



THE EDUCATION AS WISDOM IN ST. AUGUSTINE

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ABSTRACT

As we investigate the pedagogical thought of St. Augustine we must also ask ourselves about his idea of the human person, which has been formed from his experience of Conversion. The concept of wisdom enriched by this experience serves to elaborate an integral proposal of education. The ultimate goal of this article is to show how the concepts proposed by the bishop of Hippo can serve to implement a teaching model that promotes and harmonizes knowledge with happiness and values. We used the hermeneutic method and the documental analysis for the development of this article. The analysis is based on the following works of St. Augustine: *Confessions*, in which he tells the story of his conversion, *De Beata Vita*, in which he establishes the goal of all human life, which is happiness, *De Magistro*, in which he presents the Augustinian teaching method, and *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, in which he applies this method to a particular case, that is, catechesis for beginners. We used the hermeneutical method and documental analysis to develop this article. The present work is organized in following parts: lack of integration between science, values and citizenship; concept of wisdom in St. Augustine; application of the concept of wisdom to education, and finally, elements of teaching profile that gathers some of the contributions of the Bishop of Hippo.

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INTRODUCTION

The present article is derived from the analysis of the doctrine of St. Augustine, who was born in 354 AD. His contribution to philosophical and educational thought is embodied in the following works: *Confessions* in which he tells the story of his conversion, *De Beata Vita*, in which he sets the goal of all human life, that is happiness, *De Magistro*, in which he presents the Augustinian teaching method, and *De Catechizandis Rudibus* in which he applies this method to a particular case, which is catechesis for beginners. In this article we discuss with scientific rationality, understood as means to goal, which has imposed itself in our current culture as the most authentic expression of reason. Science is an advantage for western thought of unusual importance. The increasingly surprising scientific advance in term of the thresholds of biology, genetic manipulation and the use of technology, require that the debate between science, ethics and citizenship be updated. It is also demanded by one of the consequences of this situation that can be observed in education, where values are proclaimed and even promoted as transversal axes –for example, in our national curricula-, but in practice they receive little attention in comparison with science, which can be seen in the fact that problems of coexistence persist and in the little social commitment from the educational sphere at all levels.

Since the starting point is the lack of unity between science, ethics and citizenship, this article tries to show the harmony of these aspects in the concept of “wisdom” formulated by St. Augustine and to identify the capacities that its application would have for current education. We present some points of philosophical thought and its experience of conversion which then express its formative ideas and become a source of reflection for teaching practice.

Divorce between science, ethics and citizenship

The beginning of this problem lies, according to Morin (2009), in the very former of science, René Descartes (17th century) who elaborated the paradigm of clear and distinct ideas separating science from philosophy” (Morin, 2009, pág. 29). Consequently, this knowledge was mutilated disassociating it from its human sense, and it became unconscious to the results of its use. Referring to this mutilation of knowledge that starts from losing sight of the individual, of society and of the planet, he affirms: “... mutilation cuts off flesh, sheds blood, spreads suffering...has led to infinite tragedies and to the Supreme tragedy” (Morin, 2009, pág. 32).

The mutilation of knowledge and tragedies are the cause and effect, which resulted in the use of science to achieve the greatest possible extermination of human beings, in the shortest time, and with the minimum economic cost, which brought at the same time as an effect, the geopolitical dominance of some countries over others.

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In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, thinkers of the positive side of science, insofar as they considered that everything is determined by matter and biology, denied the possibility of human acts and thereby destroyed the basis of ethics and politics (Nocera, 2006, pág. 3). Likewise, the culture of postmodernity, in the last decades, has annihilated any rational model that gives sense to the human being by reducing man to consumer of virtual realities (Aranguren, 1997, pág. 2). The fragmentation of postmodernity coupled with relativism makes people feel unable to say whether something is good or bad in itself (Bilbeny, 2012, pág. 272). Total indifference and confusion has been reached regarding ethical values that are no longer distinguished from anti-values (Boavida & Forminho, 2001).

In terms of citizenship, three historical moments could be distinguished; one prior to modernity, in which citizens institute the government that guarantees their rights; a second in which the citizen-state relationship is mediated by political parties (Favela & Calvillo, 1997); and finally, the postmodern era, in which power is held by transnational capital and the citizen has disappeared, or rather has become a consumer (Sanchez, 2013). In our time the meaning of community, citizenship and democracy has vanished, equally all ideal of sacrifice and abnegation and we are left with an individualistic, intimate and materialistic happiness (De la Torre, 2000).

In the positive scientific aspect, education was reduced to the use of techniques, methodologies, processes, instruments and measurable standards. For example, Vásquez (2012) states that "Durkheim explicitly reject the term pedagogy because of its commitment to philosophy in order to try to turn reflection on education into a positive science – of acts- that deals with the system and methods that allow us to respond to the changes demanded by the social milieu" (p. 14)

The separation between science and philosophy has relativized the idea of Truth in the singular and it is now considered as something completely subjective that corresponds to the idea of authenticity (Lüke & Peters, 2018, p. 8). According to this, the only criterion of truth recognized as valid by science is empirical verification.

Experimentation, instrumentalization, quantification and measurement are useful, but insufficient. It is not possible to grasp from the microscope and the calculator the person of man in its complexity. There are emerging problems that humanity faces such as euthanasia, famine, drug addiction, abortion, poverty, etc. –situations that also affect our students–, purely scientific solutions are often incomplete, inconsistent, if no contradictory and dangerous.

The concept of wisdom

Augustine was a man who wanted to be happy. What characterizes his thinking is the permanent search for happiness and this long before his conversion to Christianity. He himself tells that the reading of Cicero's Hortensio, when he was 18 years old, inflamed his heart and awakened his longing for philosophy (San Agustín, Confesiones III, 4,7). In its time, happiness was understood precisely as tendency to happiness (Cicerón, *De finibus bonorum et malorum*, 5, 29, 86), as the effort to try to define it and determine the way to reach it. Now, happiness is but the enjoyment of truth (San Agustín, Confesiones, X, 23, 33), which was understood not only as intellectual knowledge, but also as a way of life. The way to

happiness is the exercise of wisdom, defined as a true conversion, as a radical change, which consisted in departing from vices and evils, and guided by rules to the ideal of the wise; being aware at the same time that the goal will always remain inaccessible, as well as the need to seek it tirelessly, in spite of constant human ethical fallibility (Führer, 2017, pág. 304). In this sense, our saint affirms that wisdom is the moderation of the soul that allows a full life, dedicated to contemplation, far from both passions and vices (San Agustín, *De Beata Vita* 4, 33). Happiness as well as truth and the permanent concern to reach them were for Augustine the anthropological principles that move all his life.

According to Augustine, the greatest evil, the greatest misery lies in the lack of wisdom, ignorance or foolishness, more terrible even than material poverty. It is a question of destitution on the level of being, and therefore signifies to be in the non being, in death. Therefore, to be happy would be wise ((San Agustín, *De Beata Vita*, 4, 28.30.33). Following ancient thought, wisdom for Augustine consists in the perfect knowledge of God (San Agustín, *Retractationum*, I, 2). The Augustinian reasoning is that happiness can only be full life, existence in the highest degree (San Agustín, *De Beata Vita*, 4,35), therefore, only he who seeks or possesses that which is good and eternal, that which cannot be lost, can be really happy. Since God himself is the perfect life and source of all happiness (San Agustín, Soliloquios, I, 1, 3), beatitude is to be with God, to possess him, through a good life (San Agustín, *De Beata Vita*, 4,34).

Our saint was always eager to find out the truth and the Manichean Church offered a rational explanation for everything without resorting to the faith and authority of the Catholic Church (San Agustín, *De Utilitate Credendi*, 1, 2). According to the follower of Manes, faith implied for example, accepting anthropomorphisms in God –as in the creation stories–, which was from every point of view, reprehensible. The bishop of Hippo was infected with this rationalist spirit and he himself was able to verify as he approached the Bible that the intellectual level on which it was written was too low for his aspirations. From the age of nineteen until the age of twenty-eight, he was a supporter of this religion which proclaimed truth only with words (San Agustín, *Confesionum*, VI, 10).

The reality is that every man wants to be happy and can't get it. For this, the problem of the origin of evil must be solved. Manichaeism declared to have the answer and for some time our saint agreed with his ideas. For example, with a type of materialism, which considered that everything, even God, was a material being (San Agustín, *Confesionum*, V, 10, 19). The Manichean approach understands that both good and evil are material and exist as original principles in the universe and also in man. The evil actions of human beings are the manifestation of the evil nature present in them, and therefore man is not responsible for his acts. Augustine felt particularly two tendencies that absorbed his will and dragged his heart blindly: the ambition of riches and honors, and sexual pleasure. His pride and the doctrine of Manes kept him happy thinking that happiness should come only from enjoyment of the senses and could be attained if man gave himself unlimitedly to all loves and pleasures. The Manichean ideology assured him that he was free from all sin, and in the face of his evil deeds it was enough to give any justification to questioner (San Agustín, *Confesionum* V, 10, 18).

Our saint became fully aware of this lacerating situation when he saw a drunken beggar full of amusement, who had found with only a few cents the unfruitful happiness, while he, having even reached the pinnacle of his career as an imperial Orator, could not achieve it with all his effort, in going after the riches, honors and pleasures of this world (San Agustín, *Confesio-num*, VI, 6,9). Following the Manicheans was not the answer to their longing for happiness and truth. With time, not only listening to the preaching, but also reading his books, he found that they taught nonsense disguised with supposed chronological calculations and start checks (San Agustín, *Confesio-num* V, 3, 6). However, direct experience showed him that he himself was responsible when good and evil were at work. Thus he discovered that the origin of evil is in the human will, as the Catholic Church affirmed (Grossi V. , 1995). His restlessness reached such a degree that the truth was an unattainable reality. He considered the other alternative of academic skepticism that raised the impossibility of knowing the truth but overcame it by recognizing that every man knows at least that he exists (San Agustín, *De Civitate Dei*, XI, 26).

All this system of thought was completely abandoned by our saint when he got to know Plotinus' works. Through him and Plato's works, brought Augustine something totally new and which became the scheme of his late reflection. Our saint noted that the language and the scheme of Platonic's thought agreed with that of Sacred Scripture, -although the content of Christian revelation was very different- and he adopted it as a model for reflection. Man is not only matter but spirit. For this reason Augustine adopts the definition of human being as body and soul and sometimes distinguishes more, body, soul and spirit (San Agustín, *De Fide et Symbolo*, 4, 8).

At this point, the search for happiness reveals another Augustinian anthropological principle, interiority. Augustine understands his existence as a path to the fullness of God and that the truth is within oneself. It is not a journey that is made with the feet but with the spirit, or rather, expressed with the biblical word so characteristic of him, with heart (San Agustín, *Confesio-num*, I, 18, 28). This expression does not have the romantic meaning that we give it today, but implies the mind, the soul, the being. Thus, our saint goes no longer to find out what things are but to answer the fundamental question, the big question, who he truly was, and who God is. He discovered that the act of his intelligence, memory and will were finite but that the tendency of these capacities was infinite, he discovered that man is finite but tends by nature to the infinite. According to Aimé Solignac (1990), Augustine, encouraged by reading of the Neoplatonic books and by Saint Paul, goes inward to investigate in depth the truth animated by Ephesians 3: 16-17 where it is said that Christ dwells in the inner man through faith. Our saint replaces the word truth with the word Christ and thus understands that is in the heart, where human being finds all his potentialities and where he unites himself to God, he loves and likes him (Madec, 1990, pág. 8). There dwells the Truth, the living God revealed in Jesus Christ as a measure of all things (San Agustín, *De Beata Vita*, 4,34).

Augustine has found something completely new, the personal God, very different from the impersonal Supreme Being of the Greeks and totally different from the system of the One of Plotinus which in the act of creation comes down towards the lower zones of being, returning by means of the dispossession of the material to the first unity. The God of the Bible is the

God of love who becomes flesh and gives his life by uniting the whole universe, every man with him (Ratzinger, 2011). Our saint found a value in God that did not exist among the Greeks, even more, God himself is Love and Truth in person. In fact, going to his interior, Augustine says that he saw with the eye of his soul, above his intelligence, an immutable light. To see God, with the "eye of his soul" means a purely spiritual gaze, a "gaze of the heart" (San Agustín, *Confesio-num*, VII, 10, 16). It is not the vision of some object or evidence like that of a mathematical truth. It is a vision of a person and the proper characteristic of the person is on one hand, the presence, and the other, freedom, which is given when God wants. It is a loving gaze, intimate to the heart, mysterious, very sweet, more intimate than what we call our intimacy but at the same time it is a gaze of someone who is infinitely superior, of something that is not the cosmos, nor me, nor anything interior to me.

Man can only remain for an instant in that purely spiritual gaze, for although he has the certainty of the infinite presence of God, there is another love, Augustine calls it "weight" that hauls man to himself. The contemplation of that immutable light gives him the certainty of rediscovering the truth he has sought. He says "I would more easily doubt whether I exist than whether the Truth exists" (San Agustín, *Confesio-num*, VII, 10,16). However, this light reveals even more its lamentable reality (San Agustín, *Confesio-num*, VII, 10,16). At this point Augustine is divided between two loves, one that is intimate and cannot be silenced, the love for that sweetest person that he has seen in his interiority, and another one, the love of his pleasures. A new love was born in him, a new will, with which he struggled against the weight of his practice (San Agustín, *Confesio-num*, VIII, 5, 10). He required Jesus Christ himself to carry out his conversion and he asked for it with intensity until the Lord's action freed him from his bonds in the episode of the Milan Garden (San Agustín, *Confesio-num*, VIII, 12, 29). With the action of grace, Augustine was able to pass from that feverish indecision to a single purpose, that of definitively renouncing the cravings of the "flesh" and adhering to it, putting on Christ. Now, Augustine will serve the Lord with an undivided heart, and from then on He will be only sweetness, honor and richness.

As can be seen from the above, wisdom implies arriving at an integral vision of man that is not only matter but also a spiritual reality. On the other hand, wisdom has to do with a special knowledge, with the meaning of existence encrypted in truth, love, freedom and in its very source, which in Augustine's experience is God. Finally, it consists of a path of living, searching these values, and living in conformity with them, and finding with them full human fulfillment, happiness (Fitzgerald, Diccionario de San Agustín, 2001, pág. 1156).

Wisdom and education in St. Augustine

Educating as a formative process

In the epistemological field Augustine now distinguishes rational knowledge from spiritual one which proceeds from the encounter with God and is given through enlightenment. The concept of wisdom enriched by the experience of its conversion results in the integration of science, values and citizenship. This issue is shown concretely in the theme of education which was of great interest from the beginning for our saint, as can be seen in the fact that he tried to design, after conversion, a Christian pedagogy at the service of the

proclamation of the Gospel (Sánchez & Parra, 2017) (Gaetano, 2009)

Augustine considers education as cultivation of humanity – following the Greek and Latin tradition- (Díez del Río, 1996, pág. 470) which occurs as a process and which in his case has to do with the fundamental fact of his conversion. Indeed, for Vannier (1987), the key to understanding Augustinian thought is the schema *convertio, creatio, formatio*. That creation goes second, instead of first, expresses the path of the bishop of Hippo who through conversion came to a new vision of the world (Vannier, *Conversio, creatio, formatio* chez S. Agustín, 1987, págs. 13-14). Thus, becoming human and educating oneself imply the experience of conversion, which entails the radical transformation of existence (*creatio*) (Cannig, *Teaching and Learning. An Augustinian Perspective*, 2004, pág. 2), and its perfection (*formatio*). Coincidentally, the process of conversion has been postulated as a pedagogical path: "...from external things to one's own interiority, and from there, to one's own depth, where the light of the highest and most intimate truth shines" (Böhm, 2004, pág. 54); a proposal that we try to develop briefly in this work.

Muñoz (1981) describes conversion as a movement, a process in three phases that could be called that way: movement towards exteriority, movement towards interiority and movement towards transcendence-communion (Muñoz, *Introducción a la síntesis de San Agustín*, 1981, págs. 55-56).

Exterior

In this first moment the educational process would have as its nucleus the passage from observation to contemplation. St. Augustine always departed in his reflection on experience, confronted problems as vital themes and as challenges to his pastoral practice, which has no other purpose than the full realization of the human being: "he does not place any interest in morals and practices. That is why happiness (*beatitudo*) is the key concept in Augustine's thought and to it all is reduced (Villalobos, 1982, pág. 27). It is the sole end of education (Yogis, 2014). For St. Augustine, the great questions come from man himself, although only the answers of faith can fully satisfy our restlessness and our search (Turrado, 1996).

The Bishop of Hippo speaks at this level of knowing as *cogitare, ratio*, which corresponds to our concept of science: "*Scientia est temporalium rerum cognition rationalis*" (San Agustín, *De Trinitate*, XII, 12, 17), Science is the rational knowledge of temporal things, we would say, material. There are, however, two things to keep in mind. The first is that if the world is for Augustine, an ordered totality containing logos, an order, laws (Tejerina, 2013): an order for things, *ordo rerum* (San Agustín, *De Ordine*, I, X, 28, 29); another for the affective world, *ordo amoris* (San Agustín, *De Doctrina Christiana*, I, XXVII, 28) and another for social relations, *tranquilitas ordinis* (San Agustín, *De Civitate Dei*, XIX, 14) (Tejerina, 2013). Science consists in investigating the existence and structure of this order, it should lead us to discover the existence of a divine project, which we must accept and carry out, and which with the expression of dialogue, we should use to achieve well-being and happiness (Tejerina, 2013).

The second is that for Augustine nature is not only matter. Conversion changed his way of seeing reality in such a way

that now it is not only a question of investigating phenomena to discover their ultimate cause, but of allowing ourselves to be impacted by them. In this sense our saint says that simply the power of any seed is cause for so much admiration for those who consider it (San Agustín, *Sermones*, 126,4), and elsewhere, referring to the contemplation of nature: "My question was my gaze, his answer was his beauty" (San Agustín, *Confessionum* X, 6, 9).

However, when man is focused on material things, knowing remains only curiosity, without realizing that the main component of knowledge is that it has a human sense, *id est*, that it is also a reflection on man himself. For our saint, pure knowing is mutilation of human being, alienation, man wants to know reality without asking about himself, only by the desire to experience and know (Arendt H., *El concepto de amor en San Agustín*, 2001, pág. 42).

Interior

A second phase of the process of conversion, interiority, can be characterized as the passage from the object to the subject and concretely, as going from self-referential love (*cupiditas*) to oblation-unconditional love (*caritas*) (Collins, 2007, pág. 3). Augustine no longer considers himself and object-self, purely material, expression of the passionate forces of his anima nature, but as a person capable of directing his inner capacities to the attainment of his happiness which is given by converting all existence into love and finally converting to love of God to the point of forgetting himself (Arendt, 2001, pág. 48).

Going to the interiority Augustine became aware that he is a reality that is not the material world. He then explored the inner dimensions of his being, memory, will, love. Memory, together with remembering, consists of self-consciousness, self-possession. This makes it possible to understand space and time as human categories, and man as the possessor of a historical consciousness (Grossi, 2017, págs. 287-288). The will is no longer seen as a field of war between passions through freewill, but as a space of decision and personal construction through freedom. Congruent with this discovery, he considered evil no longer as a nature present in him but as the absence of good and as the fruit of a personal decision (San Agustín, *Confessionum*, III, 7, 12).

St. Augustine speaks to us in this phase of *Cognoscere, Intelligentia*, which means wisdom. *Sapientia est aeternarum rerum cognition intellectualis* (San Agustín, *De Trinitate*, XII, 15, 25). It is not a matter of underestimating science but of recognizing two dimensions of existence that must be taken into account to achieve a happy life (Lüke & Peters, 2018, pág. 45). Indeed, although science can explain how the universe works, it cannot talk about why and for what reason it exists. As can be seen in the book *De Magistro*, words, human science, is not enough to express the reality that we are but this reality is not the material world and is related to truth, freedom, love, happiness.

Corresponding to the spiritual human condition there is a new type of knowledge, an intuitive notion, immediate to himself and to others which is not material, it does not proceed of the senses. Man perceives original qualities, to exist, to know, to love, which it cannot define as objective realities but which are the root of human person (Obertello, 1990, pág. 126). Augustine discovered in the concept of creation the unique and unrepeatable character of each human being, which has no

essence, because it is a mystery that sinks its roots in the very mystery of God (Marion, 2011, pág. 26). But this very thing makes man a continuous search, a permanent restlessness that is lived as a “weight” of the will, or rather, as an attraction of love (Marion, 2011, pág. 34.37). This “weight” is free and conscious, free because in the tendency towards the other –and towards God- there is no coercion, and conscious, because it presupposes the presence of discernment –of love in justice (Marion, 2011, pág. 39). This weight is also the love of God, from which comes, moreover, the strength to love one’s neighbor, contemplating him above all other considerations, as a creature of the Lord (Tatman, 2013, págs. 626-627). In this way, love is raised in St. Augustine as an ethical and social principle of the human world.

For this reason, he understands educational action as a participation in the joyful search for truth, as an investigation of happiness in truth (Pierantoni, 2006). In science, the scientist distances himself from reality in order to maintain his objectivity. In wisdom the wise, on the other hand, identifies with it, tastes it with the deep happiness of touching the being (Blanco, 2013, pág. 91). Wisdom has much to do with acting, with the way of inhabiting this world, with a way of living based on values; the wise is not only the knower of wisdom but the one who testifies to it with his blood if necessary (Lüke & Peters, 2018, pág. 52).

The liberal arts, that is to say, science, is for St. Augustine, *sine qua non* condition to reach wisdom then helps us to defeat ignorance and permitted us open to transcendence. This is the sense of the Augustinian effort to elaborate that unites science, values and faith (Madedc, 1990, pág. 18).

Transcendence-communion

This phase can be characterized as the passage from the individual to the community. To arrive at the conviction that conversion consists in passing to a life of communion is something that took Augustine several years, until then he had interpreted the biblical texts that speak of community only in the sense of the personal development of the individual (Van Bavel, 2004, págs. 32-45). Our saint dedicated an entire work, *De Trinitate*, to deepening the mystery of divine Trinity and the fact that the structure of the whole universe and of each individual consists of an interrelationship of love that is realized by the action of the Spirit (O’connor, 1982, pág. 138.140). Thus, Augustine saw a new reality, communion. The imprint of communion is also at the very origin of knowledge. It is very interesting to present, with regard to Education, how the Augustinian concepts of logos and word, which are at the origin of thought, serve our saint to express that intersubjectivity is a means for the construction of knowledge, as well as for opening oneself to the perspective of a community of meaning and learning.

There is an inner word, it is called *verbum* because it is a word that does not correspond to any language, with it man is known in the deepest part of his being, is the origin of the same knowledge and joins intellectual knowledge through love (Muñoz, 1981. Pág. 84-85).

The *verbum* is born when the mind is pleased to think..., it is love that unites our *verbum* to the mind that begets it, and without and without any confusion narrows itself to them in a disembodied embrace (San Agustín, *De Trinitate*, IX, 8, 13).

In education, in learning from one another, a communion of minds and souls is established which is realized in the manner of the Trinity through love: “Finally, the same charity which narrows men mutually, with the knot of unity, would not enter into souls to melt them and how to mix them with one another, if men would learn nothing through men” (San Agustín, *De Doctrina Christiana*, Proemio 6). In another place our saint says: “One does not enter into the truth but through love” (San Agustín, *Contra Faustum* 32, 18). Indeed, love precedes knowledge even if you do not love what you do not know (Westerholm, 2009, pág. 120). Thus, in consideration of Augustine, without the emission of signs, without communicative exchange, without each one teaching others what is within him, without processes of teaching and learning among humans, there would be no relationship between them; on the other hand, through education, it is possible to form a community of meaning and to realize true participation in a universal citizenship (Prada, San Agustín y la duda escéptica. Reflexiones en torno al maestro y el lenguaje, 2014).

For St. Augustine it is in Jesus Christ where we have been shown the historical realization of a just and fraternal society. To participate in Jesus implies to unite oneself to his solidarity for the one who has become poor and continues to be in need among men. In this sense, as far as Education is concerned, it should be said that the Augustinian restlessness has evolve:

“...the *magna quaestio* in no longer presented as a concern for one’s own identity, for the form that one acquires through life, but for the form that one’s suffering neighbor demands be restored to him. The person is, in this sense, primarily paradoxical, because in order to find his own identity and fill his own person with the meaning, he must abandon the individual perspective and become essentially responsible for his neighbor within a community (Boltanski, Calvo, & Barbi, 2012).

Pedagogical model: integral formation

According to what has been explained so far, it is possible to deduce that the central ideas of saint Augustine’s thought can be schematized in a pedagogical model, which we understand as an integral commitment to education. Starting from the analysis of the human situation, we rely on wisdom as the central axis of the teaching. In the educational scene teacher and student can be identified from the concerns or research questions, analysis of the experience, observation and investigation. In that encounter it will be possible to find happiness through the understanding of the unity between science, ethics and contemplation. Thus teacher and student could find the truth through that trip back and forth between subjectivity and objectivity, with the student as the protagonist. Education would thus fulfill its function of transcending person’s lives and contributing to a better world. We rehearse below a scheme based on the proposal of the Bishop of Hippo:

Scheme N° 1

Augustinian model	Wisdom	Teacher profile
Anthropology	Experience	Science, observation, inquiry
Restlessness	Conversion	Unity science-ethics, contemplation
Happiness	Interiority-freedom	Protagonism of the student
Truth	Object-subject	
Transcendence	Communion	Teaching role
		Joy, friendship, love,
		Learning Community

Source: Own elaboration based on the concepts of St. Augustine

Augustinian's thought allows us to reflect on education, the student-teacher bond and environment, thus creating a unique reflection that contributes with practical elements to those who want to follow a method that generates knowledge, joy and transformation. Below we develop some central categories of Augustine's thought regarding the educational reality.

Education as an event

Augustine's education does not consist only of transmitting information but also of an event, a transforming experience, from which the concepts are then elaborated (Bárcena, *Filosofía de la Educación: un aprendizaje*, 2013). It is necessary to emphasize here the importance of inquiry in learning. It helps us to go beyond simple belief, to let go of prejudices and to think rigorously. In this sense the role of teacher is to help the student develop the powers of his mind (San Agustín, *De Magistro*, VIII, 21).

This statement also corresponds to the Augustinian concept of contemplation. In his contact with nature, the sage marvels, contemplating it is a work of the infinite power of God. We know that for Greeks the attitude towards reality was not, first of dominion but of astonishment. Reality was contemplated in antiquity as beauty and as good; to learn would be like making a space, so that reality enriches us.

Education as communication

Augustine's experience is made in the context of dialogue with the world, with himself and with others. Let us remember that for the Bishop of Hippo the beauty and order of nature are an answer. Here we can add, in relation to the educational reality, that whoever wishes to be a teacher needs to develop the capacity to ask the most fundamental questions, to contemplate, to allow oneself to be touched by reality.

In his work *De Magistro*, wondering how we learn and studying language, Augustine reveals the objectives of language, teaching, learning, remembering and also its function as sign (Gaetano, 2009)(San Agustín, *De Magistro*, I, 1-2). Although we cannot communicate without language, without words, and these are arbitrary conventions, that is to say, they do not give us direct access to things, they are indicative, only names that we keep in memory (San Agustín, *De Magistro*, X, 29, 33). Nevertheless, there is in our saint an evolution in this subject that permitted us to say, that between the thing and the sign exists a "*verbum mentis*", a meaning search, an interpretative work, that makes the knowledge of things intentional and humanly valuable (Soto, 2005, pág. 12). In addition, knowledge is always the fruit of a search, of an interpretative effort of reality, from where the path has to be taken, to arrive at wise knowledge. Augustine himself is an expression of this search that gives meaning to world (Violante, 2015). Likewise, communication unites science with consciousness on the one hand and, on the other, it is an act of faith, trust and donation between participants (Soto, 2005, pág. 12).

Education as interiority

But the question remains: how do we really learn? In Augustinian terms: how do you get to the truth, where to look for it? We now move on the second moment, that of interiority. Words that explain words are insufficient to answer fundamental human questions. There is another knowledge, which cannot be taught either, given that words, as we have

just said, do not express the deepest reality. This knowledge can only be experienced in the human heart, the place of another kind of experience and where the truth bears witness to itself, even mathematical truth. It is from within that Augustine proposes the protagonism of the student himself can find it, since words are insufficient to communicate it. The task of the teachers should be not only to define objects in a scientific way but above all to help answer the question: who am I? In this sense, the Confessions are the Augustinian response to this question, made in a narrative of his personal history. An important task of the educational work would be to help each one to make the story that gives meaning to his own existence. To educate oneself in interiority consists in profound knowledge but also in developing the capacity to look at the person, at everyone, in their totality and greatness, because every human being is unique and unrepeatable (San Agustín, *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, XV, 23). The experience of interiority means becoming aware of this dignity, greater than anything else and which is an indication that in us dwells a mystery that transcends us. We are neither what we have nor what we do, nor both.

Interiority also implies an inner struggle, a process of the will to become a person. It is necessary to encourage the search for the truth, which is found within, bearing in mind that: "...the truth is found there, because what is proper to truth is to transform, to change...to acquire true freedom" (Ramírez, 1981, pág. 58). It requires moving from simple ability, to choosing between one thing and another, to freedom, as the profound experience of personal being. Freedom is the ability to do good, to do what has to be done (Trapé, 1987, pág. 190). In this sense it can be said that "The essence of free will is in interiority: that nothing be imposed on me from outside, but that everything sprout from that which makes me and who I am" (Ramírez, 1981, pág. 21). This human being freed from being a thing is what Augustine calls the "inner man".

The interiority is the discovery of oneself that is realized in truth, kindness, love, communion, and freedom but it ends in the recognition of the other and in the commitment of solidarity with those who suffer.

Developing cognitive skills

St. Augustine teaches us that in our mind the process of learning is realized as a harmonious work of memory, will and understanding in the likeness of the divine Trinity (McCloskey, 2005). knowledge is mediated by memory (San Agustín, *De Magistro*, I, 1). It is also mediated by will, since it supposes attention, self-motivation, concentration and constancy that superimposes itself on the opposite tendency (McCloskey, 2005). On the other hand, memory, which unites the sequence of events in a person's life, allows to give the person a significant meaning and to become a grateful receiver (Arendt (1996) in Tatman 2013). If we unite this with love it turns out that for Augustine to learn is a process of knowing-deciding-acting on behalf of others.

To educate is to unite science and ethics

Augustine unites knowledge and ethics. The knowledge of the nature of things leads us to the knowledge of ourselves, to find an inner richness that makes us rise to a new way of relating to others. Indeed those who know themselves, their needs, their struggles and failures can deeply understand and encourage other.

On the other hand, interiority, which makes us aware of human greatness, also makes us see that we are fragile, limited and the cause with our wrong decisions of evil in the world. Education at this point means a process of liberation. Augustine perceives that there are dangers in his path towards the truth that he identifies with the eagerness to dominate, the eagerness to possess and the yearning for pleasure. This inner condition causes our vision of reality to be distorted. To these obstacles would correspond in our days the scientific prejudice, the systematic atheism, the divorce between ethics and science, the capitalist context oriented to exhaust the natural resources to obtain the maximum economic profit. Interiority as an experience of fragility would help us, in terms of education, to cultivate feelings, to put ourselves in the place of the other and from there to build an altruistic citizenship. It would also allow us to discern and denounce the bad pedagogy that has made possible the atmosphere of social injustice and corruption in which we live, due to the ambition for material goods on the part of our leaders.

Role of the pupil

Since words teach nothing, the true protagonist of learning is the student himself, who must first discover his thirst for truth and find it in the depths of his being. The true protagonist of education is not the teacher but the student, with all his humanity loaded with virtues and defects (Battista, 1988). In this sense, what really matters are their motivations, decisions, feelings and attitudes.

Referring to the beginners in the faith, Augustine says that one has to start from the situation of catechizing, from what he already knows about the arts, and from faith, and from its errors, from its attitudes (San Agustín, *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, VII, 12). If it comes from heresy, we must speak more precisely by showing with delicacy that we have the authority of the Church, to certify the authenticity of our creed. Those who come inflated by the arrogance of oratory must be taught humility and appreciation for the illiterate; they must also be taught to distinguish between well-developed discourses and those that transmit the truth. In the Church it is not so much the words that matter, but the affection of the heart.

Role of the teacher

This does not mean that the teacher is unnecessary, on the contrary, it is essential because it fulfills not only an informative function but also an admonitory role. This means, on the one hand, motivating, but also guiding, since through dialogue it helps to advance along the way, discarding false answers and attitudes. Let us remember that the human being for Augustine is a tendency, a longing that seeks goodness, happiness and life, but at the same time it is an experience of lack, loss, limitation, slavery and death.

In this sense, it has been said that when Augustine emphasizes that words teach nothing, he is not referring to teachers who love their students and give them back the ability to express themselves. Love guides knowledge and it is also the method that makes it possible as dialogue and as a testimony of charity (Ruiz-Pesce, 2004, pág. 66). The teacher, moved by love rather than authority, is a witness and companion of the path he himself has traveled to become a person and an active member of a community. In this sense, although Augustine uses the title of teacher to refer to teachers, he generally uses other

names: "...minister, servant, mediator or delegate of the true teacher, and that of a fellow disciples condiscípulos (Io. Ev.Tr. 16, 3; S. 134, 1, 1; S. 292, 1)" (Diez del Río, *Presupuestos filosóficos y antropológicos de la pedagogía agustiniana*, 2006, pág. 58). The master then is not the possessor of the truth, but a seeker like everyone else. One who also learns from others when he teaches.

Sometimes the student does not want to speak, so it is necessary to awaken his participation by giving him confidence, to find out his situation, the reason for his attitude, to ask him for his opinion. It is possible that what we say may be trite or incomprehensible to him (San Agustín, *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, XIII, 9). You also have to worry about your bodily needs, if you are tired, if you are sleepy, if you are bored. Let's see if he's comfortable. If necessary, his attention should be drawn to a question or something dazzling that provokes joy or sadness which produces commiseration (San Agustín, *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, XIII, 18-19). It is necessary to adapt the intention and that of the discourse to the listeners, in a such a way that it is an expression of personal sentiment and at the same time a help for the different charity that each one needs (San Agustín, *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, XV, 23).

The feedback of the listener, who expresses his opinion is fundamental and in this case, in us, there must be the willingness to make an active listening. Faced with fatigue or distraction we must motivate, draw attention, appealing to feelings of joy or sadness, or appealing to something that interests him, always with delicacy. Be very attentive to the condition of the body, the needs of the listener and their problems. It's useful to talk about something unexpectedly, but don't abuse it.

Educational action in an atmosphere of joy, love and friendship

The end of education is happiness, which is understood only in relation to truth and love. The happy life consists of wisdom and only in communion is happiness found (Boff, 1991, pág. 49).

Joy

Educational action must be carried out in the atmosphere of joy (San Agustín, *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, X, 14). To be educated is to carry out the joyful search for truth and to find happiness in truth. We can confirm this intuition of St. Augustine with studies of current neuroscience that tell us that learning occurs through neural connections and that the use of positive emotions in a kind and affectionate teacher will generate brain reactions that will open the way for learning.

Love

Education consists in arousing love (San Agustín, *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, IV, 8). That is to say, for both the catechist and the catechized, the content and the didactics must be guided by love. It is the beginning, the way and the end of all what we do and say in teaching (San Agustín, *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, III, 6; IV, 8). Likewise, the love that comes from God is the source of our joy that is transfused into discourse and achieve the effect of persuasion (San Agustín, *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, II, 4).

Knowledge in Augustine begins, develops and culminates under the force of love: "...unlike modern mentality, for

Augustine the desire to know is not to have power, but to love" (Diez, 2006, pág. 49). Specifically, it is about developing in us a spirit of solidarity and communion with our students. Let us remember here what it says in *De Catechizandis Rudibus*:

"In effect, so much can do the solidary spirit, that when those are permitted impress by us that speak, and us by who are learning, dwell the ones with others: It is as if those who hear us speak for us, and we, in a certain way, learn from them what we are teaching them" (San Agustín, *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, XII, 17).

For Augustine the miracle of love is that it makes the triune God one, but this work continues in us since we are his image and our human perfection is realized in the search and in the achievement of communion. The sign that we are moving in this direction is that we are more concerned with what is common than with what is individual (San Agustín, Regla, V, 31). Translated into education this implies the responsibility of the learner to their community and of the teacher to multiple communities. In the same way, this love, as was said, consists in starting from the needs of the student, from his feelings and attitudes and desires (San, Agustín, *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, V, IX).

Friendship

This translates the concept of communion in a practical way. To seek happiness is to search for truth together, in a school in which we are all fellow disciples and therefore we must all be friends in the truth. Let us see what Augustine tells us in this regard:

Conversations, laughing together, reading pleasant books together, hobbies in common, sometimes light, sometimes serious, occasional discussions without resentment, like a man with himself, the frequent agreements, being one with the other, sometimes master, sometimes disciple, the impatient nostalgia of those who are far away, the festive welcome of those who return –these and other similar signs, characteristic of friendly hearts, expressed with the mouth, the tongue, the eyes and a thousand pleasant gestures. All of this is like the nourishment of the flame that melts souls together and makes many into one (San Agustín, *Confesionum*, IV, 8, 13).

Have a plan but not a rigid one

It is convenient to have a plan of exposition but sufficiently open to the demand of the circumstances (San Agustín, *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, XIII, 19). To expose the content, which in catechesis is the history of salvation, consists in showing it has a relationship with our own history, with our own today. It is very useful to make a synthesis, highlighting the most decisive events and explaining them in more detail (San Agustín, *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, III, 6).

It is the particular circumstances of the learner that determine the content and manner of teaching (San Agustín, *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, XV, 23). In this sense it is necessary to project the material and texts according to the students in front of us. In the realm of love it is also understood that the most important protagonist is the student and the teacher a companion, a servant.

Don't get discouraged

But it is also necessary to work in the spirit of the teacher, of the catechist, who may feel discouraged by the poverty and uselessness of his discourse, or because due to the low level of his listeners, he feels that he is not enriching himself on a personal level, perhaps also because of the little or no response of the students, or perhaps because of his interior sufferings. We must return to the foundation of our work and remember that God loves the one who gives with joy (San Agustín, *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, X, 14). It is also necessary to recognize our mistakes before the students with all naturalness, because it is human to err, and so that they do not remain with our inaccuracies. If this produces gossip or negative criticism, one must be patient (San Agustín, *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, XI, 16). The solution is to see that what we do is an expression of fraternal, paternal and maternal love and things will seem new to us because by sharing them with others we enrich ourselves (San Agustín, *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, XII, 17).

Dialogue methodology

In reality, transcendence, wisdom, is nothing but the love of the mind that seeks tirelessly and beyond everything, to lead us to the contemplation of truth (McCloskey, 2005). For this reason, Augustine said, no one sends his son to school so that he may learn what the teacher thinks, but so that he may have his own thought (San Agustín, *De Magistro*, XIV, 45) and make a contribution to the life of his community. This is the intention of formative dialogue as a part of the Augustinian process of knowledge (Popper, 1972, pág. 36).

For Augustine the teacher's methodology par excellence is dialogue, which is not an exchange of information but involves the whole person. Pascual (2003), commenting on *De Magistro*, says that the expression reflects the will of the speaker, his desires, his emotions, his experiences, his inner world (Pascual, 2003, pág. 40). Since it is an interpretative activity (through signs) and intersubjective (exchange of affections of the soul) speaking and dialogue imply faith and donation. When we speak we take for granted that the signs we receive correspond to the things they represent, and by sharing the affections of the soul, we give ourselves.

Learning community

The fact that for Augustine we are a community implies overcoming the spirit of competition and confrontation and functioning more as a team than as adversaries. More importantly, it is necessary to become aware that the defects and needs of others are not other people's problems but personal and group challenges, since one does not live for the personal good, but for the common one. We would not be able to feel at ease until everyone in the classroom is involved in a process of growth. The educational action should help us to recognize ourselves as this organic body and to work for its vigour. The concept of educational community is the practical realization of his Augustinian ideal.

The Augustinian approach that we are all one body must be translated into the development of a special sensitivity to bullying, which is one of the scourges of today's education. The Augustinian contribution would be the education of heart and would include aspects such as the relativization of wealth, power, and pleasure as a way of life and the courageous denunciation of situations of injustice that such a position produces. Then we should focus on what is essential, on what

is truly valuable, on recognizing the dignity of every human being, his inner richness, which necessarily leads to acceptance, respect and dialogue with the other. Moreover, it must be borne in mind that the Augustinian quest for unity beyond differences is expressed in tolerance –even in the face of violence- but above all in the permanent effort to defeat evil with good. For Augustine evil is the absence of good, if someone is evil, it is because he has not experienced the goodness of his fellow men (San Agustín, *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, XVI, 24). For Augustine, even those who wage war are convinced that they are seeking good... In this sense, it would be fundamental for the Bishop of Hippo, to have a personal dialogue that bears witness to the authentic meaning of life and the effort of all to create, through many situations, a culture of family and community through continuous actions in favor of life.

Transcendence

The purpose of teaching is to help the student realize this path: from material things to spiritual things (Kevane, 1987). For Augustine the truth is not a thing but a person, Jesus Christ, who speaks in the intimacy of the heart but at the same time in the development of his historical existence as a way of salvation. It is necessary to work with the catechist regarding his motivations and decisions. There are people who wish to become Christians out of some particular interest, some out of fear and some out of ambition. The teaching makes it possible to clarify its intention and to make a firm decision based on a strong commitment to Christ and to his Church (San Agustín, *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, VI, 10). Scandals inside and outside the Church should not be a reason for discouragement, but rather an occasion to recognize the fragility of every human being –including catechists- and to accentuate the Christian and social values that indicate that we live from resurrection, awaiting the full communion of all humanity and the manifestation of God’s definitive justice (San Agustín, *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, VII, 11).

One of the ways to undertake the return to oneself –for Augustine- is the beauty of things, of the same truth, because it plays a decisive role in the process of knowledge and freedom and this because it challenges my being and returns me to myself, to reality, to what is beyond all selfish interest, becoming an invitation to creativity and transcendence (San Agustín, *De la utilidad de creer*, 1, 2; Tejerina 2013). This process is lived as a tendency, as a weight, “...in St. Augustine it is not a question of attraction towards some object or operation, but towards freedom itself”. The attraction is given by the beauty that comes from the Word of God whose illumination (the same beauty) is reflected in all beings and is also lived in art, friendship, moral and cultural forms, social and historical progress” (Ramírez, 1981, pág. 25).

To educate is therefore to bear witness with unconditional love to the appreciation of the value of each individual. The school should be turned into a space of true friendship and solidarity, and the curriculum should be oriented towards creating a culture of kindness through its various aspects. To achieve this, the way is to cultivate a delicate human sensibility with regard to solidarity: “I do not know in what way, my brothers, when the affluent extends his hand to the needy, the soul of the former seems as if it is pleased with the common humanity and weakness” (San Agustín, *Sermones*, 259, 5).

Conclusion

In this work it has been possible to show how St. Augustine’s thought about the human being is translated into a reflection on education and particularly, in the concept of wisdom, the aspects of knowledge, ethics and citizenship are harmoniously integrated, resulting in a pedagogy based on love, joy and happiness, without underestimating scientific knowledge. It has also been possible to extract from his thinking some considerations for the training of teachers. After all, it has been shown how the pedagogical approach of the Bishop of Hippo brings to our world today an integral vision of education.

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