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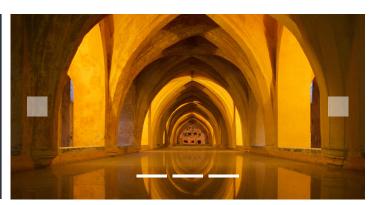
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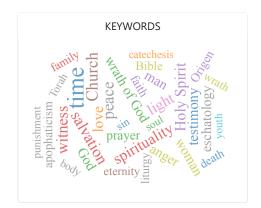Antoni Paciorek (KUL, Poland)
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Ontological Dimension of Community Education Refers to Augustine's Thought in *The City of God*

CAROLUS BORROMEUS MULYATNO iD
Sanata Dharma University, Indonesia, cbmulyatno@usd.ac.id

AGUS WIDODO iD
Sanata Dharma University, Indonesia, aguswidodo@usd.ac.id

Abstract: To educate each person integrally as a member of society, ethical principles with an ontological dimension are needed. This qualitative research with literature study method aims to explore the ontological dimension of community education refers to Augustine's thought in *The City of God*. The results of this study show that community education is synonymous with building the City of God, which is characterized by human relationships with God so that they are able to use freedom driven by altruist love to implement social responsibility for the realization of peace, justice and happiness in common life. Education of conscience plays an important role in developing the sensitivity, concern and responsibility of each person to realize true happiness in life together. True happiness, which is the goal of everyone's life, has a moral, relational-dialogical, dynamic and affective character. Altruistic love, which stems from man's relationship with God, is an ethical principle in social life. At the same time, the idea of each person's relationship with God and his presence in conscience confirms Augustine's position on the ontological dimension of the morality of living together. Augustine's ideas about the ontological dimension of social morality have influenced moral education in the Christian tradition and philosophical discourse over time.

Keywords: conscience, ethical principles, happiness, altruistic love, community education

Education plays an important role in improving the quality of life in society by constructing moral awareness and fostering good habits as members of society (Lee and Misco 2016, 85). Therefore, ethical principles are needed to cultivate the awareness, motivation, and behavior of every individual in social life. All of these develop in dynamic relationships among individuals within the family, community, school, and society (Grzadziel 2014, 92–98). As social beings living in society, every individual undergoes an educational process by realizing and embodying ethical principles that serve as the fundamental motivation for moral actions within society (Liu 2014, 137). Every individual is a global citizen who needs ethical principles to interact and act within global relationships (Waterson and Moffa 2015, 130). These ethical principles serve as the basis for respecting the beliefs of each individual that develop within different family traditions and cultural contexts. As global citizens, every individual interacts and influences others in building a quality world through the tradition of ethical behavior. Good deeds need to be continually performed and become a tradition passed down from generation to generation.

Augustine (354–430), an influential Church Father, renowned Christian philosopher, and a great teacher of the Christian faith, emphasized that the history of human life has ontological, pedagogical, and soteriological dimensions (Casella 2009, 329). Human life is always connected to God, develops within history, and requires integral education to realize a life that is just, peaceful, happy, and full of brotherhood. For Augustine, the process of education for individual and collective development needs to be understood integrally based on the principles of Christian anthropology, which optimize the development of the ontological, epistemological, physical, social, and moral dimensions of human life (Kanu 2019, 47). The education of each individual, therefore, is a dynamic process in relation to God or living in God throughout one's life (Maloney 1973, 197).

Augustine's thoughts on education have become the foundation of the Christian vision of education from the patristic era to the present (Osuji and Suleh 2015, 22). From the perspective that education is a lifelong dynamic process, contemporary educational philosophers such as Alfred N. Whitehead, John Dewey, and naturalist figures strongly advocate for this. However, they do not place the ontological dimension as a fundamental part of the dynamics of human education. Therefore, researchers are interested in exploring the ontological dimension of community-based education with reference to Augustine's thoughts, especially in *The City of God* (*De civitate Dei*). There are three main research questions that serve as the research instrument. First, what is the socio-cultural context of Augustine's life and the writing of *The City of God*? Second, how does Augustine explain the ontological dimension of community-based education? Third, how is the dynamics of community-based education implemented? The answers to these three questions lead to the goal of this research to explore Augustine's ideas about the importance of the ontological dimension in the community education process.

1. The Socio-Cultural Context of *The City of God*

Augustine's encounter with Ambrose during his life time in Milan since 384 led him to become interested in Christian teachings, until he definitively decided to believe in Christ and became a member of the Church in 387. His life experiences in Tagaste and Carthage provided him with valuable knowledge for engaging in dialogue with people from diverse backgrounds in terms of ethnicity, language, beliefs, culture, and ethnicity (Mondin 1991, 84–86). Augustine described his life journey as a pilgrimage to know the soul and God better, as God is believed to be the home of the soul (Augustinus, *Soliloquiorum libri II* 85; Hazelton 1947, 91–101). This pilgrimage in life is a movement of the soul in God, with the purpose of seeking truth, enriching the soul, fostering personal maturity, and developing peaceful and brotherly

coexistence (Kanu 2019, 48). All of these, later, had a great influence when he wrote *The City of God*.

The City of God is not only one of the Augustine's, but ranks, along with his *Confessions*, among the classics of all literature (Gilson 2010, xi). It was composed around the year of Marcellinus' death (413), and published separately from time to time, until it was completed in 426, occupied therefore the maturest years of Augustine's life, from his fifty-ninth year to his seventy-second year (Dods 1887, xii). In the "Preface" of Book I, Augustine wrote,

> My dear Marcellinus, this This work which I have begun makes good my promise to you. In it I am undertaking nothing less than the task of defending the glorious City of God against those who prefer their own gods to its Founder. I shall consider it both in its temporal stage here below (where it journeys as a pilgrim among sinners and lives by faith) and as solidly established in its eternal abode that blessed goal for which we patiently hope 'until justice be turned into judgment,' but which, one day, is to be the reward of excellence in a final victory and a perfect peace. The task, I realize, is a high and hard one, but God will help me (Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* I, Preface [FC 8, 17–18]).

It can be said, therefore, that Augustine composed *The City of God* as a moral responsibility to guide and direct the community in living together in society, since he considered "the city" not in the material, but in the social sense (Gilson 2010, xiv). *The City of God* contains universal ethical principles for building communal life (Tarnas 1991, 107–8). It is a philosophical-theological work serving catechesis, pastoral care, and community education.

The City of God consists of 22 books. In the first ten books, Augustine extensively criticizes paganism, while in the remaining twelve books, he discusses the concept of the City of God and the earthly city (Ferrari 1972, 198–208). The City of God symbolizes or represents a good way of life because it is filled with love for God, and its realization is worth striving for. On the other hand, the earthly city represents a situation of moral decay due to excessive self-love, making it morally unworthy. Augustine emphasizes the duty of believers in defending the ethical principles that motivate life for the realization of the City of God. The contrasting depiction of the City of God and the earthly city serves to explain that Christians need to uphold ethical principles derived from the teachings of the Christian faith in order to attain happiness and peace. Living out these ethical principles in communal life is an educational process that nurtures personal growth, humanity, and responsibility (Kanu 2019, 48).

At the time *The City of God* was written, society was marked by the decline of Roman government power. There was a struggle for power among the heirs to the Roman imperial throne, and moral degradation was prevalent. Roman officials were more concerned with personal pleasures and luxurious living, and social concern and responsibility had greatly declined. At this point, Augustine shared with

Cicero's opinion about the fall Rome as the consequence of their moral degradation (Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* II, 21 [FC 8, 106–11]). Cicero conceived that every society should resemble a symphonic concert, in which the different notes of instruments and voices blend into a final harmony. What musicians call harmony, politicians call concord. Without concord, there is no city. Meanwhile, Augustine, who saw that the dominant feature in the pagan concept of the city, as a political and social body, was the idea of justice, added that without justice, there would be no harmony. Therefore, justice is the first condition necessary for the existence of the city. That is why Augustine felt justified in concluding that Rome, which had lost all justice, no longer existed.

Christians, who were tirelessly striving for a brotherly and solidary communal life, were accused by political rulers as a group opposing the government. As a leader of the community, Augustine defended the people and reassured them that the survival of humanity in this world is in the hands of God. In Jacques Maritain's view, Augustine is a shepherd of the people who is remembered in the hearts of humanity because all of his works and service flow from a sincere heart (Maritain 2022, 345). Firmness of faith is necessary so that Christians do not get swept away by a life that goes against the ethical principles of communal living in *The City of God*. Augustine elaborates on the foundation or ethical basis of communal life based on the values of the Christian faith. In other words, for Augustine, community education has an ontological dimension.

2. Ontological Dimension of Community Education

The City of God contains Christian ethical principles to educate the faithful in community life. Augustine elaborates on philosophical and theological ideas about wisdom and happiness in communal life. In the light of the Christian faith, philosophy is a holistic journey of faith to attain happiness in perfect unity with God (Bourke 1964, 151). A true philosopher is a friend of God who directs his soul to unite perfectly with God as the source and pinnacle of happiness. This was affirmed by Augustine: "Great is the Lord, and exceedingly to be praised in the city of our God, in His holy mountain, increasing the joy of the whole earth" (Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XI, 1 [Walsh *et al.*, 187]). When humans truly listen to the voice of God's love planted in their conscience, life on earth will be filled with happiness and praise to God. The happiness of humans, as explained by Augustine in his thoughts on ethics in communal living, encompasses ontological dimensions that are moral, relational-dialogical, dynamic, and affective (Zizioulas 2010, 147).

Regarding the love of God poured into the heart of each individual, Augustine finds the foundation of the Christian faith based on the teachings of the Bible

(Prelipcean 2014, 766). He finds inspiration from the writings of Paul, who affirms that the love of God has been poured into our hearts (Rom 5:5). Love is the power of the Holy Spirit that unites all those who believe in God. The love of friendship is emphasized by Jesus by stating, "I no longer call you servants, but I have called you friends" (John 15:15). The love of God in the heart of each individual moves life from self-love to love of God and neighbor (Prelipcean 2014, 766–67). Altruistic love, sourced from the relationship between humans and God, becomes an ethical principle in communal living that has an ontological dimension.

The idea of life as a process of experiencing the relationship between the soul and God to attain happiness is the central focus of Augustine's philosophical-theological reflection (Chervin and Kevane 1988, 92). The human soul contains eternal divine values. The relationship between humans and God as the home of the soul is directed towards earthly happiness that reaches its fullness in eternal happiness in heaven. Considering that the purpose of philosophy and theology is to find happiness (beatitude), philosophy is not just a rational activity or form of reflection but a pilgrimage to give meaning to the lives of individuals in relation to God, the Creator.

In the light of the Christian faith, philosophical activity is not enough to simply use rational dialectic methods and logic as developed by Greek philosophers. Christian philosophy is a process of pilgrimage in life with the method of transcendental introspection (Mondin 1988, 145). This means that life is a pilgrimage of humans in relation to God towards the goal of happiness and salvation, which is fully achieved in eternal life in heaven. Life is a process of education that has ontological, epistemological, and moral-social dimensions (Kanu 2019, 48). This means that the pilgrimage of human life is a process of developing integral qualities aimed at achieving perfect happiness. Each individual is a pilgrim together with others to build a communal life of care, unity of hearts, and peace (Painadath 2014, 75).

The teachings of Christian faith about God as the source of all life events and truth form the ontological foundation of community education. In the Christian faith, the Trinity is a unity of three persons who dynamically relate to humans and urge them to direct their lives towards salvation (Zizioulas 2010, 148). The Christian faith also believes that within the human heart, there is a divine power that directs life and the humans free will to achieve the fullness of life in God. Augustine creates a hierarchical framework that colors the relationship between humans and God. God is at the top of the hierarchy of human life. God dwells in the human heart, directing human life to achieve the fullness of the relationship with God in eternity. The hierarchy below is reason and conscience, which is the place of God's power that moves humans to know and unite perfectly with God and his truth. The seed of truth and eternity (*ratio aeterna*) is planted in the human mind (*ratio seminales*). The lowest hierarchy is the mortal body. The eternal principle or *ratio aeterna* is unchanging forms of principles or essences of everything.

Humans are endowed with spiritual abilities to build and preserve the city of God. The city of God is a reflection of the moral quality of human life surrounded by justice, truth, equality, and brotherhood. Living in the city of God is described as a process of realizing the suitability of each person's life and behavior based on Christian moral and ethical principles. The affirmation of the ontological dimension of communal living plays an important role in ensuring the sustainability of human education (Cox 2018, 47). Communal education places the free will and free choice of humans not only on the orientation of happy earthly life but also on the fullness of heavenly happiness. Community education is oriented towards the development of communal life built on the obedience of its citizens to God's love. The model of obedience to God's love is shown in the example of Abraham who entrusted his life and family to God's call (Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XIV, 32 [Walsh *et al*., 544–47]).

Building the city of God is identical to the process of community education based on ontological ethical principles. The ethical principles of the city of God should inspire and move the life of each person in determining moral attitudes and behaviour for the realization of a peaceful and happy communal life. Ethical principles, eternal values, and ways of life to realize a humane way of life are emphasized in *The City of God*. *Civitas Dei* and *Civitas Terrena* are two contrasting communal environments and ways of life:

> Worldly society has flowered from a selfish love which dared to despise even God, whereas the communion of saints is rooted in a love of God that is ready to trample on self. In a word, this latter relies on the Lord, whereas the other boasts that it can get along by itself. The city of man seeks the praise of men, whereas the height of glory for the other is to hear God in the witness of conscience. The one lifts up its head in its own boasting; the other says to God: "Thou art my glory, thou liftest up my head" (Ps 3:4) (Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XIV, 28 [Walsh *et al*., 410]).

Civitas Dei or the *City of God* is a quality and dynamic of communal life inspired by Christian moral principles, namely altruistic love. Loving God's eternal law is the spiritual basis for loving fellow humans and all creatures created by God. Augustine emphasizes that to human being,

> God teaches him two chief commandments, the love of God and the love of neighbor. In these precepts man finds three beings to love, namely, God, himself, and his fellow man, and knows that he is not wrong in loving himself so long as he loves God. As a result, he must help his neighbor (whom he is obliged to love as himself) to love God (Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XIX, 14 [Walsh *et al*., 222]).

This idea shows that loving others is the embodiment of love for God, the Creator. The city of God is a reality of human life inspired and driven by divine altruistic

love, which produces brotherhood and peace. In the life of the world city, each person seeks their own glory, not fighting for a brotherly and peaceful communal life that glorifies God, as each person in the city of God strives for. Divine altruistic love is an ontological ethical principle and the basis for the implementation of moral responsibility to build a just, brotherly, and peaceful society.

Community-based education motivated by altruistic love becomes increasingly urgent to improve the fragility of the world order (Martini 1995, 43). The longing of human beings from different religious and cultural backgrounds for a brotherly and peaceful way of life becomes a starting point for building dialogue and cooperation based on the principles of love for God and others. In reality, religions also teach ethical principles that value love and brotherhood in society. Religions also encourage their followers to strive for justice and peace. Dialogue and cooperation among followers of different religions further emphasize the role of religion as a source of light that purifies the world and makes it a home for humanity to live in peace, help one another, strengthen the weak, and give hope (Martini 1995, 43).

In reality, the world city that represents the moral quality and dynamics of life driven by selfish love is always present in this worldly life. This is the challenge for the Christian faith and all of humanity. Efforts to realize altruistic love can still be infiltrated by the desire for power that shapes the "world city." Augustine states clearly:

The earthly one has made for herself, according to her heart's desire, false gods out of any sources at all, even out of human beings, that she might adore them with sacrifices. The heavenly one, on the other hand, living like a wayfarer in this world, makes no false gods for herself. On the contrary, she herself is made by the true God that she may be herself a true sacrifice to Him (Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XVIII, 54 [Walsh *et al.*, 182]). This statement illustrates that in the pilgrimage in this world the members of the city of God strive to direct themselves to the goal of the goodness of life lived in relationship with God.

Augustine's pedagogy emphasizes unity and practices that strengthen the will to act rightly. He saw such education of the will, along with the memory and the understanding, as character building.

For it is from these three that we are also wont to gain an insight into the talents and the character of the young. For the more tenaciously and the more easily a boy remembers, the more acutely he understands; and the more eagerly he studies, the more praiseworthy is his talent. But when we inquire into a person's learning, we do not ask about the sureness or the facility of his memory, or the keenness of his understanding, but what he remembers and what he understands. And because a mind is deemed worthy of praise, not only for its learning, but also for its goodness, we have to consider not only what it remembers and understands, but also what it wills – not how ardently it wills, but first what it wills and then how much it wills it. For a mind that loves fervently is only to be praised when that which it loves deserves to be fervently loved (Augustinus, *De Trinitate* X, 17 [McKenna, 57]).

Furthermore, Augustine stated that to strengthen character and to develop good habits it is necessary to practice continuous dialogue with the Divine Master living in the inner self through reflective reasoning and the realization of truth for the sake of the unity of the common life that helps each person to transcend the self.

> Do not go outside, come back into yourself. It is in the inner self that Truth dwells. And if you find your own nature to be subject to change, transcend even yourself. But remember, when you are transcending yourself, that it is your reasoning soul transcending yourself. So then, direct your course to what the light of reason itself gets its light from. (Augustinus, *De vera religione* 39, 72 [Hill, 78]).

The process of community education that takes place in dialogue and reflective reasoning needs to include honest self-evaluation and examination of conscience. Augustine's pedagogy that emphasizes the power of sincere love as the impetus for righteous and fraternal living goes beyond a pedagogy that emphasizes the development of mere intellectual intelligence. Each person develops in communal life under the guidance of the true Master. This idea was affirmed by Augustine: "God is the Author of the existence of our nature and, therefore, He must be our Teacher if we are ever to be wise, and He must be the Source of our inmost consolation if we are ever to be happy" (Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XI, 25 [Walsh *et al.*, 227–28]).

As Augustine stated, the city of the world and the city of God are realities that exist in the actual experience of human life. The task of community education is to direct members of the city of the world towards members of the city of God. This means that the reality of human life which is dominated by the power of self-love needs to be directed through community education towards a communal life driven by divine love or altruistic love. Thus, an example of an educator is very important so that students have a clear model of the reflection of the divine city. Augustine testified that all his human endeavors did not yield the results he expected. He states: "This was the controversy I felt in my heart, about nothing but myself, against myself," (Augustinus, *Confessiones* VIII, 11 [Watts, 461]). Thus, he discovered that life is not about seeking success or fame but about cultivating love for the truth. In Augustine's view, the process of education is not enough to mobilize community members to know the right but primarily to cultivate humility that enables them to love the right and act rightly. Thus, educating community members who live in the tension between the forces of the city of this world and the city of God is a process of cultivating humility, sensitivity of conscience and social responsibility.

3. Conscience Education and Social Responsibility

Augustine draws attention to the important role of conscience and the human soul that leads to goodness and a happy life. He asserts that "even today we rightly regard as happy all those whom we see leading a good and holy life in the hope of future immortality, untroubled in conscience and with easy access to God's forgiveness for the sins which are due to the frailty of human nature" (Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XI, 12 [Walsh *et al.*, 206]). Conscience is the inner voice that provides guidance on what is right and wrong. Augustine stresses the need to educate the conscience to understand and respond to moral calls and avoid the domination of self-love. The education of conscience aims to shape moral character that will guide individuals and society in achieving spiritual salvation in perfect relation with God. The education of conscience also plays a crucial role in enabling individuals to use freedom wisely, choose good, and fulfill their responsibility driven by altruistic love. It should be realized that,

> There will remain in each and all of us an inalienable freedom of the will, emancipating us from every evil and filling us with every good, rejoicing in the inexhaustible beatitude of everlasting happiness, unclouded by the memory of any sin or of sanction suffered, yet with no forgetfulness of our redemption nor any loss of gratitude for our Redeemer (Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XXII, 30 [Walsh *et al.*, 508]).

Although Augustine wrote extensively on the meaning of conscience in his various writings, the focus of the writings is to explore the importance of conscience education, which is to strengthen altruistic love in each person as a moral and spiritual force to develop community life. Conscience education is crucial to direct freedom towards altruistic love that originates from the unity of the soul and God (Mondin 1988, 155). Education of conscience guides humans in achieving a deeper relationship with God, nurturing sensitivity to others, and strengthening cooperation to achieve true happiness in unity with God. Education should teach us to love God above all things and our brothers and sisters as ourselves. Teachers play a spiritual guide role in helping students understand and apply the teachings of faith, form good character, and develop a conscience that is sensitive to truth and goodness. In other words, Augustine emphasizes the importance of conscience education in building moral awareness, creating an integral life vision, and strengthening responsibility to guide the history of the development of the city of God. The term city of God does not primarily refer to a place or a specific city like Carthage, Rome, or any other city, but rather a situation of community life throughout the world driven by altruistic love according to the will of God (Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XIX, 17 [Walsh *et al.*, 228]).

Altruistic love as the ethical principle of the city of God is already embedded in the conscience of every person as a member of community since created by God. This ethical principle also drives human life towards the goal of eternal happiness and salvation. Thus, Augustine believes that as God's creation, every individual has the seed of orientation to God in their hearts to experience perfect happiness (Bourke 1964, 151). Directing life towards achieving eternal happiness in God becomes the goal of conscience education.

Augustine's ideas about the ethics of conscience become the basis for building an integral vision of life history. For Augustine, the main actor of the history of life is God who loves human beings and dwells in their hearts. Humans participate in God's work of building a peaceful and happy life history together. Augustine's ethics is very different from classical Greek ethics that emphasizes human beings as the main actor of the dynamics of life history. For Augustine, when humans listen and realize the whisper of conscience driven by the love of God, they participate in God's work to realize the community of God, namely peaceful and just life. Every individual has the ability to participate in realizing God's love because of the gift of the Holy Spirit (Sandlin 2022, 5). God's love embedded in human hearts makes humans partners of God in realizing happiness and peace. Peace and happiness, both inner and outer, which become the characteristics of the community of God, will become real when humans live morally. Thus, it can be concluded that education of conscience is an essential part of enabling every individual to fulfill their responsibility to guide the history of life towards the realization of happiness and salvation.

Christian believers have the responsibility to educate the conscience of members of society by listening to the Word of God, praying, making positive plans for others, and habitually acting in accordance with God's law. Community education plays a crucial role in developing sensitivity and clarity of conscience so that each person as a member of community is able to distinguish between the ethical principles of the city of God and the city of the world. Clarity of conscience guides each person to choose the city of God as the ultimate goal of their life. Education of conscience is essential in developing the responsibility of each person in realizing a brotherly and peaceful community life.

It is the responsibility of all human beings, regardless of their religion or belief, to guide the history of life based on the principle of altruistic love that fosters peace and prosperity. The primary task of every believer is to build the city of God through dialogue and cooperation so that the city of the world, which is characterized by hostility towards others, self-love, egoism, and exclusive living, is eroded. The atmosphere of life that reflects the realization of the city of God is fought for by those who love God and live according to the law of love.

Although there is conflict between good and evil in this world, Augustine believes that in the future, the city of God will triumph. This hope is based on the nature of God's love itself, which cannot be defeated by evil. This view is a response to

those who are cynical about the role of religion and its followers in society. Augustine cultivates hope that the end of the pilgrimage to the city of God is eternal happiness, peace, and prosperity that surpasses all effort and sacrifice during life in this world. At that time, God, the King full of mercy, will wipe away every tear from his people. From that moment on, there will be no more hardship, crying, or suffering because "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. And death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away" (Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XX, 17 [Walsh *et al*., 292]). The conscience of each person that is moved and led by the love of God will produce the fruits of a peaceful and brotherly community life. The principle of love is the basis for personal and communal life transformation in society.

The City of God contains a pedagogical message. Augustine himself was an educator who took on his duties and responsibilities as an educator throughout his life. He began this responsibility as a rhetoric teacher and ended it as a church leader. Augustine's main concern was to build a consistent personal character in living and fighting for moral principles to realize a just and peaceful community. Through his thoughts, Augustine invites readers to be sensitive to their conscience. Anyone who listens to the divine voice within themselves will have a vision and attitude towards realizing a just and peaceful community or society. Thus, it is clear to Augustine that philosophy and theology must be contextual and provide a solid foundation and impetus for the transformation of community life.

Augustine shows that the essence of community education is the effort to cultivate a strong personal character as a member of community. A strong personal character is marked by awareness and responsibility to build a peaceful, just, and brotherly communal life, while still maintaining hope amidst life's challenges. Augustine's ethics are based on a Christian anthropological-religious vision. Augustine uses the term "person" to indicate the integrity of human beings as the foundation of their dignity. Every person has dignity because they come from God, the same Creator, and will return to Him as the purpose of life. Placing humans as God's creation is the basis for human responsibility to develop brotherhood in building communal life. Brotherhood is not just a social fact to avoid harming others. Brotherhood is the essence of human beings as God's creation. Disrupting brotherhood means hurting God the Creator and hurting human dignity.

Augustine's thoughts on communal ethics and the education of conscience provide a framework for reflecting on the phenomenon of communal and state life. When moral principles rooted in the conscience of human beings are neglected and life is dominated by self-love (egoism), destruction will soon befall communal life. *The City of God* is a prophetic voice for human life that has deified self-interests. Greed and covetousness, which are the clearest faces of egoism, will never lead to happiness. Egoism has given birth to a culture of violence characterized by cruelty, slander, and various forms of cheating for the sake of momentary self-gratification.

Worldly things (bodies, material possessions, and social status) are not the ultimate goal because they themselves will not provide perfect happiness. For Augustine, worldly things only have meaning when they are placed as a means to achieve the goal of life, which is happiness in the love of God and others. Therefore, the order of communal and state life will not bring about a peaceful, just, and prosperous life if it ignores the voice of God's love planted in the conscience of human beings.

Live according to the love of God planted in your conscience because living in love is the implementation of the law embedded in the heart of every individual. This is the essential message that Augustine wants to convey through *The City of God*. Augustine's message remains relevant to the struggle to realize a more brotherly and peaceful society in our time. When egoism has taken over all aspects of life, the prophetic voice becomes very important in re-orienting personal and communal life towards the realization of ethical principles with an ontological dimension to answer the longing for a happy life (Karpov 2019, 233). Based on Madi's analysis, the city of God as envisioned by St. Augustine is an answer to human hope that unites truth and happiness (Madi 2022, 10). The worldly longings of humans cannot provide satisfaction for a happy life because happiness only occurs when one attains the eternal good of abiding in God himself. In other words, Augustine shows the connection between righteousness, eternal good and happiness in God.

In the realm of state and communal life, these moral principles need to be translated into positive norms to assist and guarantee the implementation of these moral principles. Ethical principles also serve as criteria for evaluating positive norms and communal traditions. Positive law is very useful because of its rational-objective nature and its focus on the awareness of equal dignity. Thus, positive law will help provide a clear scope for each individual to realize subjective-affective, dynamic, and complex brotherly love in communal life. Without positive legal norms, there will be clashes in the implementation and realization of human values as believed by each individual.

Conclusion

Augustine understands humans as moral creatures who have ontological roots in their relationship with God. In *The City of God*, he describes two cities known as the city of the world and the City of God. Humans are involved in building these cities. When human life is driven by altruistic love, the dynamics of life reflect the atmosphere of the City of God, which is peaceful, brotherly, and happy. When the hearts of humans are dominated by self-love or egoism, the dynamics of communal life are marked by chaos, greed, violence, and hatred. Education of conscience is crucial so that every individual realizes and fulfills their responsibility to build

the City of God. Education of conscience is essential to cultivate sensitivity, care, and social responsibility towards achieving peace and happiness that reaches its perfection in heaven. It is evident that Augustine emphasizes the importance of ethical principles with ontological dimensions in community education for the realization of the City of God.

Augustine's idea of sincere love as the internal driver of each human person restores the orientation of community education which ideologically adheres to a pedagogy of activism based on mere human abilities and calculations. Augustine developed a reflective and transformative integral pedagogical vision to realize the community of brotherly love as the real image of the city of God. Relationships in community life are educational spaces to realize a peaceful, united and happy life together that is imbued with brotherly love. With reference to *De magistro*, educators in Augustine's view need to involve students in the learning process. This is emphasized: "What foolish curiosity could ever prompt a man to send his child to school in order to have him learn what the teacher thinks?" (Augustinus, *De magistro* XIV, 45 [FC 59, 59]). The educational process takes place in a dialogical community that learns from each other.

> For so great is the power of a sympathetic disposition of mind, that, as they are affected while we are speaking, and we are affected while they are learning, we have our dwelling in each other; and thus, at one and the same time, they as it were in us speak what they hear, and we in them learn after a certain fashion what we teach. […] And this is so much the more our experience in proportion to the intimacy of our friendship with them because, just as we are in them in virtue of the bond of love, in the same degree do things become new to us which previously were old (Augustinus, *Enchiridion de fide, spe, et caritate* XII, 17 [Shaw, 292])

Christian education, therefore, needs to pay attention to various experiences and life contexts so that students have broad insights and are able to contribute to the transformation of life together.

Some of Augustine's key thoughts on community education to build the City of God include education of conscience, altruistic love as an ethical principle, freedom driven by altruistic love, and social responsibility to create a humane communal life. Augustine emphasizes the crucial role of education of conscience in building the City of God. Education plays a role in developing knowledge of truth, awareness of ethical principles in communal life, and humane ways to build a just, brotherly, and peaceful communal life. Education of conscience plays a crucial role in the process of character formation, moral awareness, and behavior to achieve the ultimate goal of humans in the eternal City of God. Augustine's idea of education of conscience to cultivate ethical awareness and social responsibility becomes the foundation for the development of a humanistic-religious vision of education amidst the education system that

tends to prioritize the formation of pragmatic and applicable knowledge in response to the demands of productivity of the industrial society (Topping 2010, 378).

Augustine provides a relevant contribution to the development of communal life based on Christian wisdom that unites human rational abilities with divine power embedded in the conscience. Ethical reflection on communal life is related to the increase in knowledge of truth that drives the realization of concrete steps in achieving a brotherly, peaceful, and happy communal life. *The City of God* explains ethical principles and the ontological dimension of human life and action. There is unity between human phenomena and divine power that becomes the primary element in forming the ethical behavior of each individual in communal life. Furthermore, Augustine's ethics not only explain the basics of individual choices to achieve happiness but also the responsibility of each individual to build a just, peaceful, and happy communal life. Augustine shows the foundation of a happy life and the way to achieve it. In the midst of communal life marked by increasingly blurred communal norms, Augustine's thoughts provide enlightenment for anyone who loves truth, peace, and brotherhood.

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