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Fabio Gasti, Marino Neri (ed.), *Agostino a scuola: letteratura e didattica. Atti della Giornata di studio Pavia (13 novembre 2008). Testi e studi di cultura classica 43.* Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2009. Pp. 191. ISBN 9788846723840. €18.00 (pb).

**Reviewed by Vincent Hunink, Radboud University Nijmegen
(v.hunink@let.ru.nl)**

Augustine can be meaningfully connected with 'school' in more than one way. First, there is his own experience as a pupil with ancient education, ranging from the elementary education by the *ludi magister* to the highest forms of rhetoric. In addition, he was a teacher of pagan rhetoric himself. At a later stage in his life, well after his conversion to Christianity, his teaching role radically changed: as a bishop he taught his faithful for over thirty years in countless sermons, many of which are still extant.

In addition to these various forms of personal experience in education, Augustine as a thinker and writer has contributed important and influential ideas about what real (that is, in his view, Christian) teaching is, or should be, and what place pagan knowledge and literature could have in it, such as in his *De catechizandis rudibus* and *De doctrina Christiana*.

In turn, Augustine's works were studied in school for many centuries. And even today it seems to make sense to reflect on the possibilities of using Augustinian texts in the Latin curriculum and to explore their potential for the education of pupils.

Thus, the theme of Augustine and school is actually rather vast, and it seems difficult to comprise all its subthemes in one volume.

Surprisingly, this is exactly what a new Italian volume with conference papers of a colloquium in Pavia aspires to do. The collection consists of four long papers by academic scholars, and four much shorter ones by school teachers (I leave aside the introductions and words of welcome that seem due in Italian collections of conference papers). It does not come as a surprise that the academic authors focus on Augustine and his practical and theoretical approaches of education, whereas the teachers highlight modern didactic approaches of Augustine.

Although this division is clear enough, the volume as a whole fails to convince because it does not present all material in a coherent and balanced way. Notably, the 'academic' papers are far too long and offer relatively few new insights, whereas the 'didactic' papers show little interaction with the academic ones and are so short as to be no more than suggestive of fruitful didactic methods. The volume is certainly relevant for scholars and specialized libraries, but can not be recommended to a general audience.

The first paper by Paola Francesca Moretti (36 pages) deals primarily with Augustine's own experience of education and his approach to using and justifying the liberal arts as instruments in service of truth and faith. A brief analysis of *De dialectica* follows, which shows how sensitive Augustine is to matters of etymology and sound. This in turn brings the author to the *Confessiones*, where an excessively long series of textual examples (amounting to more than 20 pages) is adduced to elaborate on this point.

In response to this, I would suggest that Augustine's linguistic talents stand out for all

to see clearly enough, both in his *Confessiones* and in other works, and need little explicit analysis here. Much of this article would better fit the detailed notes of a good commentary on the *Confessiones*, rather than as the opening piece in a collection of essays on the broad theme of Augustine and school.

The second paper is by Domenico Devoti (21 pages). It tackles a well known problem: how did Augustine, the experienced rhetorician, deal with the circumstance that most of the Bible is in plain, simple language, and how did he manage to develop something of a 'Christian rhetoric'? Devoti studies *De catechizandis rudibus* and *De doctrina Christiana* at some length, including a fair amount of paraphrase from these works, only to arrive at the conclusion that Augustine did not establish a Christian rhetoric (as the title of his piece suggested) but rather re-established rhetoric, a fairly meager and predictable result.

One of the editors, Fabio Gasti, attempts to bridge the cleft between 'Augustine the rhetorician' and 'Augustine in the classroom', by suggesting a thematic approach of texts by Augustine and other authors on 'conversion' (24 pages). Of course, *Confessiones* 8 is given much space, but other authors, such as Paulinus of Nola, are also highlighted. Augustine's literary account of his conversion has in turn influenced later authors, such as Orientius in his *Commonitorium*. It is a pleasant surprise to see this lesser known poet mentioned in this context. Gasti has at least seriously tried to contextualize the theme of conversion that seems so crucial to our understanding of Augustine.

The fourth, central piece of the volume is the longest (51 pages) and the least satisfactory one. Sergio Audano widely elaborates on two passages in *De civitate Dei* (3,16 and 5,18) where Augustine quotes a Virgilian line (Aeneid 6,823: *uincet amor patriae laudumque immensa cupido*) on Brutus. We hear all about Brutus, the Virgilian line, Livy's account, and Augustine's use of the passage and almost inevitably a final section deals with later, Renaissance echoes of the Augustinian Virgil quote. It is all very learned and richly documented, but I find it difficult to see the relevance of the contribution to the issues in the volume. The piece shows a clear lack of restraint and focus and one might even call it self-indulgent.

The ample room given to Audano has perhaps been at the expense of the four other contributions with a clearly didactic aim. That seems a pity, for it is here that the most interesting ideas can be found.

Anna Turra and Sabina Depaoli are working together on an Augustine project for classes. In their contributions (9 and 7 pages), they center the 'lexicon of I' in Augustine, (with the Latin words on body, soul, and senses) in combination with approaches to bring pupils in contact with Augustinian philosophical thought, which makes one, in the end, turn towards God. Some parts of these contributions remain rather abstract to me, but it is refreshing to see modern teachers think about ways to teach Augustine.

The final two and shortest pieces are arguably the most useful ones to those who wish to put theory into classroom practice. Martino Menghi in no more than 4 pages manages to suggest a promising confrontation in class of Augustine and the Stoic philosopher Seneca, notably on the issues of 'the good', 'grace', and 'time'. This straightforward and clear idea may prove to be inspiring to many teachers.

Finally, Gianluca Vandone suggests a practical approach to teach Augustine (6 pages) by concentrating on some essential connecting threads: Augustine as an author belonging to both classical culture and Christian culture, and Augustine as a philosopher highly indebted to Plato. Some concrete textual proposals are made (*De Doctrina Christiana* 2,40,60-61; *Confessiones* 6,6,9-10, and *De beata vita* 4), the first one which is analyzed as a case study.

The volume is concluded with a helpful index locorum.

As a whole, the book does not give a coherent view of the broad theme that is 'Augustine and school'. It is somewhat unbalanced, clearly favoring long academic pieces to shorter

didactic ones, which are, nonetheless included. However, it is in these final pieces that the general reader will find the best ideas.

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