

Teaching and Learning: An Augustinian Perspective

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Abstract: This article gives seeks to illuminate the topics of teaching and learning from an Augustinian perspective. It demonstrates how Augustine's writings are a rich resource for philosophical, theological and pastoral reflection on teaching and learning. It critically examines the connection between Augustinian pedagogy and Augustinian ethics, that is to say, with love for God and neighbour. It goes on to demonstrate that for Augustine the two interpenetrate, and draws conclusions for current educational practices, as the love of truth put in the service of love of neighbour, especially in his/ her love for truth.

Key Words: Augustine of Hippo; *De catechizandis rudibus*; teaching and learning; pedagogy; love of God; love of neighbour; love of truth

Augustine of Hippo offers a rich resource for philosophical, theological and pastoral reflection on teaching and learning. Already in December 386, four months or more before his baptism, he had proposed, in *On Order* 2,7,24-19,51, a program for education in the liberal arts, the object of which was the vision of beauty, the vision of God. Shortly afterwards, in his *Soliloquies*, he had explored the epistemological foundations of such a program, focusing on the highest of the liberal arts, i.e., philosophy, the subject matter of which for him was God and the soul. Then, in the late 380s, in the dialogue with his son, Adeodatus, called *The Teacher*, he developed an accompanying theory of language and interpretation, a theory that would be further worked out and applied in his classic treatment of the interpretation of Scripture in *On Christian Doctrine* dating from the mid to late 390s.¹ It is not surprising, therefore, that in 415-418 as he explores different mental analogies in his work, *On the Trinity*, he should draw attention also to the *amor studentium*, i.e., "the sort of love... that the studios have, that is people who do not yet know but still desire to know some branch of learning... The more... the thing is known without being fully known, the more does the intelligence desire to know what remains... The object of our inquiry is what it is that [someone] loves in that which he is studios to know."²

From this text of *On the Trinity* Phillip Cary takes the title of his essay, "Study as Love," which appeared in the volume *Augustine and Liberal Education*, published in 2000. Two other contributions to the same volume are of particular value for an appreciation of Augustine's perspectives on teaching and learning. These are Richard M. Jacobs'

¹ For the articulation of these highlights from Augustine's theory of education see P. Cary, "Study as Love: Augustinian Vision and Catholic Education," in K. Pappenroth and K. L. Hughes (eds.), *Augustine and Liberal Education* (Aldershot, Burlington USA, Singapore, Sydney: Ashgate, 2000), 63, and 75 n.52; P. Cary "What Licentius Learned: A Narrative Reading of the Cassiciacum Dialogues," *Augustinian Studies* 29.1 (1998): 155-156.

² *On the Trinity* 10,1,1-2. See E. Hill (trans.), *The Trinity*, in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century* (Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1991), 286-288.

“Augustine’s Pedagogy of Intellectual Liberation: Turning Students from the ‘Truth of Authority’ to the ‘Authority of Truth,’” and Thomas F. Martin’s “Augustine’s *Confessions* as Pedagogy: Exercises in Transformation.” Jacobs’ study focuses on Augustine’s work *The Teacher*, with its challenge to Adeodatus “to be discriminating about words, to question and test the assumptions underlying assertions, and to take delight in contemplating created truth” (p. 118). It culminates in the call to “teachers” to “introduce their students to the culture of the intellect;” the students’ own intellects are the very subject of education (pp. 120-1). Augustine expresses this principle very clearly in the final pages of *The Teacher*:

Do teachers advertise that they verbally transmit their own acts of understanding, or the truths of their disciplines, for students to receive and retain? What father sends a child to school with the silly aim of finding out what the teacher’s understanding is? Rather, when all subjects, even those concerning virtue and wisdom, have been expounded by those who profess them, then students, if they are really to be called that, *investigate within themselves* whether what they are hearing is true, strenuously putting it to the test of *their own interior truth*. That is the point at which they learn. And when they reach an inner conviction of truth, they praise their teachers, not realizing that, even if the teachers knew what they were saying, the praise rightly belongs to the taught ones not the one who taught. Men make the mistake of calling others their teachers when they are no such thing, since there is a near-simultaneity between what is said and what is understood, and where inner assent follows so quickly on outer discussion they think the latter caused the former.³

Thomas Martin, in his chapter on Augustine’s *Confessions* as pedagogy, and as exercises in transformation, reads the *Confessions* in light of Pierre Hadot’s description of the four necessary learning exercises that lie at the heart of the pedagogy of ancient philosophy, viz., learning to live, learning to dialogue, learning to die, and learning to read. Martin shows how, for Augustine in the *Confessions*, the purpose and goal of all these exercises is to learn [of] God (*ut discerem te*: 10,26,37), the God who is one’s own very life. Martin concludes that “[t]he pedagogy of the *Confessions*...is not for the sake of self-transformation in any classical sense of the term. Instead, it demands the surrender of the self to the One alone who can heal and transform: “Without you, what am I to myself but a guide to my own downfall? – *quid enim sum ego mihi sine te nisi dux in praeceps?*” (pp. 42-43; *Confessions* 4,1,1).

As significant as the Cassiciacum dialogues are to an understanding of Augustine as pedagogue – not to mention the classics, *The Teacher*, the *Confessions*, and *On the Trinity* – it is a little work, most probably dating from late 403, that forms our special focus of attention in this article. We are speaking of *De catechizandis rudibus*. Along with *On Christian Doctrine*, *De catechizandis rudibus* came to exercise an increasingly important role in the education of clergy at the monastic schools, especially from the eighth century onwards, under the influence of Bede, Alcuin and Rabanus Maurus, and it has continued to have an impact on Western pedagogical thinking more generally throughout the centuries.⁴ In what follows I intend, firstly, to sketch the original context from which the work emerged and to outline its general structure; secondly, to highlight a number of key passages that might be read with value by those engaged in the enterprise of Catholic

³ Garry Wills (trans.), *The Teacher*, 45, appendix to *Saint Augustine’s Childhood: Confessions Book One* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2001), 188-189. Emphasis on “investigate within themselves” and “their own interior truth” has been added.

⁴ See, for example, G. Howie, *Educational Theory and Practice in St. Augustine* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), 150-153, 159, 217.

tertiary education today; and, thirdly, to draw our reflections on these passages into the framework of the principles that guide Augustine's pedagogical thinking as a whole.

As with very many of Augustine's writings, *De catechizandis rudibus* is a response to a request, an answer to questions put to him by others. In this case we know from the first words of the work itself that the one making the request is named Deogratias (Augustine calls him "brother"), and a couple of lines later we learn that he is a deacon in Carthage, the principal city of Proconsular Africa, where he enjoys popularity as a teacher of the faith. What was it then that the deacon Deogratias asked of Augustine? In the most general terms, he wanted Augustine to send him "something in writing which might be of use to [him] on the question of instructing beginners in faith [*de catechizandis rudibus*]" (1,1).⁵ The term *rudes* in this expression referred specifically to people who were approaching the church for the first time with the wish to become Christians. All classes were encompassed under this rubric: the uneducated (16,24), the moderately well-educated (9,13), and the very well-educated (8,12). Even if some of the very well-educated were already steeped in learning about the Christian faith, the designation *rudes* still applied to them, and would continue to do so until, having placed themselves under an authorised teacher, they had received a formal introduction to "the central points of the faith that gives us our identity as Christians" (1,1). The *rudes*, whatever their background, had still to take the step by which they would become catechumens (*catechumeni* or *audientes*, in Augustine's terminology), and the yet further step that would make them petitioners for baptism (*competentes*, as Augustine calls these). At the time of their first official approach to the church, however, the *rudes* were still pre-catechumens, or candidates for admission to the catechumenate. Following the introductory instruction that these newcomers received – an instruction that was delivered in a single session – they would have been at the point of progressing from the class of beginners in Christian faith, or of newcomers to Christian faith (*rudes*), into the ranks of the catechumens or hearers (*audientes*). This passage would be enacted through the rite of reception into the catechumenate. From that time on they would bear the name Christians (*christiani*), though they would not be called faithful believers (*fideles*) until, as neophytes, they had reached the stage of mystagogy immediately following their full initiation into the church at the Easter Vigil.

Because of the quite specific group of people envisaged by the work, and in view of the particular kind of instruction appropriate to their needs, *De catechizandis rudibus* has been translated here as *Instructing Beginners in Faith*. Following a prologue (1,1-2,4) the work falls into two quite distinct parts. In part one (3,5-14,22), Augustine provides advice and directions concerning how the historical exposition, or the subject matter, is to be presented (*de modo narrationis*), whether an exhortation is to be added to the precepts (*de praecipiendo et cohortando*), and how the person giving the instruction, or doing the teaching, is to develop a cheerful attitude (*de hilaritate comparanda*). The first and second of these elements are responses to Deogratias's explicit questions, while the third picks up on his admission that, in giving this instruction to beginners in faith, he often has "the feeling of being trifling and distasteful," even to himself. In part two of the work (15,23-27,55), then, Augustine provides Deogratias with two model addresses – the first quite lengthy, the second very short – in which the principles that he has identified in part one are put into practice.

⁵ All translations from *De catechizandis rudibus* are my own. My new translation is to appear shortly in the series *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century* (Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, forthcoming).

Central to Augustine's directions for presenting the historical exposition or subject matter is "love from a pure heart and a good conscience and unfeigned faith" (1 Tim 1:5), which is set as the standard both for the person giving the instruction and the one receiving it. The theme of love quickly gains prominence as the principal motif of this section of the work. In the light of various kinds of human love, most notably friendship, God's love for humankind is elucidated (4,7). The whole of Scripture is said to "[tell] of Christ and [call] to love [*Christum narrat et dilectionem monet*]" (4,8). This love is proposed to Deogratias as the goal to which he is to direct everything that he says to the beginners, and he is to "recount every event in [his] historical exposition [or in his curriculum content] in such a way that [his] listener by hearing it may believe, by believing may hope, and by hoping may love" (4,8). In sum, the prime purpose of the historical exposition (*narratio*), or of the presentation of subject matter, is to explain the deeper meaning of the events that are recounted, a "meaning [that] is brought out when we relate [these events] to the goal constituted by love (see 1 Tm 1:5)." In this way the listener will be subliminally conscious of a "golden thread" running throughout the presentation of these events as a whole, "like the golden thread which holds together the previous stones in an ornament but does not spoil the ornament's lines by making itself too obvious" (6,10).

As well as inquiring about the starting-point and the end-point of the historical exposition or of the subject matter to be covered (*narratio*), Deogratias had also asked whether an exhortation (*exhortatio*) is to be added to the precepts. His uncertainty on this score reflects the situation in which, as a result of the Christian imperial order established by the Theodosian Code, increasingly large numbers of people were seeking instruction in faith as a prelude to being accepted as catechumens. Under such circumstances, however, many may have had ulterior motives for making this first approach to the church.⁶ Thus, the point of Deogratias's second question concerning the introductory instruction in faith was to learn whether the attention of beginners in faith should be drawn to the practical consequences of the subject matter for their way of life or whether it was sufficient simply to "invoke the precepts" as objects of teaching (1,1). Augustine's reply is unambiguous. He clearly insists that, "once the historical exposition [or the presentation of content] is concluded," the newcomers' attention is to be directed to the question of the resurrection of the body and to the last judgement that is to come, and that newcomers are to be provided "with the resources of insight and courage needed to confront temptations and scandals, whether from outside or from within the church itself" (7,11).

Thus, not only does Augustine adopt the style of discourse that is appropriate to the exposition, i.e., the *genus humile* or *subtile*, but he also uses a second style, i.e., the *genus sublime* or *grande*, the purpose of which is to urge or sway listeners to some courses of action and to dissuade them from others. Cicero's distinction between the *narratio* and the *suasio* may be to the point here: the *narratio* bears on the past or the present, the *suasio* on the future; the former seeks to convince, the latter to sway.⁷ As Augustine reflects in Book 4 of *On Christian Doctrine*, "if listeners need to be taught, this calls for the narrative style... but if the listeners are to be moved rather than taught...more forceful kinds of speaking

⁶ Motives of material gain, or desire for social and professional status (even survival), may have caused people either to pretend that they wished to become Christians or to seek admission to the catechumenate for the wrong reasons. See *Instructing Beginners in Faith* 5,9; 17,26.

⁷ See *De partitione oratoria* 4,13: *Est enim narratio praeteritarum rerum aut praesentium, suasio autem futurarum. Quare ad fidem et ad motum adhibenda est omnis oratio.*

are called for.”⁸ The more forceful kinds of speaking that Augustine employs in the introductions to his model addresses, and in the exhortations, are premised upon an eschatological future, and one that is evoked with all its dramatic consequences in the last judgement, which “will be good toward the good, harsh toward the wicked, impartial toward all” (7,11).

For all this, however, in part one of *Instructing Beginners in Faith* it is a third style of discourse, the *genus medium*, which is given particular prominence. This is the style used by the orator to delight his hearers and make his address pleasing to listen to (*delectare*).⁹ Observing the standard rhetorical rules of brevity, clarity and credibility will play an essential role in delighting one’s listeners, just as it does in teaching and swaying, convincing and persuading.¹⁰ Augustine, however, pushes beyond the rhetorical rules as such and transposes the discussion of delight onto a deeper psychological level, himself posing the question as to how the person who gives instruction is to develop a cheerful attitude (*de hilaritate comparanda*). Taking his lead from Deogratias’s complaint “that when [his] address is lengthy and delivered without enthusiasm [he has] often had the feeling of being trifling and distasteful [even] to himself...” (1,1), Augustine uses his own experience (2,3) to probe the causes of the discouragement and aversion (what we might today call burn-out) which affect those who have responsibility for teaching beginners.¹¹ He finds that despondency, dejection and aversion for the task of giving instruction can arise:

(1) because the language of instruction proves to be such an inadequate expression of our intellectual insight, and while “it pleases us to gain extraordinary insight [it] irks us to have to give utterance to it in ordinary speech” (2,4; cf. 2,3);

(2) because we are afraid of making a mistake or of inadvertently causing offence to our hearers, and are inhibited by not “knowing beforehand whether the words we need to convey our meaning will come to us or whether they will be understood by our listeners to their advantage;”

(3) because “our rather grown-up mind” finds it childish and “distasteful to be constantly rehearsing familiar phrases that are suited to the ears of little ones” (12,17);

(4) because our listeners fail to respond, making us “grow discouraged and, in the very midst of the instruction, [we] begin to falter and feel ground down because all our effort seems to be for nothing;”

(5) because we feel upset at being deflected from something else that we had planned to do or had looked forward to doing, with the result that, feeling pressured by a sense of obligation, we are “in a grumpy mood and thus give [our] instruction in a disagreeable manner” (14,20); and

⁸ *Teaching Christianity* 4,4,6 (trans. E. Hill, amended).

⁹ On the three styles of discourse, and how they are linked, respectively, to the *genus iudiciale*, the *genus deliberativum*, and the *genus demonstrativum*, see B. Studer in A. di Berardino and B. Studer (eds). *History of Theology. I. The Patristic Period*, trans. M. J. O’Connell. Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1996, pp. 287-291.

¹⁰ See, for example: 3,5; 5,9; 7,11; 8,12; 13,18-19 (brevity); 6,10 (clarity and credibility); 13,18 (brevity and clarity); 9,13 (credibility).

¹¹ These are summarized in 10,14, and then dealt with individually in 10,15 through 14,22.

(6) because we are in turmoil as a result of some scandal in the church, or in society, or because we find ourselves depressed as a result of some lapse or sin of our own.

Having presented these difficulties in summary in 10,14, Augustine proceeds in the paragraphs that follow to reassure Deogratias that “whichever of the many causes it is that clouds the bright sky of our mind, we should look for means in harmony with God’s will to relieve that feeling of depression, and then we may greatly rejoice in the fire of the Spirit and take delight in the calm achievement of our good work. *For God loves the cheerful giver* (2 Cor 9:7).”

The discussion of cheerfulness (*hilaritas*) now takes on an unmistakably theological tenor. As already noted, “the golden thread” that unobtrusively links the central events recounted in the presentation of subject matter is spun from the love of God that is revealed for humankind in the humility of Christ. The message that Deogratias is to proclaim is that “...Christ came before all else so that people might learn how much God loves them, and might learn this so that they would catch fire with love for him who first loved them, and so that they would also love their neighbour as he commanded and showed by his example, he who made himself their neighbour by loving them when they were not close to him but were wandering far from him” (4,8). It was, as William Harmless writes, this “message [that] shaped [Augustine’s] pedagogy,” this exhilarating message of great love, for which “[a] glum Deogratias would have proved a poor spokesman...”¹² Thus, just as love proved to be the central motif of Augustine’s directions for presenting the subject matter (3,5 – 6,10), so too now love is shown to be at the very heart of any endeavor to develop a cheerful attitude or disposition in those who are to give the instruction, to do the teaching.

In response to the experience of finding one’s own address trifling and dull in comparison to the silent delight of intellectual perception – an experience in which one feels oneself “compelled to come down as it were from the pinnacles of thought and delay over each slow syllable in the plains far below” (10,15) – Augustine refers Deogratias to the example of the kenotic Christ (Phil 2:6-8), to whom he applies the words of Paul that he “became weak for the weak in order to gain the weak” (1 Cor 9:22). And alluding to the “love from a pure heart, and a good conscience” of 1 Tm 1:5, he highlights the need for humility and purity of intention in those who teach beginners: “For if our understanding finds its delight within, in the brightest of secret places, let it also delight in the following insight into the ways of love: the more love goes down in a spirit of service into the ranks of the lowliest people, the more surely it rediscovers the quiet that is within when its good conscience testifies that it seeks nothing of those to whom it goes down but their eternal salvation” (10,15).

When fear of making mistakes or of causing offense, along with uncertainty about his effectiveness as a speaker, prompt Deogratias to play safe by reading from texts that have already been prepared rather than improvising and adapting his words to the people who are actually present, Augustine encourages him by pointing out that the work to which he is called is a work of mercy for others, and that as such it must be performed with humility. “We will even be glad,” he tells Deogratias, “to endure troubles for the sake of our work of mercy, if it is not our own glory that we seek there (see Jn 7:18). For a work is truly good only when the will of the one who performs it is struck with the shaft of love and when, returning as it were to its proper place, the will comes to rest again in love.” Furthermore, “cheerfully [allowing] God to speak through us in accordance with our

¹² W. Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 154 and 153.

capacities...[we will find] that *for those who love God, all things come together in the good* (Rom 8:28)" (11,16).

In similar vein Augustine analyses and offers remedies for the other causes of burn-out that he has identified. Deogratias will be helped to overcome his aversion to repeating the same basic subject matter over and over again, when he draws close to his listeners "with a brother's love, or a father's or a mother's." Entering with compassion – even with friendship – into the others' perspectives, he will "find refreshment in their fresh approach" and his "own enjoyment will be revived by sharing in the enjoyment that others derive from [acquiring this knowledge of God] for the first time" (12,17). Deogratias is to meet unresponsive listeners with gentle encouragement, welcome them with a sense of fraternal communion, use all available means to discern the right tack to take with them and, in every case, to treat them with compassion. When his listeners are jaded, he may need to use humor or to say something slightly startling (preferably something related to their own situation), but this is always to be done in a friendly, non-threatening tone, and he is to be particularly attentive to his listeners' physical needs (13,18-19). In the face of despondency at having his best-laid plans interrupted by the arrival of someone seeking instruction, Augustine reminds Deogratias in general terms "that in all our dealings with people we should act compassionately and out of an obligation of purest love..." and in this way show that we prefer God's schedule of activities to any that we have drawn up ourselves (14,20).¹³ As for the distress caused by another's scandalous conduct, which makes us "unable to offer our address calmly and congenially," Augustine reassures Deogratias that "our love toward those for whom Christ died...should be so great that the very fact of news being brought to us, who are despondent, that someone is present who wishes to become a Christian, should be sufficient to console us in our despondency and to free us from its bonds, just as the delight we take in making a profit [in this case, the promised progress of the beginner] generally alleviates the pain of incurring a loss [in this case, the failure of a fellow Christian]" (14,21). If, on the other hand, our grief of heart has been caused by some lapse of our own, "we should be glad when an opportunity is given us to perform a work of great mercy [i.e., offering instruction to beginners]; [for] it is like a spring appearing in our path, so that from its waters the blaze that had broken out [from our sin] can be extinguished" (14,22).

Augustine is all too conscious that "when words have to come up from the dry well of dejection, they do not flow easily" (10,14), and so he has dwelt at length on the obstacles that Deogratias may encounter in developing a cheerful attitude (*de hilaritate comparanda*) toward his work. The aim has been "to drive out the darkness of...repugnance for the task" and ensure that Deogratias is "in the right frame of mind to do the kind of teaching that is constantly asked of him." The outcome is that "[f]luent and

¹³ As O. Wermelinger. *Vom ersten katechetischen Unterricht*, trans. W. Steinmann (München: Kösel Verlag, 1985), 112 notes, Augustine is himself proof of such compassion in his dealings with Deogratias. He allows his own schedule of activities to be disrupted in order to respond to Deogratias' request for assistance. In this he not only shows his love for Deogratias personally but, by reflecting on instruction in faith and modelling it for others, he also gives a practical demonstration of love for the church as a whole (see 1,2). Peter Brown reports that, as a result of reading the Divjak letters discovered in 1975, he changed his mind about what he had earlier considered a tragic hardening of spirit in the older Augustine. In the new edition of his widely-read *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 466-467, Brown speaks of Augustine's letters being "marked by... an heroic lack of measure when it came to the care of endangered souls... The letters make plain that the old Augustine was prepared to give his unstinting attention to any problem that might trouble the faithful, no matter how busy he was, no matter how trivial or how ill-framed the problem seemed to be, and no matter how remote from Hippo, or how eccentric, its proponents were."

cheerful words then stream out from an abundance of love and are drunk in with pleasure [by our listeners]...[this being the] love *that has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us* (Rom 5:5)" (14,22). Cheerfulness (*hilaritas*) on the part of the speaker is then met with delight on the part of the listener, and the love poured out by the Holy Spirit is at the heart of the exchange.

Augustine's sensitivity and adaptability to different kinds of audiences had already been evident in his directions to Deogratias as to how to gear his instruction to two particular types of beginners in faith: the polished and the cultured, on the one hand, and those with a run-of-the-mill education in grammar and rhetoric, on the other (8,12 – 9,13). Also, it was "a man from the country" to whom Augustine was once offering instruction who had taught him an important lesson in attentiveness to physical need (13,19); and the imagined audience for the long model address will be "an ordinary type of [towns-]person without much education" (16,24). Now, immediately before embarking on that model address, Augustine reflects with impressive virtuosity on the variety of circumstances in which such introductory teaching might be done, and on the implications for his pedagogy of audiences of very different kinds. While it remains true that the message of love shapes the pedagogy, each particular confluence of circumstances and types of listeners requires that, "although we owe the same love to all, we should not treat all with the same remedy. And so, for its part, this very love is in pain giving birth to some (cf. Gal 4:19), makes itself weak with others (cf. 1 Cor 9:22); devotes itself to edifying some (cf. 1 Cor 8:1), greatly fears giving offence to others; bends down to some, raises itself up before others. To some this love is gentle, to others stern, to no one hostile, to everyone a mother" (15,23).

Although Augustine's practically-inspired reflections on teaching and learning in *Instructing Beginners in Faith* need to be interpreted, at least initially, against the quite specific background out of which they arose – i.e., a brief pre-catechumenal education for those who had expressed an interest in embracing the Christian faith – their applicability is by no means limited to that context, nor indeed to the particular forms of the education of clergy that later developed under their influence. We ask, then, what bearing these directions might have on teaching and learning in the context of a contemporary Catholic university. Recall how Augustine expresses the message that shapes the pedagogy: "Christ came before all else so that people might learn how much God loves them, and might learn this so that they would catch fire with love for him who first loved them, and so that they would also love their neighbour as he commanded and showed by his example, he who made himself their neighbour by loving them when they were not close to him but were wandering far from him" (4,8). It is not theologically unthinkable that this narrative of God's incarnational, self-emptying, and humble love, and the responsive reciprocal love for God and neighbour that it kindles, might consciously shape a Catholic university's sense of identity and mission, the way curriculum is conceptualised and research priorities are determined, and the types of review and quality assurance processes that are adequate, as well as acting as integral principles in the university's formulation of teaching and learning plans, policies and strategies. How would the university's institutional profile look if love for God and neighbour, in right relationship with one another, and articulated in a properly educational and pedagogical manner, were accepted as the fundamental mandate of a Catholic university? What difference would it make if the university had a sustained focus on cheerfulness in teaching and learning, and could benefit from a theological reflection that counteracts the factors leading to cheerlessness and prompts those fostering cheerfulness in our classrooms and meeting-rooms? How might the major Christian themes of the last judgment, the resurrection of the body, and the love that is

poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit – the love that sustains cheerfulness – influence a Catholic university’s thinking about its educational aims and objectives? What responsibility does such a university have to provide its students “with the resources of insight and courage needed to confront temptations and scandals, whether from outside or from within the church itself” (7,11)? And, who knows, such resources are sorely needed.

Phillip Cary, in the essay referred to earlier, aligns the guiding principles of Augustinian pedagogy with the guiding principles of Augustinian ethics, that is to say, with love for God and neighbour. He places learning or study under the commandment of love for God, and teaching under the commandment of love for neighbour.¹⁴ “To love our neighbours,” Cary continues, “means to help them find happiness, which means to help them love God. The pedagogical implication of this is that teachers should care for their studies first and their students second.” As Cary explains, “[s]ince teachers teach by example, their most important obligation is to study, to love truth for its own sake, so that their students may learn to do likewise” (p. 69). Cary’s argumentation in classifying learning under love for God and teaching under love for neighbour is unexceptionable. And yet, insofar as teaching as love for neighbour means that the teacher primarily models learning as love for God, we must resist the temptation to make too neat a distinction, either between learning and teaching (see *De catechizandis rudibus* 12,17), or between love for God and love for neighbour (see the message-shaping-pedagogy text from *De catechizandis rudibus* 4,8, in which Christ makes himself a neighbour to humankind). Following a wonderfully practical reflection on how teaching is hard because love for neighbour is hard, Cary himself effectively invites us to think again about the axiom “that teachers should care for their studies first and their students second,” something that, in practical terms, Augustine himself did not do, especially from the time of his preaching as a newly-ordained bishop in Carthage in 397. Cary visualizes the teacher reading a student essay that resembles a blurry photograph, and trying to find patterns and insight in the blurriness. This, he says, is love, “love of truth put in the service of love of neighbour – indeed *love of the truth in the mind of one’s neighbour* rather than in oneself” (p. 70, my emphasis).

This move on Cary’s part from self to neighbour, this love for truth in the mind of one’s neighbour, effectively lifts the neighbour out of “second” place, just as Augustine in *De catechizandis rudibus* sees Christ himself as heightening the concept of neighbour in making “himself neighbour [to human beings] by loving them when they were not close to him but were wandering far from him” (4,8). This move also reflects a growing Augustinian insight, especially and increasingly after the mid-390s, into the profound unity between love for God and neighbour.¹⁵ A short text from Book 8 of *On the Trinity* shows compellingly how an Augustinian emphasis on the unity of love turns uncompromisingly to the neighbour:

True love, however, is this: being constantly intent upon truth “we live justly” (Titus 2:12), and consequently we consider all that is mortal of no value in comparison to love for people by which we desire that they live justly. For thus we will be able to prepare

¹⁴ Cary, “Study as Love,” 63. Augustine’s *Answers to the Eight Questions of Dulcitius*, 3 appears to offer some justification for this distinction: “The love of knowledge and truth should invite us to continue learning. The love of others should compel us to teach.”

¹⁵ See R. Canning, *The Unity of Love for God and Neighbour in St Augustine* (Leuven-Heverlee: Augustinian Historical Institute, 1993), especially 249-330.

ourselves even to die for the good of the brethren, following the example that the Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us.¹⁶

Where might reflection on such a radical turn to the neighbour, which is at one and the same time a radical turn to God, and a conversion to truth, impinge on an institution such as Australian Catholic University that presents itself in its Mission Statement as summoned “to attend to all that is of concern to human beings... [as] guided by a fundamental concern for justice and equity, and for the dignity of all human beings... [and as] committed to serving the common good”?¹⁷

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¹⁶ *On the Trinity* 8,7,10, translation my own.

¹⁷ *ACU National Handbook* (2003), 11.