

Re-thinking the Teachings and Epistemology of St. Augustine

Rene R. Calandria^{1*}

¹ University of Perpetual Help System DALTA Las Piñas, Philippines

* Corresponding Author: rene819va@gmail.com

Received: 26 October 2024 | Accepted: 17 December 2024 | Published: 31 December 2024

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55057/ajress.2024.6.8.14>

Abstract: *St. Augustine, a celebrated Doctor of the Church is not just a theologian but a philosopher whose thoughts and teachings did not only make their way to the Magisterium of the Church but influenced generations of philosophers, theologians, and thinkers after him. His teachings on the preeminence of faith over reason were key in unlocking both the problems of theological knowledge and ethics. After his conversion, St. Augustine's life dramatically changed as he devoted his time not only in philosophical discourse but on theological studies and service to the Church where after his ordination to the priesthood, he spent most of his pastoral life not only in preaching and teaching but in debating against the heresies of his time. St. Augustine's deep commitment as a philosopher, theologian and defender of faith is worthy of intellectual reckoning because his life and teachings run through such "extreme passion and doubt" that even the sinner can draw hope from his conversion, the devout can follow in the footsteps of his holiness, the philosopher and theologian can learn from his wisdom and the student in arts and humanities will perpetually feel interest in the struggling of a soul to disenthral itself from the fierce promptings of passion and the seduction of intellectual pride. His epistemology and teachings promote the idea of philosophy as the servant of theolog which consequently looks at the world as seen in and through God, rather than God seen in and through the world.*

Keywords: epistemology, interiority, Divine Illumination, pedagogy, spirituality

1. Introduction

Background of the Study

The life of St. Augustine is a testament of man's sinful tendencies and human weakness, yet it also reveals the infinite goodness of God. The stories may happen thousands of years ago and may sound medieval, but they resonate the current arguments about man's existential situatedness, i.e., his moral, spiritual, social, and political struggle towards a meaningful existence. The rhetorical presentation of his life as told by St. Augustine himself are nothing but true confessions of man's search for freedom, interiority, justice, and the pursuit for truth. These existential realities as told by St. Augustine seem too far in space and time yet too close to the heart of contemporary man.

St. Augustine, a celebrated Doctor of the Church is not just a theologian but a philosopher whose thoughts and teachings did not only make their way to the Magisterium of the Church but influenced generations of philosophers, theologians, and thinkers after him. His teachings on the preeminence of faith over reason and his discovery on the role of the "will" were key in unlocking both the "problem of theological knowledge and the problem of ethics" (Cushman,

1950). After his conversion, St. Augustine's life dramatically changed as he devoted his time not only in philosophical discourse but on theological studies and service to the Church where after his ordination to the priesthood, he spent most of his pastoral life not only in preaching and teaching but in debating against the heresies of his time, the Manichaeism, Donatism and Pelagianism to name a few. St. Augustine's deep commitment as a philosopher, theologian and defender of faith is worthy of intellectual reckoning because his life and teachings run through such "extreme passion and doubt" (Sheehan, 1890) that even the sinner can draw hope from his conversion, the devout can follow in the footsteps of his holiness, the philosopher and theologian can learn from his wisdom and the student in arts and humanities will "perpetually feel interest in the struggling of a soul to disenthral itself from the fierce promptings of passion and the seduction of intellectual pride" (Sheehan, 1890). Although his epistemology does not draw any significant distinction between his philosophy and theology, but his discourses highly suggest "using the former to serve the latter" (Gundersdorf Von Jess, 1974) which consequently looks at the "world as seen in and through God, rather than God seen in and through the world" (Suchocki, 1982).

When St. Augustine told us about his personal ambition to become a governor of one of the provinces of the Roman Empire, it reminds us not only of man's political nature but more so of man's own insatiable desire for power and glory, a familiar phenomenological narrative of the present generation. St. Augustine's familiar story is remarkable because of his dramatic conversion from being a sinner to becoming one of the great doctors of the church, from being a skeptic and denier of God's wisdom to becoming a teacher and defender of faith. Like any other mother, St. Monica has been very supportive of St. Augustine's ambition in fact St. Monica herself at a later year was regretful because she too has sinned by ambition and perhaps might have been instrumental in "sacrificing the purity of her child to those longings after future fame which she had shared with him" (Sheehan, 1890). St. Augustine's spiritual journey has never been an easy ride, in the early years he never escaped the danger of pride and the lust of sensuality, both of which were "too deeply rooted" (Taylor, 1963) that he struggled overcoming them, oftentimes making the most "valiant efforts to overcome the temptation that assailed him, and then sink back into despair again" (Sheehan, 1890).

It must be noted that the conversion of St. Augustine was twofold, moral transformation and intellectual enlightenment which according to Sheehan (1890), in St. Augustine "there was not only intellectual blindness to be relieved but moral depravity to be corrected." Both moral decay and intellectual pride have consumed his early life. According to St. Augustine himself, when he came to Carthage "where a cauldron of illicit loves leapt and boiled about me. I was not yet in love, but I was in love with love, and from the very depth of my need hated myself for not more keenly feeling the need" (Augustine, 1993). What is most telling about St. Augustine's conversion is the unconditional love of his mother Monica who unceasingly prayed for the conversion of his son, a prayer that day after day, and night after night ascended into the Heaven to knock into thy God's throne (Sheehan, 1890). The love of St. Monica for his son and her persistent prayer before God is supernatural that defies the logic of facts and is a powerful reminder of God's infinite mercy (Sheehan, 1890). St. Monica's maternal love for her son which is so patient and persistent, is an important reminder for us about the power of prayer which is "ready to turn vice into virtue, and to accept the faintest aversion from sin as the promise of high perfection, it is faithful, so perfect, so unselfish, so true, that next after God's love for us, it is the best and holiest thing we mortals possess" (Sheehan, 1890). St. Augustine himself acknowledged the power of his mother's prayers saying that "for nine years, while I was rolling in the filth of sin, often attempting to rise, and still sinking deeper, did she in vigorous hope persist in incessant prayer" (St. Augustine, 1858).

There has been limited literature on the question of existential causality and the intuitive nature of St. Augustine's epistemology specifically the role of Divine Illumination in the knowledge of the truth. This is the research gap which this study would like to fill in.

This hermeneutical analysis of St. Augustine's teachings and epistemology aimed to explore the meaning and understanding of existential causality and the intuitive nature of his epistemology specifically the role of Divine Illumination in the knowledge of the truth.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research design

This paper is a qualitative research using hermeneutical and textual analysis of St. Augustine's teachings and epistemology in relation to the apparent conflict between faith and reason. This approach will focus on understanding the meaning and role of "Divine Illumination" and involves systematic analysis of textual content in academic literatures to identify themes and meanings in our understanding of faith and reason.

2.2. Data collection

The study involves a systematic review of existing academic literature especially his famous books on the "Confessions" and "The City of God." The academic literature used are translations from scholars of St. Augustine and known Augustinian academic experts. Other existing literatures and studies are considered to gather rich data that can provide deep philosophical insights and understanding in the interpretation of St. Augustine's rhetoric.

2.3. Data analysis procedure

This qualitative study used thematic analysis. The textual and interpretative readings of academic literatures involve identification of patterns and themes consistent with St. Augustine's philosophy and theology as narrated in the Confessions and the City of God. This paper will also be directly quoting St. Augustine's words so the readers will have the opportunity to read it from the "teacher's mind" and judge for themselves how far he relates to the feelings and sentiments of the contemporary world and the modern faithful of the Church of Rome rather than mere readings of dogmatic citations.

3. Results and Discussion

St. Augustine made his intellectual debut by making an assertion that the eternal Logos rests in the history of Jesus Christ, the "inward Illuminator" and the "principium" or beginning of knowledge. This assertion serves as St. Augustine's opening salvo in introducing a new Christian epistemology that emphasizes the primacy of faith over reason. He once declared that "faith precedes reason because nisi credideritis, non intelligetis, unless you believe, you will not understand" (Cushman, 1950). In declaring the primacy of faith, he argues that "faith must precede ratio, not because reason is intrinsically incompetent but because reason in a man whose will has not submitted to the Grace of the Mediator, is an untrustworthy reason" (Cushman, 1950). In his confession, St. Augustine provides a general declaration of his own existential experience saying that "by believing I might have been cured, for then the eye of my mind would have been clearer and so might in some ways have been directed towards Your truth which abides forever and knows no defect. But as usually happens, the man who has tried a bad doctor is afraid to trust even a good one, so it was with the health of my soul, which could not be healed save by believing" (Augustine, 1993).

St. Augustine's philosophical dogma which asserts that faith precedes knowledge and understanding seem to suggest not only that faith is asserting a proposition to be true before having any justification to believe that such proposition is true (Boespflug, 2016) but also that the intelligibility of sensible reality may appear idolatrous given that temporal realities are elevated "to the status of eternal goods" (Miller, 2011). This apparent epistemic error failed to understand St. Augustine's view of man as created in the image of God and "endowed with reason, a rational animal whose very nature it is to reason, and who has reason before he understands" (Gundersdorf Von Jess, 1974). St. Augustine's epistemology which emphasizes the precedence of faith over reason (*fides quaerens intellectum*) does not undermine the significance of reason nor does it suggest any competing roles of faith and reason in the process of knowing and understanding. St. Augustine in his exhortation reminded his readers to exercise with care about "what they believe" (Boespflug, 2016) and "consider whom they have to believe" (Gundersdorf Von Jess, 1974) because "in believing what it does not see, picture it to itself as something which it is not, and so hope for and love that which is false" (Boespflug, 2016). St Augustine writes that "reason is not entirely absent in authority" because despite the priority of faith over reason, reason itself comes first in as much as man calls upon reason "to persuade us of the very reasonableness that faith should precede reason" (Gundersdorf Von Jess, 1974). Although he warns his readers about the danger of "believing everything that one hears" (Boespflug, 2016).

In his discourses, St. Augustine showed the interconnectedness and complementarity of "faith and reason" by presenting "two epistemologies regarding sensible reality," one relates to sensible objects intelligible to us as they physically appear and the other goes beyond their physical appearance to "probe their structure, their essence, and the source of their existence (Miller, 2011). St. Augustine (1993) said in the Confessions (Book X:VI):

"And what is this God? I asked the earth and it answered: I am not He; and all things that are in the earth made the same confession. I asked the sea and the deeps and the creeping things, and they answered: We are not your God; seek higher. I asked the winds that blow, and the whole air with all that is in it answered: Anaximenes was wrong, I am not God. I asked the heavens, the sun, the moon, the stars, and they answered: Neither are we God whom you seek. And I said to all the things that throng about the gateways of senses: Tell me of my God, since you are not He. Tell me something of Him."

The intent of asking these questions is not meant to discard or diminish the intelligibility of sensible realities but to understand the "fundamental facts about them disclosing the significant "difference between creation and the creator" which denotes to the basic difference "according to which the former points to how the latter creates and sustains that which is" (Miller, 2011) created. This idea suggests how the Providence of God protects His handiwork and sustain the order of nature.

St. Augustine believed that man could begin to comprehend the existence of God and create a theological justification by "starting in the sensible world in which we live, and move towards the soul, the pinnacle of God's creation" (Gundersdorf Von Jess, 1974). St. Augustine (2017) adheres to the Platonic theistic belief about God as the cause of existence saying in the City of God (Book VIII:IV) that he preferred Plato over all other philosophers of the Gentiles because he:

“entertains such an idea of God as to admit that in Him are to be found the cause of existence, the ultimate reason for the understanding and the end in reference to which the whole life is to be regulated. Of which three things, the first is understood to pertain to the natural, the second to the rational, and the third to the moral part of philosophy.”

Again, in the Confessions, St Augustine (1993) reiterated this thought saying:

“And I saw You, Lord, in every part containing and penetrating it, Yourself altogether Infinite... here is God and here is what God has created; and God is good, mightily and incomparably better than all these; but of His goodness He created them good, and see how He contains and fills them.”

For Plato according to St. Augustine, “God alone could be the author of nature, the bestower of intelligence, and the kindler of love by which life becomes good and blessed” (Cushman, 1950). This tripartite distinction of God’s functionality is not just a thoughtful parallelism to the function of the persons of the Holy Trinity (Cushman, 1950) but recognition of the “rational proofs of the existence of God” which is dialectical in nature and is “instrumental in the process as viewed from its final end,” (Gundersdorf Von Jess, 1974) rendering the cause-and-effect theory intelligible. St. Augustine writes in the Confessions (Book IX:X), “we did not make ourselves, but He made us who abides forever” (Augustine1993). In expressing not only an iconic epistemology but introducing how man is cleansed and released from the bondage of ignorance through divine illumination in Book IX:II of the City of God, St. Augustine (2017) writes:

“the soul which they believe to be the soul of the world, derives its blessedness from any other source than we do, viz. from that Light which is distinct from it and created it, and by whose intelligible illumination it enjoys light in things intelligible.”

Allers (1952) in quoting the City of God wrote that “God is the sun which illuminates the intelligible world in a manner comparable to that by which the sun illuminates the sensible world. The soul is, in some way, like the moon which receives its light from the sun.” This theory of illumination mirrors the Gospel of John 1:6-9 which was quoted by St. Augustine (2017) in the City of God saying:

“There was a man sent from God whose name was John; the same came for a witness to bear witness of the Light, that through Him all might believe. He was not that Light, but that he might bear witness of the Light. That was the true Light which lighten every man that cometh into the world, - a distinction which sufficiently proves that the rational or intellectual soul such as John had cannot be its own light, but needs to receive illumination from another, the true Light.”

This Light which illumines the human mind is referred to by St. Augustine as the Word, he said in the Confessions, “in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God, and that it is the Word which lighteth every man coming into the world, by participation in which men are made wise” (Cushman, 1950). Although there has not been any systematic approach to the doctrine of illumination anywhere in St. Augustine’s works, but he made several references to God as “the intelligible light and our illumination” or referred to Him as “that superior light by

which the human mind is illuminated” and ultimately acknowledging the process of illumination as the “essence of cognition” (Allers, 1952).

St. Augustine’s argument about the primacy of faith in the process of knowing and understanding is anchored on his conviction that reason and knowledge are both dependent upon the “character of the will” (Cushman, 1950) and since actual will is corrupted because it does not always fully “will to be with God” but rather to be with thyself (Cushman, 1950) “will” falls into “error and boorish pride” (Boespflug, 2016). And it is by virtue of faith that the cleansing of the “will” occurs (Cushman, 1950). Man was blinded and cast himself into the sin of pride whose only way out is through humility. Cushman (1950) explains the process of man’s deliverance by echoing St. Augustine’s thought about God who was humbled in time, as the “principlum of knowledge” and “having assured a human soul and flesh, cleanses the soul and flesh of believers.” Although man falls into the trap of ignorance, but the Divine Illuminator and Mediator comes to us in time to release us from the bondage of ignorance, self-love, and pride (Cushman, 1950). Man is rescued through the illuminating activity of God (Cushman, 1950) and even in his fallenness, “his reason is exalted by the Divine informing, so that God is the light by which are known whatsoever things are known, temporal and eternal” (Augustine, 2017) and such informing action by the Truth is “apprehended a priori” (Cushman, 1950) as what St. Augustine (1993) would say in the Confession, “they are in my heart even before I learned them.”

St. Augustine’s search for knowledge and truth started with his encounter of Cicero’s famous book *Hortensius*, the point of departure of his intellectual conversion. There have been some arguments related to the circumstances of St. Augustine’s encounter of Cicero’s famous book “*Hortensius*” which according to the great scholar, Gaston Boissier, was by accident but the passage in the Confession says otherwise (Taylor, 1963). Taylor (1963) argues that at the young age of 18, Augustine first read “*Hortensius*” while studying rhetoric in the University of Carthage because it was a required reading in the course who according to Augustine was taught under the tutelage of rhetorician and not under a philosopher (Taylor, 1963). St. Augustine himself said in the Confessions that Cicero’s “*Hortensius*” was part of the “normal order of study” further praising the book to “contain an exhortation of philosophy (Augustine 1993). According to Augustine (1993), Cicero’s book “quite definitely changed the direction of my mind, altered my prayers to You, O Lord, and gave me a new purpose and ambition.” Although there are some arguments that Cicero’s book did not show and lead St. Augustine to true Wisdom but what St. Augustine said on the Confessions does not seem to suggest that, he said “my heart was strangely inflamed with a desire for immortal wisdom, and I began to rise, in order to return towards Thee ... for I did not apply that book to the sharpening of my tongue, and it was not its style but rather its matter that moved me” (Augustine 1993). According to Taylor (1963), St. Augustine is telling his readers that he was drawn to God because Cicero’s book propelled him to the love of wisdom. The profound effects of Cicero’s book were narrated and confirmed by St. Augustine himself in Book VI and Book VII of the Confessions and as Taylor (1963) would argue that the “immediate effect of reading *Hortensius* was not a desire to study philosophy rather an interest in the study of Sacred Scriptures.”

St. Augustine is popularly known as the theologian of interiority because of the introspective nature of his famous masterpiece, *Confessions* (Sanlon, 2014). The theory of interiority refers to the idea of the inner self or self-reflection which plays front and center in St. Augustine’s philosophical and theological thought. His existential desire for “inner peace” and his journey towards an interiorized self has not been easy because it requires that he disavow the apparent truths that he discovered from Cicero’s *Hortensius* (DeVitis, 1971). According to St.

Augustine, the purpose of interiority is not only to find the self but to discover God within, that place where “Christ teaches and reveals the truth” (Sanlon, 2014). St. Augustine’s idea of interiority paves the way to a new theological understanding about the Divine’s presence within man where we are not only engaged in an interior conversation with God (Sanlon, 2014) but such interiorization serves as a “gateway to God’s luminous power in individual souls” (DeVitis, 1971). St. Augustine reminds us that an interiorized self is only possible through “God’s revelation” but such revelation can only happen “at the point of inner reflection” (Sanlon, 2014). The pilgrimage towards God starts within the self where our inner space, thoughts, and emotions are “examined and journeyed through to encounter God” and in that dialogue the Inner Teacher “teaches and reveals the truth” (Sanlon, 2014). St. Augustine (1993) acknowledged this interior dialogue with the Inner Teacher in his “Confessions” saying, “You have heard from me before I utter it; and whatever good You hear from me, You have first spoken to me.”

Interiority is the gateway towards the real and ultimate truth which dwells within and was referred to by St. Augustine as God. The ultimate goal of self-reflection is to seek and discover the truth. In St. Augustine’s theory, the Socratic method of knowing thyself goes far beyond mere self-knowledge rather introspection leads us towards the knowledge of Him who is the Ultimate Truth. St. Augustine’s journey to interiority was the beginning of his moral conversion where in the summer of 386 he heard a voice in the garden of Milan repeating frequently “Tolle lege, Tolle lege” (Take up and read; take up and read) (Suchocki, 1982). Like a good servant, he went back to the place where his friend Alypius was seated and where he set down the epistles of St. Paul (St. Augustine, 1858). And the letter of St. Paul to the Romans 13: 13-14 laid down the foundation of St Augustine’s spiritual and moral conversion serve as the answer to that restless journey which he acknowledged in Book 1 of his Confession saying, “my heart is restless until it rests in Thee” (Augustine, 1993).

St. Augustine’s spiritual journey has evolved into a communal pilgrimage in the company of his friends. His understanding of friendship is deeply rooted in his own existential experience especially his personal bond with friends during his youth and early adulthood who followed him to Cassiciacum to establish the first religious community. In Book IV of the Confessions, St Augustine introduced the idea of friendship as an expression of human love which is deeply rooted in Divine love (Suchocki, 1982) since He dwells within. St Augustine’s love of friendship is a personal story as he experienced it through a friend (Suchocki, 1982) which was not named throughout the Confessions but someone who is about his age, who grew up with him as a child, who went with him “to school together” and played with him as well (Augustine, 1993). That expression of love is a transference of care by valuing our own welfare in the welfare of the other (Suchocki, 1982). Augustine (1993) considered his childhood friend as the “brother of my heart” and whom “we depended too much upon each other.”

The death of his friend however greatly affected and overwhelmed him saying in his Confessions “I have no hope of bringing him back to life, nor for all my tears did I ask for this, simply I grieved and wept. For I was in misery and had lost my joy. Or is weeping really a bitter thing, pleasing to us only from a distaste for the things we once enjoyed and only while the distaste remains keen?” (Augustine, 1993). The death of his friend made Augustine realize the transiency of human nature and all existence including his own (Suchacki, 1982). St. Augustine’s love for his friend is genuine and through that love, he experienced death (Suchocki, 1982). Such experience of emotional death is made explicit when he cried on the Confessions saying on Book IV “how does it come then that from the bitterness of life we can pluck fruit so sweet as is in mourning and weeping and sighing and the utterance of our woe?”

He echoed the same experience in the City of God XIX where he said, “how shall we contrive to feel no bitterness in the death of those whose life has been so sweet to us?” (Augustine, 2017). So painful is the experience that St. Augustine describe the unbearable sadness of being “only half alive” (Augustine, 1993).

With St. Augustine’s new understanding of personal identity being self-reflective, he totally transformed the idea of friendship and with that changed the relational dynamics between individual and community (Valk, 2009). It is a kind of friendship where two distinct human beings and two souls are absorbed into one, a reduction of two identities into one (Miller, 2011). St. Augustine (1993) writes in the Confessions, “For I thought of my soul and his soul as one soul in two bodies.” This idea of friendship mirrors the definition of friendship in Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics where the ultimate goal is building a community of friends in pursuit of a common good (Valk, 2009) and this highest form of friendship gives man the opportunity to achieve what Aristotle referred to as eudaimonia. While St. Augustine retain the Aristotelian description of friendship however, he went further to define friendship “through the prism of the Divine” (Valk, 2009) and not a mere human connection but a relationship characterized by spiritual dimension that will bring man closer to God. The relational aspect of this type of friendship will serve as a foundation of the monastic life where group of friends will come together “united by the ideal of an almost dedication to community life and the search for wisdom” (McEvoy, 1986). In Book VI:14 of the Confessions, Augustine (1993) describes this community as a:

“group of friends who had much serious discussion together, concerning the cares and troubles of human life which we found so hard to endure. We had almost decided to seek a life of peace, away from the throng of men. This peace we hope to attain by putting together whatever we could manage to get, and making one common household for all of us, so that in the clear trust of friendship, things should not belong to this or that individual, but one thing should be made of all our possessions, and belong wholly to each one of us, and everybody own everything.”

Such community was mostly financed by Romanianus and when he went back to Africa to manage his wealth, the community collapse (McEvoy, 1986). But it was not long after the project was terminated that another community will sprout. After Augustine’s conversion, he resigned from his prestigious career and retreated at Cassiciacum and laid down the very foundation of a monastery in Thagaste (McEvoy, 1986) and the community in Hippo was born inevitably soon thereafter. And from Hippo, the community life envisioned by St. Augustine where members share their lives and resources in a peaceful co-existence and are one in their spiritual goals, will serve as a model of monastic life among religious communities in the years to come.

St. Augustine’s theory of pedagogy is best understood in his book “The Teacher” which details the “dialogue between a father (Augustine) and his son Adeodatus (Anderson, 2015). There is a limited account about Adeodatus because he died at an early age before reaching the age of eighteen. Most research never mentioned the exact age of his death and not much has been said about him except that according to Anderson (2015), he was talented, beloved, and thoughtful. In this dialogue, Adeodatus played a great role in St. Augustine’s attempt to harmonize both his Christian faith and philosophical convictions (Anderson, 2015). One of the major accomplishments of St. Augustine was not only finding a common ground between faith and reason but by integrating his Christian beliefs and philosophical reflections he was able to articulate and defend “articles of faith like God’s existence” (Anderson, 2015). In this dialogue,

St. Augustine's pedagogy was made explicit by his attempt to integrate his understanding of the fundamental nature of man, the search for truth and the crucial role of divine illumination along the process.

The pedagogical theories of St. Augustine stems from his philosophical and theological belief about the central role of God and the transformational power of divine truth and illumination in the teaching and learning process. To this end, the goal of education in St. Augustine is not only the knowledge of God but a deeper love of God. His teaching methodology mirrors both the Platonic and Socratic approaches where "knowledge of the world is seen in and through God, rather than God seen in and through the world" (Suchocki, 1982). In his work on "The Teacher," St. Augustine used Socratic method in his attempt to explain the intelligibility and noncontradictory nature of the Christian doctrines (Anderson, 2015). His epistemological approach is mostly influenced by the Platonic doctrine on the innate character of knowledge within the soul. St. Augustine went further with his theory of Divine illumination where truth sits within the soul waiting to be discovered through the act of enlightenment by the "superior and intelligible light," (Allers, 1952) which he referred to as God.

The concepts of teaching and learning were discussed in the first part of the book on "The Teacher" with St. Augustine asking, "When we speak, what does it seem to you we want to accomplish?" and with Adeodatus responding cleverly saying "So far as it now strikes me, either to teach or to learn" (Augustine, 1995). In their succeeding dialogue, they came to an agreement that the goal of communication is teaching because by speaking, the speaker "attempts to inform a person about what is in somebody's mind" (Anderson, 2015) and they both conclude that teaching is necessarily carried out by the language that we often used to communicate and the examples that show "what is to be taught" (Anderson, 2015). While communication serves as a tool to teaching and learning, St. Augustine reminds us that "there is a certain kind of teaching through reminding" (Augustine, 1995) or remembering and this is of course understandable because of his belief in the innate nature of knowledge. According to St. Augustine (1995), we learn through the process of remembering and the person who reminds us of something is teaching. St. Augustine concludes that communication or speaking has the sole purpose of teaching or reminding either others or ourselves. With St. Augustine's intuitive approach to learning where ideas are "a priori" in the mind and soul of the human person, it is safe to say that rationalism found its way in the Doctor of the Church.

4. Conclusion

The contributions of St. Augustine in the study of philosophy and theology are remarkably significant not only because his theological teachings were adopted by the Church but because of his enlightened discussion on the preeminence of faith over reason and his discovery of the role of the "will" were key in unlocking both the "problem of theological knowledge and ethics" (Cushman, 1950)

The problem of human existence in St. Augustine is best summarized in his famous question, "Tu, qui vis te nosse, scis esse te?" – You who want to know yourself, do you know, you are?" which resembles Rene Descartes' famous dictum "cogito ergo sum" - I think therefore I Am. Although there is no evidence that Descartes was influenced by St. Augustine but both Latin maxims presuppose the existence of a doer because the very act of doubting and thinking assumes the actuality of a doubter and thinker. And since doubting is an intellectual act proper only to a rational animal, all other capacities of the mind including "memory, understanding, recognition, judgment, will" among others are associated in the act of doubting hence are also

actual and certain like doubt itself (Spencer, 1931). The question of existential causality is best illustrated in St. Augustine's the Confessions where he also introduced his epistemology.

St. Augustine's epistemology is succinctly intertwined with his theory of Divine Illumination referring to God as the cause of existence saying in the City of God (Book VIII:IV) that "in Him are to be found the cause of existence, the ultimate reason for the understanding" (Augustine, 2017) and further writing in the Confessions (Book IX:X), "we did not make ourselves, but He made us who abides forever." (Augustine, 1993) implying the existence and presence of the Eternal within the human soul. St. Augustine declares that "faith precedes reason because nisi credideritis, non intelligetis, unless you believe, you will not understand" (Cushman, 1950). His insistence on the primacy of faith is not because reason is intrinsically incompetent but because reason in a man whose will has not submitted to the Grace of the Mediator, is an untrustworthy reason" (Cushman, 1950). His epistemological approach is mostly influenced by the Platonic doctrine on the innate character of knowledge within the soul. St. Augustine went further with his theory of Divine illumination where truth sits within the soul waiting to be discovered through the act of enlightenment by the "superior and intelligible light," (Allers, 1952) which he referred to as God. This Light which illumines the human mind is referred to by St. Augustine as the Word, he said in the Confessions, "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God, and that it is the Word which lightenth every man coming into the world, by participation in which men are made wise" (Cushman, 1950). Although there has not been any systematic approach to the doctrine of illumination anywhere in St. Augustine's works, but he made several references to God as "the intelligible light and our illumination" or referred to Him as "that superior light by which the human mind is illuminated" and ultimately acknowledging the process of illumination as the "essence of cognition" (Allers, 1952).

The "a priori" nature of knowledge and St. Augustine's rationalistic approach to learning and understanding is rooted in the theory of interiority which is the gateway towards the real and ultimate truth which dwells within and was referred to by St. Augustine as God. The ultimate goal of self-reflection is to seek and discover the truth. In St. Augustine's theory, the Socratic method of knowing thyself goes far beyond mere self-knowledge rather introspection leads us towards the knowledge of Him who is the Ultimate Truth. The theory of interiority refers to the idea of the inner self or self-reflection which plays front and center in St. Augustine's philosophical and theological thought. According to St. Augustine, the purpose of interiority is not only to find the self but to discover God within, that place where "Christ teaches and reveals the truth" (Sanlon, 2014). St. Augustine's idea of interiority paves the way to a new theological understanding about the Divine's presence within man where we are not only engaged in an interior conversation with God (Sanlon, 2014) but such interiorization serves as a "gateway to God's luminous power in individual souls" (DeVitis, 1971).

The concept of interiorization is reflective in St. Augustine's teaching pedagogy where God's transformative power and illumination have central roles in the teaching and learning process. To this end, the goal of education in St. Augustine is not only the knowledge of God but a deeper love of God. His teaching methodology mirrors both the Platonic and Socratic approaches where "knowledge of the world is seen in and through God, rather than God seen in and through the world" (Suchocki, 1982). St. Augustine's theology of interiority takes a reflexive twist where "religion turns man's thoughts within" (Spencer, 1931) explicitly describing the introversion method saying, "Noli foras ire, in te redi, in interiore homine habitat veritas" – Do not wish to go outside; stay inside. Truth dwells in the inner man. And just like Carl Jung's psychological mantra to "Go not outside, truth dwells in the inner man," St.

Augustine's reflective method having been directed and "turned inward by religion necessarily and naturally results in "self-assurance" (Spencer, 1931).

St. Augustine's epistemology is distinctly connected to the theory of Divine illumination and the only pathway towards knowledge of the truth is through interiority because it is in the inner self where we encounter and dialogue with the Inner Teacher who teaches and reveals the truth (Sanlon, 2014). Such revealing action by God necessarily results in the "a priori" apprehension of the Truth (Cushman, 1950) as what St. Augustine (1993) would say in the Confession about the presence of the truth in the inner self, "they are in my heart even before I learned them." It is within this context of Divine revelation and the knowledge of these "eternal truths that all truth is known (Spencer, 1931).

This illuminating action of the Eternal Truth and His immutable knowledge of creation suggest the non-existence of human freedom because as some philosophers would argue, if God knows the totality of man's existence, then man's life is already actualized and complete hence no need for him to actualize his being (Teske, 2008). St. Augustine rejected this deterministic argument during his dialogue with Evodius, his friend in Milan and a native of Thagaste like him. In his arguments against determinism, St. Augustine discussed human free will in relation to Eternal justice and the concept of sin where he said on his book "On Free Choice of the Will" that the act of sinfulness and the commission of evil happen only when man abandons and refuses to learn (Augustine, 1993). This argument is based on the premise that learning is knowledge of what is good and "if all understanding is good, and no one who does not understand learns, then everyone who learns is doing good" (Augustine, 1993). Since knowledge is acquired through the learning process (Augustine, 1993) and awakened in man's soul through Divine Illumination (Allers, 1952) so no one knows except through learning hence "for anyone who learns, understands; and everyone who understands is doing good" (Augustine, 1993) During that dialogue, where Evodius asked if God is the cause of evil (Augustine, 1993), St. Augustine's response proves that although God is immutable however he cannot be the cause of evil because that goes against the goodness of God (Teske, 2008) hence a contradiction of His essence. God is good, the same good is the cause why all other created goods have been created (Teske, 2008). Man, who was created out of that good has the freedom to will either the good or the evil although it is only by the process of willing what is good that man can actually satisfy his will (Spencer, 1931) because the will is created to will what is good.

St. Augustine's teachings and epistemology are mostly basic catechism of his faith which makes him not only the theologian of interiority but defender of faith. If his justification on the impossibility of an "ad infinitum" argument especially on the issue of "cause and effect" as one of his most compelling contributions to philosophy, then his Doctrine of Illumination and interiority are his significant footprints in theological studies. One may not agree with St. Augustine epistemology but as Spencer (1931) would argue, God will remain mysterious because for man to understand God is to contain God within the nature of the human brain and lower down His nature within the level of man. And if the argument on Eternal Truth and Goodness are pointless for deductive reasoning, the empirical data are equally pointless in the final analysis for theological and religious purposes (Spencer, 1931). Knowledge of the truth sits within which science will fail to understand because empiricism never gets along with rationalism.

References

- Allers, R. (1952). St. Augustine's Doctrine on Illumination. *Franciscan Studies*, 12(1), 27–46. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41974505>
- Anderson, R. (2015). Teaching Augustine's *on the Teacher*. *Religions* 6(2), 404-408. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel6020404>
- Augustine. (1993). *Confessions*. Translated by F.J. Sheed. Hackett Publishing Company.
- Augustine. (2017). *City of God*. Translated by Marcus Dods. Digireads.com Publishing.
- Augustine. (1995). *Against the Academicians and The Teacher*. Translated by P. King. Hackett Publishing Company.
- Augustine. (1993). *On Free Choice of the Will*. Translated by Thomas Williams. Hackett Publishing Company.
- Boespflug, M. (2016). Is Augustinian faith rational? *Religious Studies*, 52(1), 63–79. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26159842>
- Cushman, R. E. (1950). Faith and Reason in the Thought of St. Augustine. *Church History*, 19(4), 271–294. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3161161>
- DeVitis, J. L. (1971). The Interiorized Self: Augustinian Epistemology and Existential Education. *Journal of Thought*, 6(2), 109–115. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42588240>
- Gundersdorf Von Jess, W. (1974). Reason as Propaedeutic to Faith in Augustine. *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 5(4), 225–233. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40024636>
- McEvoy, J. (1986). *Anima una et cor unum: Friendship and Spiritual Unity in Augustine*. *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale*, 53, 40-92. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26188894>
- Miller, R. B. (2011). Evil, Friendship, and Iconic Realism in Augustine's "Confessions." *The Harvard Theological Review*, 104(4), 387–409. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41234096>
- Sheehan, P. A. (1890). The Life and Influence of Saint Augustine. Part I. *The Irish Monthly*, 18(202), 200–209. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20498035>
- St. Augustine. (1858). *The Catholic Layman*, 7(84), 133–135. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30066521>
- Sanlon, P. T. (2014). Interiority, Temporality, and Scripture. In *Augustine's Theology of Preaching* (pp. 71–98). 1517 Media. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt9m0t0m.11>
- Spencer, W. W. (1931). St. Augustine and the Influence of Religion on Philosophy. *International Journal of Ethics*, 41(4), 461–479. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2378306>
- Suchocki, M. (1982). The Symbolic Structure of Augustine's "Confessions." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 50(3), 365–378. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1463596>
- Taylor, J. H. (1963). St. Augustine and the "Hortensius" of Cicero. *Studies in Philology*, 60(3), 487–498. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4173424>
- Teske, R. J. (2008). Divine Immutability in Augustine. In *To Know God and the Soul: Essays on the Thought of Saint Augustine* (pp. 131–152). Catholic University of America Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt2852xn.12>
- Valk, F. V. (2009). Friendship, Politics, and Augustine's Consolidation of the Self. *Religious Studies*, 45(2), 125–146. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27750004>