Africa and Rome as well as employing it as the Rhetor of the Imperial Court in Milan. Saint Augustine describes his pre-conversion self as a “seller of words” (*venditorem verborum*).<sup>80</sup> In some ways Saint Augustine’s pre-conversion self would feel comfortable in the world of the internet, which Eyal sees as fundamentally a forum of persuasion.<sup>81</sup> Alter goes further seeing Web 2.0 being based on what was learned in creating habits from the persuasion model for selling Pepsodent toothpaste in the 1930s. He sees that there is a “Hooked Model” of persuasion (Hook, Story, Offer) creating habits which have added a cyberspace Behavioral Addiction<sup>82</sup> to the reality of natural substance addiction.

In Saint Augustine’s understanding of humility, doubt has a real value. Howie sees Saint Augustine as seeing the humility of doubt as a “readiness to learn the Truth.”<sup>83</sup> When Saint Ambrose recommended that Saint Augustine study the Prophet Isaiah, Saint Augustine had doubts about his ability to understand Isaiah<sup>84</sup> and put it off until he was ready to learn the Truth that Isaiah wrote about. From the humility aspect of Saint Augustine’s category of Communion, we can develop a brave heart for using our SEL Relationship skills in a technological world to guide our interactions with the persuasion forces of the internet. Augustinian humility and related doubts can enable us to see through the Hooked Model (Hook, Story, Offer) of Web 2.0 and immune ourselves to the Behavioral Addiction fostered by the technological forces of persuasion.

### **Communion: Strengthening Courage and Cheerfulness**

Parker Palmer in his spirituality of learning reminds us that we need *Courage to Learn*.<sup>85</sup> To have a brave heart of Augustinian Communion and apply it to our employing the SEL Competency of Relationship skills, we need to strengthen our courage.

In his work, *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, Saint Augustine reports that Deogratius, a

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<sup>79</sup> Augustine, *Sermon 278*, 3.

<sup>80</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *Confessions IX*, 5, 13.

<sup>81</sup> Eyal. N. *Hooked: How to Build Habit-Forming Products*, 12.

<sup>82</sup> See Alter, A. *Irresistible: The Rise of Addictive Technology and the Business of Keeping Us Hooked*, 15.

<sup>83</sup> Howie, G. *Educational Theory and Practice in St. Augustine*, 148.

<sup>84</sup> Augustine, *Confessions IX*, 5, 13.

<sup>85</sup> Palmer, P. J. *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*.

deacon from Carthage, knowing of Saint Augustine's expertise in preaching asked him for the text of a sermon to win converts to the faith. Saint Augustine responded with this work which includes 2 sermons – one short and one long – to be used based on the preacher's assessment of the readiness of the hearers. Saint Augustine includes in this work guidance for the preacher's assessment of the needs of the hearers. Here he provides Deogratius with concerns about the "hearts" of the hearers that Deogratius should consider in his preaching for their conversion.<sup>86</sup> These concerns can be addressed by the preacher's encouragement, i.e., giving courage to the hearers. I paraphrase Saint Augustine's thoughts in this way:

When hearers are tired enCourage them with a cheerful attitude.

When hearers are discouraged enCourage them with consideration and patience.

When hearers are bored enCourage them with care to find new and exciting things.

When hearers are sad enCourage them with love and joy.

When hearers are apathetic enCourage them with compassion and energetic exhortation.

When hearers are tense or fearful enCourage them with kindness and tact while building trust.<sup>87</sup>

In more contemporary and less religious ways Martin Seligman terms these types of concerns as, "Flourishing." To Flourish Seligman sees the need for PERMA (Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishments).<sup>88</sup> Such PERMA is a part of the SEL Category of Relationship Skills we should bring with us as we go into our cyberspace experiences.

Saint Augustine adds to this courage a need for Cheerfulness (*de hilaritate comparanda*)<sup>89</sup> as part of building our brave heart. In true Augustinian Communion cheerfulness is rooted in a biblical understanding. As Saint Paul reminds us, "God loves the cheerful giver" (*2 Corinthians* 9:7). In his sharing with Deogratius, Saint Augustine also notes Saint Paul's observations, "Cheerfully letting God speak through us honoring our capacities, so that 'for those who love God, all things come together in the good' (*Romans* 8:28)."<sup>90</sup> and "Fluent and cheerful words flow out from an overflowing of love and are drunk with pleasure ... and love itself that says them to us as the love 'that has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been

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<sup>86</sup> Augustine, *De catechizandis rudibus*, 10,14-13,19

<sup>87</sup> See, *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> Seligman, M.E.P. *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being*, 16.

<sup>89</sup> "Cheerful attitude" is Raymond Canning's translation of Augustine's use of "*de hilaritate comparanda*" in Saint Augustine, *Instructing Beginners in Faith*, 16

<sup>90</sup> Augustine, *De catechizandis rudibus*, 11.16.

given to us' (*Romans* 5:5)."<sup>91</sup>

Armed with a brave heart strengthened by the courage and cheerfulness of Augustinian Communion, we can be ready to engage cyberspace with its anonymity, avatars, bullying, and fake news. We can also be ready to deal with technologically engendered social anxieties of FoMO (Fear of Missing Out) or Nomophobia (Fear of Lacking Cell Phone Access) and the physical impacts of "Blackberry Thumb,"<sup>92</sup> or "Cell Phone Elbow"<sup>93</sup>. Strengthened by courage and cheerfulness we can see through the internet's dark side and ill-will to find IRL (what happens In Real Life) and JoMO (the Joy of Missing Out).

### **Communion: Working with Diligence**

As identified above, the SEL Competency of Responsible decision-making involves "making decisions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, appropriate social norms, respect for others, and likely consequences of various actions; applying decision-making skills to academic and social situations; contributing to the well-being of one's school and community."<sup>94</sup>

Saint Augustine is famous for his observation "Love and do what you will."<sup>95</sup> In English this is commonly misunderstood in flippant ways that love allows one to do anything, almost amorally. However, "love" in this observation is from the Latin work "*dilige*," which is part of the verb "*diligo*." This is also the root for the English word, "diligence." To reflect the sense of *dilige*, this Augustinian observation might be better translated as "Love diligently and do what you will." This loving diligently is also at the center of Augustinian Communion. We can see this when Saint Augustine uses this concept in applying the biblical commandment of "Love of God and love and neighbor" (*Matthew* 22:35–40, *Mark* 12:28–34, and *Luke* 10:27) in his *Rule*<sup>96</sup> for community living. This gives evidence of the primary place of love and the affective dimension of life in the life and thought of Saint Augustine and support his being termed the "Disciple of the Love of God."<sup>97</sup> Van Bavel sees Saint Augustine as finding in the Great

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<sup>91</sup> *Ibid*, 14,22.

<sup>92</sup> DeNoon, D. J. "Blackberry Thumb: Real Illness or Just Dumb?"

<sup>93</sup> Harmon, K. "Is There Such a Thing as 'Cell Phone Elbow'?"

<sup>94</sup> Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). "Core Competencies for Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)."

<sup>95</sup> Augustine, *Homily 7 on the First Letter of John*, 8.

<sup>96</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *Rule*, I,1.

<sup>97</sup> Pegis, A.C. "The Mind of Saint Augustine." 8.

Commandment what he calls “The Double Face of the Love of God.”<sup>98</sup> For Saint Augustine, van Bavel sees the commandment’s Love of God and His Truth is 1st in the order of our Purpose, while the commandment’s Love of Neighbor is 1st in order of Action/Doing.<sup>99</sup>

In our acting in cyberspace on the SEL Category of Responsible decision-making with such diligent love, Augustinian Communion is a constant building up of the ability to love rightly in the spirit of *Sapientia Sacra* (Holy Wisdom). By using this diligent love in Responsible decision-making we overcome the divided will that Saint Augustine always tried to teach us to do. This is diligent love building up of a true “edifice of love.”<sup>100</sup> This Augustinian Communion diligent love not only impacts our affective learning, but also aids in sharpening our mental powers as we work with diligence through chains of reasoning moving from known to the unknown<sup>101</sup> as well as honing other mental abilities.<sup>102</sup> These are the “scaffolding” of learning and “ladder of humility” identified above. We also need to pay attention to the consistency of our actions in our diligent work in Responsible decision-making so as to avoid creating confusion for others about our deepest values and aims.<sup>103</sup>

### **Augustinian Communion: Summation**

In the Augustinian Communion aspects of engaging our brokenness, practicing humility, strengthening courage and cheerfulness, as well as working with diligence we find points to connect with others (our neighbors). While they aid in applying the Social Categories of SEL, they lead us to connect more deeply with others, even deeper in an Augustinian Solidarity through the practice of Augustinian Communion as *Sapientia Sacra* (Holy Wisdom).

### **Conclusion**

According to CASEL, “Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.”<sup>104</sup> When we engage in the technological world, particularly with its dark side and ill-will, SEL should aid in engaging in good and effective ways. By looking at SEL in a

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<sup>98</sup> van Bavel, T.J. “The Double Face of Love in Augustine.”

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>100</sup> Augustine, *Letter 55*, 21,39.

<sup>101</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *Soliloquies*, II, 20, 34.

<sup>102</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *De magistro*, 21, *De ordine*, I, 8, 25 and II, 5, 17 and *De animae quantitate*, 25.

<sup>103</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *Sermon 47*, 9.

<sup>104</sup> Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). “What Is SEL?”

technological world through the lenses of interiority (dialogue with the Teacher Within) and communion (friendship and community) as the principle categories of Saint Augustine’s thought, we have been able to find these lenses as providing value-added aspects to any understanding we have of SEL and technology. Through Augustinian Interiority via an Augustinian Reflection Circle (L-O-R-D Approach) we have identified reflection practices to help us work through the radical exteriority of cyberspace and negative aspects of technological persuasion. Through Augustinian Communion we have found practices of engaging our brokenness, practicing humility, strengthening courage and cheerfulness, as well as working with diligence to help us deal with the pervasive individualism, isolation, anonymity, dark side, and ill-will of the participatory/social Web.

In being able to intersect the practices from Augustinian Interiority and Communion with SEL and the technological world we might even venture to see ourselves working with *Sapientia Sacra* (Holy Wisdom) through what Insunza has identified as an “Augustinian Process of Personal Development”<sup>105</sup> and as I see it we can also call it an Augustinian Approach to Character Development. Insunza sees this approach as having 3 aspects, i.e.,

1. Know Yourself

Let me know myself, let me know you.<sup>106</sup>

2. Accept Yourself

Accept your imperfection, it is the first step to perfection.<sup>107</sup>

3. Surpass Yourself

Do not get stuck where you are, always forge ahead.<sup>108</sup>

The first 2 aspects may be achieved through the practices of Augustinian Interiority and the personal (self) SEL Categories. The third may be achieved through the practices of Augustinian Communion and the social SEL Categories. Each element can advance finding healthy ways to participate in the technological world.

At the beginning of this essay, I identified two areas of caution, Dodaro’s concerns about the limits of applying the thought of Saint Augustine’s in the contemporary world and Bowers concerns about the non-neutrality and problematic use of technology. I hope that I have taken

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<sup>105</sup> See, Insunza Seco, S. “Affectivity in Religious Formation,” 216-222.

<sup>106</sup> Augustine, *Soliloquies*, II, 1, 1.

<sup>107</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *Sermon 142*, 10.

<sup>108</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *Sermon 169*, 18.



seriously these concerns and not been naïve about the possible intersections of Saint Augustine's thought, SEL and the world of technology. If I have been appropriately cautious, then I think these intersections can aid us in having an Augustinian Hope in our Information Age for finding through Augustinian Pedagogy the much deeper *Sapientia Sacra* (Holy Wisdom) described by Eguiarte.

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Biography

Rev. Gary N. McCloskey, O.S.A. is a researcher/educator focusing on both the Pedagogy of Saint Augustine of Hippo and the practice of Instructional Technology. Fr. McCloskey has been a teacher and administrator in higher education as well as teacher on middle and secondary levels in various locations in the Eastern U.S. In addition to publications he has shared research findings and provided teacher professional development on 6 of the 7 continents. His work (as well as documents from others who have used his work) can be found at [www.augustinianpedagogy.org](http://www.augustinianpedagogy.org). He has also taught and authored publications in the field of Instructional Technology including 2 editions of a University-level textbook: Eugene F. Provenzo, Jr., Arlene Brett and Gary N. McCloskey, O.S.A. *Computers, Curriculum and Cultural Change: An Introduction for Teachers*. (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1999 and 2005) and is a certified online teacher. He serves on the Board of Trustees of Merrimack College (MA, USA) an Augustinian university-level institution. Born in 1951, he professed religious vows in the Order of St. Augustine in 1970 and was ordained a Roman Catholic priest in 1977.