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RETRACING AUGUSTINE'S ETHICS

Lying, Necessity, and the Image of God

Matthew Puffer

ABSTRACT

Augustine's exposition of the image of God in Book 15 of *On The Trinity* (*De Trinitate*) sheds light on multiple issues that arise in scholarly interpretations of Augustine's account of lying. This essay argues against interpretations that posit a uniform account of lying in Augustine—with the same constitutive features, and insisting both that it is never necessary to tell a lie and that lying is absolutely prohibited. Such interpretations regularly employ intertextual reading strategies that elide distinctions and developments in Augustine's ethics of lying. Instead, I show how looking at texts written prior and subsequent to the texts usually consulted suggests a trajectory in Augustine's thought, beginning with an understanding of lies as morally culpable but potentially necessary, and culminating in a vision of lying as the fundamental evil and the origin of every sin.

KEY WORDS: *Augustine, lying, necessity, image of God, interpretation, Trinity*

Is it ever necessary to tell a lie—perhaps to save a human life, to bring about someone's eternal salvation, or to fulfill the role-specific duties of one's public office? The broad consensus among scholars is that Augustine's consistent answer to this question is "No." Regardless of the circumstances, and contrary to occasional scholarly objections and minority reports, Augustine's position is that all lies are sins, and therefore one should never tell a lie.

In what follows, I explore how the image of God gives shape to Augustine's moral reasoning about lying.¹ My contention is not simply that the image of God holds explanatory power for understanding Augustine's ethics, but also that this doctrine serves to illuminate three distinct but interrelated interpretive concerns with applications beyond Augustine and the test case of lying. I treat the first concern, the hermeneutics of familiarization and defamiliarization, in conversation with John Bowlin's and Paul

¹ The use of "moral reasoning" throughout this essay is informed by recent comparative religious ethics literature that explores patterns or frames of "normative reasoning" or "practical reasoning" that give rise to moral judgments and to which appeals are made in justifying these judgments (see Kelsay 2010, 228; 2012, 585, 593–94).

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Griffiths's writings on Augustine's ethics of lying and coercion. The disagreement here has to do with the proximity of contemporary readers to Augustine with respect to philosophical and theological premises, forms of moral inquiry, and ethical judgments. A second line of inquiry asks about formal similarities between lying and killing as understood by Augustine and by religious ethicists today, specifically whether they are analogous or disanalogous acts, and in what respects. Contra Alain Epp Weaver and David Decosimo, I argue that due to his theological commitments regarding the image of God, Augustine neither does nor should treat lying and killing as morally analogous acts. The third concern explores whether an intertextual-canonical or a genetic-historical reading method is more appropriate for interpreting Augustine's ethics of lying. After outlining the standard interpretation of Augustine's ethics of lying, I examine his earliest and final writings on the topic as two vistas from which to view and appreciate developments regarding the definition of lying, its potential necessity, and the central role that lying plays in the genesis of evil.

1. In the Beginning of Evil Was the Lie

The question of lying gets at the very core of Augustine's theology, since it has implications for understanding his doctrines of God, the Trinity, Christology, soteriology, and humanity. There is no ethical issue more intimately tied to these theological loci than that of lying. The reasons for this have to do with his account of the act of lying and the unique way this act draws upon the twin functions of the image of the Trinity in the rational soul. Killing, torture, and coercive violence are acts that involve natural evils and violence, both resulting from and necessitated by original and inherited sin. While Augustine is clear that killing, torture, and coercive violence are lamentable and miserable but sometimes necessary acts—for they are not moral evils in and of themselves—he insists that lying is never necessary. "No one can prove that at times a lie is necessary" (*mend.* 7.10).² Particularly in Augustine's mature theology and ethics, lying becomes the fundamental moral evil. It is the act by which the mind turns away from the *summum bonum*, and voluntarily reorients its attention toward lesser created goods without reference to their Creator. This is the original sin of Lucifer, the Father of Lies, and the original sin of the first humans. It is the origin of the schism between the heavenly and earthly cities and remains the essential, enduring feature of the latter. In each origin, and ever since, it is the sin of lying that has been at the root of every other sinful work.

² I have used, and on occasion slightly emended, the translations that appear in the reference list. See Abbreviations (at the end of the essay before the References section) for Latin titles, dates, and English translations of Augustine's texts.

The lie is the original evil that gives rise to all other evils. In the beginning of evil was the lie.

If we are to understand Augustine's ethics we will have to attend to the meaning he gives to lying—the reasons for his view of it as the primal evil act, the original human sin, and the source of every subsequent sin in human history. We will also want to consider the implications for political existence amidst the two entangled cities and the necessities of their life together in the *saeculum*.³ In order to understand how Christians ought to engage in civic life during the shared journey of the two cities, Augustine thinks we will need to consider the lies of the demons before the creation of the human.⁴ As James Wetzel observes, Augustine identifies lying as foundational to the *civitas terrena*, alien to the *civitas dei*, and essential to understanding the permixtum, *civitas saeculi*.

Each of the two cities, then, is a mixed bag of natures, fleshy and fleshless, but a distinctive unity of will. Angels and saints in chorus will the good for God's sake; demons and their human minions work publicly for worldly glory, while privately serving the good of their separate and endlessly dissipating selves, for theirs is the unity of a common lie. Opposing orientations of will, one true, the other false, is what counts for Augustine as the defining difference between two mixed-natured cities, both angelic and human, but as different as day and night. (Wetzel 2012, 12)

It is an orientation of will on which the true or false nature of one's eschatological residence turns. The opposition of the two cities and the lie held in common by the reprobate, the demons, and the Father of Lies leads to questions about moral psychology and, for Augustine, the image of God.

The image of God is integral to Augustine's ethics of lying and to understanding the evils and sufferings afflicting the citizens of both cities in the *saeculum*. And yet, this claim is not borne out either by Augustine's first six major writings on lying or by secondary scholarship on Augustine's ethics of lying. A major reason for this is that Augustine never mentions the image of God in the vast majority of his discussions of lying.⁵ Not until Book 15 of *De Trinitate* (c. 426), Augustine's final

³ The Latin *saeculum*, from which the English "secular" derives, denotes for Augustine a particular span of time that began at Christ's ascension to heaven and will continue until Christ's second coming.

⁴ See *civ.* 11.13–15. It is not sufficient to begin an inquiry into Augustine's political theology at *De civitate Dei* 19 if the aim is to understand the commitments and motivations that form its descriptions and prescriptions offered so late in his oeuvre in general and in *De civitate Dei* in particular. We will need to examine those texts that explore the role of the lie in the rational soul, its distorting role in all human action, and its implications for the good life and the common good.

⁵ The image of God is never mentioned in *en. Ps.* 5.7, *s. Dom. mon.* 5.37, *mend.*, *ep.* 82, *c. mend.*, or *ench.* 6–7.

foray into the dynamics of deceit, do the ethics of lying and the account of the image of God finally converge. Because *De Trinitate* 15 rarely serves as a source for interpretations of Augustine's ethics of lying, its interpretive significance for related issues in Augustine's theological ethics is largely overlooked.

2. Three Questions of Interpretation

2.1 *Familiarization or defamiliarization?: Augustine's moral reasoning and our own*

Augustine's staunchest critics and most sympathetic readers alike find his ethics vexing. Lying and coercion are two of the more perplexing topics to which Augustine scholars and ethicists regularly turn, and proposals for rehabilitating or reconciling his seemingly incommensurable judgments are standard fare among scholars engaging his moral reasoning about lying and coercion (see, for example, Brinton 1983; Dodaro 1994; Weaver 2001; Johnson 2001; Decosimo 2010).

Regarding coercion, for example, John Bowlin observes that "many of his critics suspect that he does not believe his own 'threadbare arguments,' or at the very least should not, given that his efforts to justify coercion are inconsistent with his more settled views about virtue, freedom, and the limits of political authority in the *saeculum*" (Bowlin 1997, 54). And yet Bowlin suggests that if "we cannot imagine sharing Augustine's conclusions about the use of coercion against religious dissent," then it is likely that we have misunderstood what Augustine is up to (1997, 54). In an effort to make Augustine more comprehensible, Bowlin directs attention away from the conclusions alien to modern readers and highlights instead those features of Augustine's context and his moral reasoning with which readers might more readily identify. If we cannot imagine consenting to his judgments about political and religious coercion, perhaps we are nevertheless quite close to him with respect to forms of moral reasoning, basic dispositions, and aspirations. The advantage of such an approach is that it familiarizes Augustine. It forces us to see ourselves as nearer to him, and he to us, in spite of his explicit judgments that might lead us to believe otherwise. According to Bowlin, by virtue of a common human nature, we share with Augustine a collection of reason-giving practices, capacities for moral discernment, and common moral intuitions that make our judgments for the most part intelligible to one another. Augustine's moral reasoning largely resembles our own.

Griffiths's strategy for reading Augustine's ethics of lying is nearly the opposite. His aim is not to show that Augustine's ethics are commensurable with our natural or shared intuitions, practices, or inclinations, but

rather to disclose just how alien his doctrinal commitments, moral grammar, and formative disciplines are from those taken for granted within a consumerist and individualistic “late-capitalist democracy” (Griffiths 2004, 229). According to Griffiths, nearly everyone has

moral and practical intuitions that make the Augustinian ban on the lie unacceptable and the reasons for the ban dubious. This will be true whether or not you are a Christian: the distance between Augustine’s metaphysic and ours is great; greater still would be the distance between a community that took the Augustinian ban seriously—a community of truth—and the forms of social, political, and economic life in which we live and move and have our being. (Griffiths 2004, 226)

Griffiths’s goal is not to show the reader how Augustine’s moral reasoning is like ours, but to introduce the reader to Augustine’s moral vision in a way that defamiliarizes for the reader her own context, enabling taken-for-granted assumptions to come into view. He aims to explain to the reader why she will remain inclined to disagree with Augustine, even though Augustine is correct: “For those who are not Christians already, such persuasion would require assent to a large number of truths about God’s nature and the image of God in us, for Augustine thinks that what he argues about the lie presupposes the truth of such Christian convictions” (Griffiths 2004, 15). Indeed, Augustine’s position regarding lying has proven unpersuasive not only to non-Christians, but to most Christians as well (see Ramsey 1985). Griffiths puts quite a fine point on the matter with a range of scenarios:

A million innocent lives against the lie. . . . Only Augustine would accept the terms and ban the lie. The consistent Augustinian cannot lie to save innocent life, whether one or a million. . . . Should I lie to save the life of my child? No. Should I lie to prevent war, encourage peace, soothe the weary and discouraged, instruct the foolish, or liberate the innocent from torture? No. (Griffiths 2004, 230)

If Griffiths is right, then Augustine’s ethics that derive from the image of God may well be at odds with the way in which many religious ethicists and human rights discourses today deploy the image of God and its purported secular or public-reason analogue, human dignity.⁶

⁶ Consider Augustine’s potential response to Jürgen Habermas, Nicholas Wolterstorff, or Jeremy Waldron who offer three rival judgments regarding the image of God vis-à-vis human dignity and rights. Habermas claims that “the concept of ‘man in the image of God’ [translates] into that of the identical dignity of all men that deserves unconditional respect” (Habermas and Ratzinger 2006, 45). Wolterstorff argues the image of God does not translate directly to human dignity nor does it establish human rights (Wolterstorff 2008, 342–61). According to Waldron, the image of God “may not be appropriate as a ground for human rights at all, or if it is looked to as a ground, it may make a considerable difference to the character of the rights theory we erect on its foundation” (Waldron 2011, 216).

Although Bowlin focuses on coercion and Griffiths writes about both lying and coercion, comparing their modes of familiarization and defamiliarization is instructive. For they share a common experience of finding Augustine initially perplexing and a common goal of making his ethics intelligible (if not agreeable) to his readers today. Both scholars find interpreting Augustine's ethics less than straightforward and seek to explain them in light of his particular social and cultural context and philosophical and theological commitments, all of which require the difficult work of contextualization and interpretation. In offering their explanations, however, Bowlin and Griffiths devise different, and in important ways opposed, reading strategies. These strategies help to illustrate how scholars arrive at disparate accounts of Augustine's ethics, at least in part due to the fact that their interpretations tend either to civilize Augustine according to contemporary moral norms or to make him alien to modern sensibilities. Readers of Bowlin and Griffiths are challenged to discern whether Augustine's ethics are largely our own or represent instead a quite distinct mode of moral inquiry grounded in his doctrines of the Trinity and of the image of God. We begin to discern a possible resolution to this quandary by examining the respects in which lying and coercion are analogous and disanalogous acts according to Augustine's moral vision and the moral reasoning that informs his ethical judgments.⁷

⁷ Historical literature only adds to the reasons for consternation regarding Augustine's ethics as proposals for resolving alleged tensions or reconciling apparent inconsistencies. For example, some forty years since Peter Brown's epic biography and Robert Markus's *Saeculum* first appeared, both scholars have revisited and revised their widely influential estimations of the brooding elderly bishop. Looking back at his masterpiece, Brown recognizes that in his interpretation of the mature Augustine—the “truly oppressive,” “severe and aggressive figure of authority”—he had failed to appreciate “how little authority Augustine actually wielded over his hearers” (Brown 2000, 446). Robert Dodaro and Brent Shaw share Brown's more recent appraisal of Augustine's relative lack of influence over his contemporaries (see Dodaro 2003; Shaw 2015). Recognition of such limits has led Brown, with Dodaro and Shaw, to ascribe even greater importance to the role that rhetoric plays as Augustine constructs arguments intended to move Roman political officials to wield their power (see Dodaro 2004, 2005; Shaw 2011). Markus's early estimation perceived Augustine's proposals for ecclesial discipline as a “horrible doctrine” resulting from a tension between his commitment to a desacralized political sphere and his advocacy of state-sponsored coercion of religious dissent (Markus 1970, 142). More recently, Markus is less sanguine about identifying the former trajectory of secularization that he had associated with Augustine, including its conception of the secular that is particularly salutary to “modern secular liberalism” (Markus 2006, 3, 12, 51–69). Brown and Markus have modified their appraisals in part due to the discovery of letters and sermons that lend greater perspective on Augustine's context, including a better understanding of to whom letters were addressed and where their recipients stood in the Roman imperial hierarchy, and in part due to a wave of scholarship that has generated significant advances in late-antique historiography. Predictably, ethics scholarship has evolved in conversation with Brown, Markus, and historical studies such that recent interpretations of Augustine's ethics challenge aspects of his historical reception, including issues of coercion, rape, sexuality, and slavery (see Lee 2016; Webb 2013; Larsen 2015; Conley 2015).

2.2 Analogous or disanalogous acts? Lying and killing in Augustine's moral reasoning

Religious ethicists display a diversity of interpretations in their critical engagements with Augustine's ethics of lying, on the one hand, and his ethics of violent coercion, on the other. Some scholars perceive in Augustine's apparently absolute prohibition of lying an idealism that is in tension with his judgments regarding political and religious coercion that are often labeled as "Augustinian realism." Predictably, responses to this alleged tension depend greatly on the constructive purposes of a given reader.

Weaver, for example, embraces Augustine's position on lying—interpreted as an absolute prohibition of a sinful act—and then applies that reasoning to all acts of violence, including killing, both public and private. Augustine should have endorsed this pacifist position in order to become consistent with his better insights (see Weaver 2001). Augustine is wrong to arrive at the ethics of violence and killing that he does and, for consistency's sake, they ought to be revised and brought into agreement with his ethics of lying. The result, Weaver argues, is an authentically Augustinian prohibition of killing analogous to his absolute prohibition of lying.⁸

Taking a very different approach, Decosimo asserts that Augustine's justification of killing, limited to those who hold the relevant public office, provides a lens through which to perceive the ethics of lying that Augustine truly held. He applies an early public/private distinction from a discussion of self-defense in *De libero arbitrio* (ca. 388 CE) to his later moral reasoning regarding lying, with the result that Augustine's purported absolute prohibition of lying becomes analogous to a prohibition of *private* killing in self-defense.⁹ According to Decosimo, lying by a *public* official is scarcely considered by Augustine, but we can discern what Augustine would have written, and actually held to be the case, by extrapolation.¹⁰ Decosimo argues that Augustine's ethics of lying are therefore analogous to his ethics of violent coercion: there is not an absolute prohibition of lying, as Augustine's interpreters through the ages have thought, but merely a prohibition of private lying. Lying, like killing, is sanctioned under certain conditions such as holding either the

⁸ Weaver's argument bears formal resemblance to John Howard Yoder's use of Karl Barth's ethics of capital punishment to critique his ethics of war (see Yoder 2003, 79n3).

⁹ See Decosimo 2010. This argument was anticipated though not prosecuted by John Rist: "If [an offence to God] is Augustine's concern, we may wonder whether official lying might not be justified and accepted in a similar way to official killing" (Rist 1994, 195).

¹⁰ Like John Mark Mattox, Decosimo interprets *Quaestionem in heptateuchem* (*qu.*) 6.10–11 as an instance of justified lying by a military officer (see Mattox 2006, 64; Decosimo 2010, 13–24).

legitimate authority of a public magistrate or the requisite subordinate office.¹¹

Although their arguments run counter to one another, Weaver and Decosimo share a common aim: identifying an authentically Augustinian ethic that incorporates into a single framework his seemingly divergent ethics of lying and killing in war. And they share a basic assumption, namely that Augustine's ethics of lying and his ethics of violent coercion ought to be understood as formally similar. Lying and violent coercion should be evaluated as morally analogous acts, and the moral judgment that applies to one act should apply equally to the other. The problem, according to this reading, is the untenable disanalogous assessments of lying as absolutely prohibited and of violent coercion as sometimes justified.¹² Weaver and Decosimo disagree about who bears responsibility for these two ethical assessments and about how best to resolve the evident (Weaver) or apparent (Decosimo) conflict. Weaver believes scholars have interpreted Augustine correctly and the fault for the incoherence lies with Augustine. Decosimo believes that acts of lying and killing are congruent in Augustine's thought but that scholars have misinterpreted the ethics of lying such that Augustine is made to appear inconsistent. Weaver faults Augustine. Decosimo faults Augustine's interpreters. Neither considers the image of God or how it might illuminate a more coherent picture of how the ethics of lying and killing fit within a distinctively Augustinian theological frame. In order to see how Augustine's moral reasoning might hold together disanalogous judgments regarding lying and killing, we must reconsider the reading methods that have generated the standard interpretation of Augustine's ethics of lying.

2.3 *Intertextual-canonical or genetic-historical? Reading Augustine's ethics of lying*

Much ink has been spilled detailing Augustine's ethics of lying. There are five basic elements:

1. A lie is a false signification with an intention to deceive [*falsa significatio cum voluntate fallendi*] (see *c. mend.* 12.26; *mend.* 3.1; *ench.* 7.22);
2. All lying is a sin and thus absolutely prohibited. Lies cannot be justified, no exceptions (see *mend.* 18.37; *ench.* 6.18, 7.22);

¹¹ John von Heyking advances yet another interpretation suggesting that Augustine did not hold an absolute prohibition of private lying but does condone lies where the "final purpose" is to "fulfill an obligation to love God and neighbor" (von Heyking 2001, 114–20).

¹² Rist represents the more widely held view that lying and killing in Augustine's ethics are morally disanalogous acts: "Perhaps an analogue is to be found with killing more easily than lying, since lying, as a curiously religious offense like blasphemy and apostasy, may be always forbidden" (Rist 1994, 197).

3. Scripture might seem to condone lies. It does not (see *ep.* 28; *mend.* 15.26–18.39; *ep.* 82; *c. mend.* 10.25–17.36);
4. A just cause, loving motivation, good intention, or the avoidance of horrendous consequences might seem to justify lying. They do not (see *c. mend.* 7.17–10.24; *ench.* 7.22);
5. Some lies are worse than others. No one may be acquitted of a lie they have told, though they may be pardoned (see *en. Ps.* 5.7; *mend.* 13.23–14.25; *c. mend.* 8.19, 15.31–17.35; *ep.* 82.22; *ench.* 7.22). More culpable lies require greater punishment or penance for their pardon.

All of this is standard fare in scholarship on Augustine's ethics of lying, and all of it is correct. At least up to a point.

Augustine affirms each of these propositions numerous times and in multiple texts, particularly in his two major works on the topic—*De mendacio* (395) and *Contra mendacium* (420). Predictably, in nearly any article addressing Augustine on lying, these features are taken for granted or prominent among the elements addressed in praise or critique.¹³ Although there have always been those who contest the *validity* of this ethic of lying, more important for understanding Augustine rightly are those who contest this standard *interpretation* of Augustine either on one of the major points, their finer details, or the moral reasoning informing his argumentation. Some critical engagements draw extensively upon Augustine's own writings to advance sweeping reconsiderations of the standard account. Depending on one's assumptions, interpretations that are incompatible with the above features might be persuasively argued as representing Augustine's thought. For example, there are warrants for Decosimo's thesis that "Augustine is not best understood as forbidding lying absolutely . . . he would permit and require lying in certain circumstances," just as there are for John von Heyking's interpretation that "lying is not only permissible in certain circumstances, but also required" (Decosimo 2010, 662; von Heyking 2001, 118). Both scholars discover elements within Augustine's thought that might lead us in a direction other than the standard, what we might call "canonical," reading. The relevant interpretive question here, however, is whether the warrants for these minority reports are stronger than those of the scholarly consensus regarding Augustine on the topic of lying.

¹³ See, for example, Brinton 1983; Ramsey 1985; Feehan 1988, 1990, 1991; Fleming 1993; Dodaro 1994; Newey 1997; Griffiths 1999, 2004; von Heyking 2001; Weaver 2001; Davis 2001; Johnson 2001; Levenick 2004; Decosimo 2010; Gramigna 2013; Tollefsen 2014. Among Augustine's most careful interpreters on the topic of lying, Griffiths addresses each of these standard elements (see Griffiths 2004, 25–39). Though he does not enumerate them as I do, Griffiths affirms these elements with some nuances and exceptions to which we will return below.

The standard reading is “canonical” not only in constituting a scholarly consensus, but also in terms of its intertextual method.¹⁴ The vast majority of scholars (including Decosimo, Griffiths, von Heyking, and Weaver) read the major writings on lying across Augustine’s career intertextually, synthesizing them as if they constituted a coherent whole and as if apparent discrepancies can be ironed out, so to speak, by appeal to other texts, categories, and distinctions.¹⁵ Such intertextual-canonical or synthetic reading implies, without justifying the assumption, that Augustine’s ethics of lying remain sufficiently consistent such that any developments occur within a coherent overall frame. Such assumptions are evident when scholars claim that we can discern what Augustine meant to conclude regarding a particular case presented, for example, in *De mendacio* by reading what he says about another allegedly analogous case in *De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus* (see von Heyking 2001, 119). Likewise, we might interpret the entirety of Augustine’s writings on lying in light of a public/private distinction voiced by Evodius in *De libero arbitrio* to differentiate between species of killing (see Decosimo 2010, 666n15; *lib. arb.* 1.5.12–13). The very question scholars consistently put to Augustine and attempt to answer, “What was his ethic of lying?,” thus creates a selection bias. It implies that Augustine offers a single ethic of lying across his corpus just waiting to be discovered if we can discern and rightly order the pieces that constitute the whole. The presumption

¹⁴ On “intertextuality,” see Daniel Boyarin’s distinction between rabbinic midrash as an intertextual reading strategy that constitutes an alternative to the reading strategies of both “Higher Criticism” and the “historical school” (Boyarin 1990, 20–21, 39–41).

¹⁵ Boniface Ramsey writes that in *Contra mendacium* Augustine is “elaborating some of the principles already set down in *De mendacio*” (Ramsey 1985, 508). Elsewhere, Ramsey writes, “The doctrine on lying contained in *Contra mendacium* adds relatively little to that found in *De mendacio*” (Ramsey 2009, 556). Decosimo also finds that “there are no differences between the two texts that are relevant for our purposes” (Decosimo 2010, 662n3). Weaver sees little difference between the texts in terms of content, though *Contra mendacium* is “a less clear denunciation of lies” in contrast to the “fairly theoretical character of *De mendacio*” (Weaver 2001, 56). Griffiths brackets the question of historical development, but assumes none in his methodology: “My goal is not to provide a complete and historically nuanced account of Augustine on the lie. I want, rather, to lay bare the structure of his thought on the topic, its grammar and syntax, and to make constructive use and application of that structure” (Griffiths 2004, 16). Feehan’s articles cite the two major texts without discussion of possible differences since their shared “aim, as is well known, was to prove that the lie is not justifiable under any circumstances” (Feehan 1988, 132). Von Heyking, unlike Feehan, reads *De mendacio* as a justification for lying intentionally written in such a manner “that Augustine’s ideas will be clear only to the attentive reader” (von Heyking 2001, 115), and he reads *Contra mendacium*—in which a “prohibition against lying is made clear” (von Heyking 2001, 114)—as a more pragmatic and politically motivated letter than as a useful account of Augustine’s ethic of lying. He alone finds real conflict because he interprets *De mendacio* as advancing an argument about the conditions that justify lying. None of these authors discuss developments in Augustine’s ethics.

of a canonical reading then warrants the intertextual use of selected texts and categories as the lenses through which to read disparate texts and categories.¹⁶ The shortcoming of such interpretations is their tendency to overlook incongruities or minimize developments in Augustine's thought that a historicized reading leaves intact.

In contrast to the intertextuality nurtured by canonical readings, a genetic-historical reading encourages careful attention to theological and methodological developments across Augustine's writings.¹⁷ Augustine was as cognizant of his development as anyone.¹⁸ Scholars have increasingly taken up questions of his development with respect to the origin of the soul, nature and grace, religious conversion, and political coercion (see Fredriksen Landes 1982; O'Connell 1987; Brown 2000, 139–50, 482–513; Markus 2006, 51–69; Rombs 2006; Harrison 2008; BeDuhn 2010; Couenhoven 2013). Similarly, Augustine's expositions of the image of God exhibit considerable development over time, particularly between his two major works on lying, *De mendacio* (395) and *Contra mendacium* (420).¹⁹ A genetic-historical or diachronic reading allows features of his evolving moral reasoning to come into

¹⁶ When scholars acknowledge that Augustine adds elements in later writings on lying not present in earlier ones, c. *mend.* 7.18 is often the example given (see Ramsey 2009, 556).

¹⁷ On "genetic-historical" interpretation and the priority of methodology over material decisions, see McCormack 1995, viii–ix.

¹⁸ Augustine sees his development as a function of writing, preaching, and exposition: "We who preach and write books write in a manner altogether different from that in which the holy canonical books were written. We develop as we write [*proficiendo scribimus*], learning something new every day, preaching as we explore, speaking as we knock . . . you should not take any previous book or preaching of mine as canonical scripture [*canonica scriptura*]" (s. 162C); "I am among those who write while developing and develop while writing [*proficiendo scribunt et scribendo proficiunt*]" (ep. 143.2–4); "I should wish no one to embrace all my teaching. . . . I have undertaken to retrace [*retractanda*] my works in order to show that I have not always held the same views; rather, I believe I developed [*proficienter*], by God's mercy, while writing. . . . We can have good hope for someone if the last day of this life finds him still developing" (*don. persev.* 21.55).

¹⁹ Augustine's pre-*Confessions* writings refer to a disposition of the rational soul toward [*ad*] the image of God whereas only the second person of the Trinity is [*est*] the image of God (*Gn. litt. imp.* 16.55–60). In *Confessions*, this becomes a disposition toward the Trinity for the first time, and not specifically the Son (*Conf.* 13.22.32). Between 401 and 413, Augustine first affirms that the rational soul itself is the image of God (*op. mon.* 32.40), then that the *in-spirited* mind (*qua* image of God) is lost in the fall (*Gn. litt.* 6.24.35) before wavering on this point and later asserting that the mind (*qua* image of God) is merely *veiled* by the law and thus the image is not lost in the fall (*spir. et litt.* 28.48). Finally, in *De Trinitate* the image of God is defined as the mind's non-adventitious, existing capacity [*capax est*] for potentially participating [*particeps potest*] in the contemplation of Wisdom when activated by the Holy Spirit (*Trin.* 14.4.6, 14.8.11, 14.12.15). In important respects Augustine's ethics develop in parallel to and as a corollary of his theological anthropology. Thus, with respect to the later Augustine, Griffiths is correct: the image of God is integral to Augustine's ethics of lying, and Augustine's conclusions presuppose "a large number of truths about God's nature and the image of God in us" (Griffiths 2004, 15). I would add that insofar as Augustine's image of God evolves, the respects in which it informs Augustine's ethics of lying also changes.

view in ways that the intertextual-canonical readings of both the standard interpretation and the minority reports tend to elide. Once recognized, such developments aid in arbitrating disputes about analogous and disanalogous acts in Augustine's ethics as well as competing interpretations of the ethics of lying.

3. Retracing Augustine's Ethics of Lying

3.1 *Before the standard interpretation*

Evidence of Augustine's developing moral reasoning begins to emerge already in his earliest writings on lying. Augustine first engages the ethics of lying in the *Enarrationes in Psalmos*. Expositing Psalm 5 (c. 392)—particularly Psalm 5:7 (“You will destroy all those who speak a lie”)²⁰—Augustine makes several claims about lying from which the standard interpretation, based upon *De mendacio* and *Contra mendacium* is shown already to involve developments beyond this earliest account.²¹

Three particular claims in *en. Ps. 5* that are already overturned by the penning of *De mendacio* have to do with the definition of lying, whether jokes are lies, and the (non)necessity of lies. In the earlier text, “joking” and “lying to be helpful” are considered two examples of “lies to which no great blame is attached, and yet they are not completely without blame” (*en. Ps. 5.7*). Joking is a lie, and thus morally blameworthy, but there are worse lies one could tell. Three years later, *De mendacio* explicitly denies that jokes are lies. In the latter, Augustine excludes joking from his discussion of lies on the grounds that the joker “has in mind no deceit” (*mend. 1.2*). This restatement presents not only a change of judgment regarding the moral species of joking but also a new definition of lying. Whereas the first account considers joking to be a blameworthy lie, *De mendacio* asserts the opposite on the grounds of a new definition

²⁰ This is Psalm 5:6 in many English Bibles that depart from the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin texts. The latter regularly begin numbering the verses of Psalms with traditional titles that the former leave unnumbered.

²¹ Augustine's exposition of Psalm 5:7 includes two texts that feature prominently in his ethical writings on lying: “This is what should be on your lips: ‘yes, yes; no, no;’ anything more than that is from the evil one” (Matthew 5:37), and “A lie in the mouth kills the soul” (Wisdom 1:11). Of the more than one hundred scriptural quotations in the seven major writings on lying, Matthew 5:37 and Wisdom 1:11 stand out in different respects. Matthew 5:37 is the sole text cited in each of the major writings; Matthew 5:37 and Wisdom 1:11 are the two texts with the most overall citations (ten and seven, respectively); Wisdom 1:11 holds the distinction of being the text most quoted in any single writing, with six in *De mendacio* alone.

of lying that incorporates and makes essential the element of an "intention to deceive" (*mend.* 3.3–5.5, 14.25). From a change in the definition of lying follows a changed judgment regarding the blameworthiness of joking.²²

A third development involves the necessity of lying. The exposition of Psalm 5:7 suggests that some people, such as the "perfect disciples" [*perfecti*], attain a perfection in which they tell not even the least culpable lies. Although "those who are perfect" will be capable of avoiding lies of every sort, "if [someone] is not yet able to do this, then he should tell only those lies which are necessary" (*en. Ps.* 5.7). Augustine has in view a particular case: "If someone, for example, does not want to betray another person even to the death we all can see, he ought to be willing to conceal the truth, but not to tell a lie" (*en. Ps.* 5.7). Although the perfect tell no lies, in order to save another's life, *en. Ps.* 5 allows that the imperfect may find it necessary to lie in such a case. A few years later, *De mendacio* disallows lying in precisely this exceptional case. Even if "a man should take refuge with you, who by your lie might be saved from death," Augustine now concludes the opposite of what he previously had: "No one can prove that at times a lie is necessary" (*mend.* 7.10).²³ Revisions such as these three are not restricted to lying, but rather

²² Weaver, Griffiths, and Decosimo offer competing accounts of Augustine's understanding of joking in relation to lying, each of which aims to bolster a particular interpretation of the ethics of lying. None of their interpretations of joking cite *en. Ps.* 5 and so none observes how this earliest account of lying defines lying differently, treats joking as a culpable lie, or entertains a "necessary" lie (see Weaver 2001, 57; Griffiths 2004, 29, 34–35; Decosimo 2010, 663–64). A rare exception, Christopher Levenick notes that *en. Ps.* 5.7 contradicts Augustine's expositions of joking and lying elsewhere. However, rather than attending to the dating of this text or considering the possibility of historical development, he exhibits an intertextual-canonical method in accounting for the evident inconsistencies with Augustine's major writings. "Given the larger context of Augustine's writings on lying and joking, I must determine that in the latter sentence, Augustine intended *fallendi voluntas* rather than *duplex cor: quandoque bonus dormitat Augustinus*" (Levenick 2004, 309n34). That is, excusing Augustine for nodding off at the crucial point, Levenick replaces Augustine's term "*duplex cor*" (a term common to Augustine's writings from 392–395) with "*fallendi voluntas*" (a term Augustine does not use systematically in defining a lie until *De mendacio* in 395), explaining that Augustine must have meant something other than what he wrote in *en. Ps.* 5.7 (in 392).

²³ Augustine also rejects the possibility of a necessary lie in a contemporaneous letter in which he chides Jerome, "are you perhaps going to give us some rules by which we might know where it is necessary to lie and where it is not?" (*ep.* 28.3.5). In case Jerome misses his sarcasm, Augustine lays it on a bit thicker, "Please, do not explain it with lying and dubious reasons . . . it is surely not a great fault by which my error favors the truth, if in your case the truth can correctly favor a lie" (*ep.* 28.3.5). Mocking the idea of necessary lies, Augustine's frustration derives from Jerome's suggestion that Peter and Paul colluded in a case of "useful lying" (see *ep.* 28.3.3–5; see also Plato 1992, 2.381–83, 3.412–17).

correspond to ongoing developments in other aspects of Augustine's moral reasoning to which scholars have given considerable attention.²⁴

Collectively, these elements highlight development in Augustine's moral reasoning prior to the standard account that relies heavily upon *De mendacio*. Individually, each element also provides potential fodder for those who would object to various features of the standard interpretation. Not surprisingly, some interpretations of Augustine's "ethic of lying" (those that treat it as if it were static) prove to be more commensurate with Augustine's moral reasoning in one period than they are with his thought during another. With additional elements of the later ethics of lying in view, we are afforded a much broader perspective on and greater appreciation for developments beyond the standard account.

3.2 *On the Trinity and its image: the basis and limits of an analogy*

More than thirty years after his first reflections on lying, *De Trinitate* presents a markedly distinct approach to theological reflection on lying. Augustine begins Book 15 by reminding his audience about the aims of the intellectual exercise through which this difficult text guides the reader. Its purpose is to inculcate a contemplative love for the triune God while training readers in the recognition of several key distinctions. First, the generation of the Son from the Father is distinct from the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son. Second, human nature consists of body and soul, and the mind is not the entire soul but only its highest part—the rational soul [*animus*] consists of the irrational part of the soul [*anima*] held in common with the beasts plus the mind [*mens*] that is common to humans and angels. Third, although human beings are rightly said to be the "image of God," it is only with respect to the mind or rational part of the soul—and not the body or the lesser parts of the soul—that human beings are so called. And fourth, building upon the above affirmations, the image of God in the mind demonstrates to natural reason what scripture teaches and the Catholic faith affirms regarding the distinction between the generation of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit within the Trinity.²⁵ *De Trinitate* serves as an exercise that teaches these doctrines in order that readers might grow in faith and wisdom, increasing in both understanding of and love for the triune God.²⁶

²⁴ Prominent among these are his reflections on the (non)attainability of perfection in this life (see Brown 2000, 144–50; Fredriksen Landes 1982, ix–xii; Harrison 2008).

²⁵ Augustine's affirmations of agreement between Scripture and natural reason trace back to *Acad.* 3.20.43.

²⁶ See Roland Kany's argument that the intended audience includes believers, those "skeptical about Christianity," and "that he normally had unbelievers in mind as well" (Kany 2013, 387–99).

In pursuance of our plan to train [*exercere*] the reader, *in the things that have been made* (Rom 1.20), for getting to know him by whom we were made, we came eventually to his image. This is the human [*homo*] insofar as it excels other animals, i.e. reason or intelligence, and whatever else can be said about the rational or intellectual soul that potentially pertains to what is called “mind” [*mens*] or “rational soul” [*animus*]. Several Latin authors have used this latter word, *animus*, to distinguish what is pre-eminent in humans and not found in beasts by a proper name of its own from the soul, *anima*, which is in humans and beasts alike. (*Trin.* 15.1.1)

The reason to investigate the mind or rational soul is not to understand the mind for its own sake but as a preliminary step toward understanding the trine God through the image of the Trinity: “We are looking for God, going step by step through various trinities of different sorts until we eventually arrive at the human mind” (*Trin.* 15.2.3). For although there are many “likenesses that are useful for understanding God with, as far as this is possible; of such likenesses none is more suitable than the one which is not called God’s image for nothing” (*Trin.* 15.9.16).²⁷ The mind, as the image of God, manifests a greater likeness to the Trinity in its attributes than any of the Trinity’s other vestiges either in the several lower trinities in the human or in the rest of creation.

After distinguishing the substantial and relational attributes that the image of God shares with the divine nature from those it lacks, Augustine indicates the distinctive ways the image of God manifests instructive analogies to the Trinitarian processions and to the mission of the Son in the incarnation. Examining the divine and human processes of generating or begetting a “word,” the human mind discovers itself to be an image of the Trinity it seeks to contemplate. What Augustine is “trying to do is somehow to see him by whom we were made by means of this image which we ourselves are, as through a mirror” (*Trin.* 15.8.14). As the mind contemplates its own process of generating words, it is reflecting upon the nearest analogue to the Trinity that exists—nearest in the sense of similarity, but also nearest in the sense of its immediate proximity to itself. The mind actively images the processions of the

²⁷ Protestant Reformers otherwise appreciative in their reception of Augustine were uncharacteristically critical of his speculations regarding the image of God (see Luther 1958, 60–61; Calvin 1960, 190). Modern theologians are similarly critical, taking issue with Augustine’s association of the image of God with the rational soul. Kathryn Tanner, for example, begins *Christ the Key* with a query that announces a distinctively Christological interpretation of the image of God: “What light might be thrown on the well-worn idea that human beings are created in the image of God, if Christ were the key to understanding it?” (Tanner 2010, 1). Thus Tanner and others might affirm Augustine’s statement that among the “likenesses that are useful for understanding God with . . . none is more suitable than the one which is not called God’s image for nothing,” albeit with a very different understanding of what constitutes the “image of God” and with different results where their respective doctrines of God and the divine attributes are concerned.

Trinity when its self-knowing produces an accurate understanding of itself such that it loves itself as the image of God that it is.

The Pauline statement that “we now see through a mirror in an enigma, but then it will be face to face” (1 Corinthians 13:12)—where “mirror” refers to “image” and “enigma” refers to “likeness”—indicates that whatever the mind’s eye perceives, it perceives through the very image of God. The twin processes of thinking and (subsequently) communicating together shed light both on the eternal generation of the Word of God in relation to the procession of the Spirit and on the assumption of a human nature by the Word of God in the Incarnation. Augustine thus distinguishes between two basic types of “words” generated by the human mind that index the Word of God in what would come to be known as the immanent and economic trinities, respectively. These two words are integral to the relationship between the image of God and lying where the two concerns are brought together.

3.3 *Two words: immanent Trinitarian processions and the economic Christological mission*

First, there is a “word” uttered inwardly that precedes all signs and significations needed in order to communicate this word to another. These are pre-linguistic words in the thinking mind, “begotten of the knowledge abiding in the rational soul, when this knowledge is uttered inwardly just as it is” (*Trin.* 15.11.20). Such words derive from truths or ideas capable of being retrieved from the memory, where they are readily available for the mind’s active knowing, should the mind will to bring them forward into the intellect’s conscious thinking attention.²⁸ In a perfectly functioning mind, this first word is a faithful representation of a truth generated from the memory through the mind’s remembering, knowing, and willing this truth in the process of thinking.²⁹ Augustine considers the generative, triadic process of remembering, knowing, and willing a word to be analogous to the immanent procession of the eternally begotten Word of God, the second person of the Trinity.³⁰ The will

²⁸ On “the word that belongs to no language,” see *Trin.* 15.10.19.

²⁹ “For when we utter something true, that is when we utter what we know, a word is necessarily born from the knowledge which we hold in the memory, a word which is absolutely the same kind of thing as the knowledge it is born from. It is the thought formed from the thing we know that is the word which we utter in the heart, a word that is neither Greek nor Latin nor any other language; but when it is necessary to convey the knowledge in the language of those we are speaking to, some sign is adopted to signify this word. And usually a sound, sometimes also a gesture is presented, the one to their ears and the other to their eyes, in order that bodily signs may make the word we carry in our minds known to their bodily senses” (*Trin.* 15.10.19).

³⁰ “If anyone, I say, can understand this, he can already see through this mirror and in this enigma some likeness of that Word of which it is said, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*” (*Trin.* 15.10.19, quoting John 1:1).

constitutes a unifying bond of agreement between the truth known from memory and the true word generated by and from this truth as it is being thought by the intellect. This true word serves as the basis from which a second word is measured as either constituting a lie or not.

The second "word" is that which has assumed a sign appropriate for communication through language and the senses. This second word may be expressed sensibly, visually or audibly, but it is no less a second, distinct word if it remains in the thinking mind without being expressed sensibly. Compared to the first word, it differs primarily not in that it is expressed sensibly but in that it is a word that has assumed a sensible sign. The primary referent of the term "word" is the first pre-linguistic word generated in thought rather than this second word that re-presents the first word by taking on the form of a particular sensible sign. When uttered in the mind, the second type of word already includes the signifier of a particular language that it takes on for communicating to others. Should the word that has assumed a sign be expressed sensibly to others, it is the mind that willfully both determines what sensible sign will be used and decides the sensible means of manifesting to others the word initially generated in the mind. "The vocal sounds of our speech are signs of the things we are thinking of. Thus the word which makes a sound outside is the sign of the word which lights up inside, and it is this latter, pre-linguistic word that primarily deserves the name of 'word'" (*Trin.* 15.10.19–11.20). The sign-assuming word is paradigmatically borne outward to others by speech, though this is by no means the only means of sensibly signifying the word generated in thinking attention (see *Trin.* 9.7.12, 15.10.19; *c. mend.* 10.24–13.28). Signification of a word can also assume other sensible representations such as written words and bodily gestures. Regardless of the sensible mode of manifestation, whereas the first, pre-linguistic word is analogous to the eternally begotten Word of God, the second, sign-assuming word is analogous to the Word that assumes flesh, the incarnate Word that takes a temporal, human form.³¹

So, the mind as an image of the Trinity generates these two types of words—a pre-linguistic word generated from the memory and a sign-assuming word capable of sensible expression—whose distinction promises to aid in attaining a greater understanding of the Trinity, especially

³¹ With respect to the second word, see John 1:14 and Philippians 2:3–8. "Our word becomes a bodily sound by assuming that in which it is manifested to the senses of men, just as the Word of God became flesh by assuming that in which it too could be manifested to the senses of men. And just as our word becomes sound without being changed into sound, so the Word of God became flesh, but it is unthinkable that it should have been changed into flesh. It is by assuming it, not by being consumed into it, that both our word becomes sound and that Word became flesh" (*Trin.* 15.11.20).

its processions and missions but also certain of its substantial and relational attributes. For the purpose of understanding the second person of the Trinity (the Word of God both in its immanent generation from the Father and in its economic assumption of a human nature) through one's investigation of the created image of the Trinity (the human mind's generating of a pre-linguistic word and its assumption of a sensible sign), it is necessary to differentiate between the first and second human words. Human words are useful for contemplating the Trinity where there is a recognition of the distinction between the pre-linguistic and sign-assuming types of human words.

Therefore if you wish to arrive at some kind of likeness of the Word of God, however unlike it may be in many ways, do not look at that word of ours which sounds in the ears, neither when it is uttered vocally or when it is thought of silently ... we must come to that word of man, the word of a rational animal, the word of the image of God which is not *born* of God but *made* by God, the word which is neither uttered in sound nor thought of in the likeness of sound which necessarily belongs to some language, but which precedes all the signs that signify it and is begotten of the knowledge abiding in the consciousness, when this knowledge is uttered inwardly just exactly as it is. (*Trin.* 15.11.20)

The first, pre-linguistic word is analogous to the eternal Word of God. The second, signifying word is analogous to the temporal incarnation of the Word of God.

3.3.1 THE TRINITARIAN PRE-LINGUISTIC "YES, YES; NO, NO"

Having distinguished these two words, Augustine next draws two analogies to consider how the first, pre-linguistic word and the second, sign-assuming word in the rational soul are related to the eternal procession of the Son (*qua* Word of God) from the Father and to the temporal works of God done through the incarnate Word of God, Jesus Christ (see John 1:1, 14). These analogies make use of Trinitarian and Christological dynamics in order to explicate the "yes, yes, no, no" [*est est non non*] of Matthew 5:37, the biblical text to which Augustine appeals most consistently in his writings on lying.³²

The first analogy is between *truth* in the rational soul and *substance* in the divine nature. The generation of a true word whose truth is a unity with the thing that is in awareness of the memory is analogous to the generation of the Son whose nature is consubstantial with the Father. The first word to proceed from the rational soul is generated from the

³² See *en. Ps.* 5.7; *s. Dom. mon.* 17.51; *mend.* 5.6, 15.28; *ep.* 82; *s.* 180; *c. mend.* 16.33; *ench.* 5.17, 7.22; *Trin.* 15.11.20, 15.14.23. James 5.12 repeats this account (see *s.* 180). See also 2 Corinthians 1:17.

awareness of memory such that the same truth is in the awareness of memory and in the thinking attention, just as in the generation of the Word of God from the Father the same substance is in both.

When, therefore, that which is in the knowledge is also in a word, then is it a true word, and the truth which is expected from man, so that what is in the knowledge is also in the word, and what is not in the knowledge is not in the word; it is here that we acknowledge the “yes, yes; no, no.” In this way the likeness of the made image approaches as far as it can the likeness of the born image, in which God the Son is declared to be substantially like the Father in all respects. (*Trin.* 15.11.20)

The image of God is most like God when producing true words about God and itself in relation to God. True words are those that exhibit truth-content agreement between the knowledge in the memory and the first, pre-linguistic word of intellectual thought.

In *De Trinitate*, the “yes, yes; no, no” to which Augustine appeals in this passage takes on the distinctively Trinitarian and Christological referents that we have already been observing and which are without precedent in his earlier expositions either of Matthew 5:37 specifically or of lying in general. The first referent of the “yes, yes; no, no” is the immanent Trinitarian one just observed in which the correspondence between two words indexes an analogy between the consubstantial procession of the Son (*qua* Word of God) from the Father and the unity of truth-content in the generation of the pre-linguistic word from the thing known in the memory.

3.3.2 THE CHRISTOLOGICAL SIGN-ASSUMING “YES, YES; NO, NO”

The second referent of the “yes, yes; no, no” of Matthew 5:37 in *De Trinitate* makes use of this analogy to the processions of the immanent Trinity but adds the Christological dimension of God's creation through the Word of God. It is here that Augustine takes up the possibility of lying. Just as God made all things through his only-begotten Word—“All things were made through him [the Word]” (John 1:3)—so too all human action in the world is a voluntary response to that which one knows to be true regarding good works. The rational soul stores knowledge of good and evil in the memory. All moral action begins with the willing selection of a sign-assuming word, the content of which either truthfully or falsely signifies the rational soul's knowledge regarding good works. The voluntary generation of a true sign-assuming word about good human action is the beginning of a good work. On the other hand, willfully generating sign-assuming words about good human action that do not derive from the knowledge of good works amounts to sin. The origin of sin in the rational soul occurs in a willing acquiescence to a desire to

generate a second, sign-assuming word that does not signify the pre-linguistic word it knows to be the true word regarding its knowledge of good works.

Therefore, every human action begins with the generation of a word. Whether a human work is just or sinful, however, depends upon whether the work derives from one's knowledge regarding good works. For every "yes" or "no" in one's knowledge about moral action, the mind willfully selects either a true sign-assuming word or it selects a false second word. It is through this true or false second word that one produces righteous or sinful works.

There are no works [*opere*] of man that are not first uttered in the heart. That is why it is written, *The beginning of every work is a word* (Sir 37:16). Here too, if it is a true word, it is the beginning of a good work [*boni operis*]. And a word is true when it is begotten of the knowledge of how to work well [*bene operandi*], so that here too one may apply the "yes, yes; no, no"; so that if it is *yes* in the knowledge by which one lives, it should be *yes* in the word through which one has to work [*operandum*], and if *no*, *no*. Otherwise, such a word will be a lie [*mendacium*] and not the truth, and from it will come a sin [*peccatum*], not a right work [*opus rectum*]. (*Trin.* 15.11.20)

The genesis of every sin is a prior lie in the rational soul. Every righteous work in the world, on the other hand, begins with a true sign-assuming word.³³

Voluntary consent to a wrongly ordered desire in the human mind generates a second word that is not true to the first word in the mind's knowledge regarding not only what is eternally true and good but also what is true and good with respect to moral living in the *saeculum*—"how to work well" or how "one ought to live." In the rational soul, such a word is a lie and a sin, but not yet a work. The mind lies (and kills itself spiritually) the moment it willfully selects a false signifier for this second word. Subsequently, through this false word generated as a lie, the rational soul produces a sinful work as it incarnates, as it operationalizes through the inner word toward the outer, temporal, sensible world. Thus, in two stages a sinful deed results from a desire to generate a word in the rational soul that is untrue to one's knowledge about good human action and the moral life.

3.4 *Inseparable operations: the image of God ad extra*

As the Word of God incarnate was not merely eternal Wisdom and Truth but also a human life, so the human mind incarnates through its

³³ Although every sin has as its precondition a lie, not every lie of this sort generates a sinful work. "We can have a word which is not followed by a work" (*Trin.* 15.11.20). The reason for this is that like most classical conceptions of the *logos asarkos*, the word of the rational soul need not incarnate. It need not be operationalized as a work.

sign-assuming words that are understood, quite expansively, to include the embodied existence in which one lives and works, whether for good or for ill. Just as all of God's works *ad extra* are created *through* the Word of God that was capable of assuming flesh, so also the image of God creates all of its external works *through* its own sign-assuming words. Here, the immanent, Trinitarian dynamics involved in the generation of the Word of God, the second person of the Trinity, are operative in the economic, historical life of the incarnate Christ. This translation from an immanent Word of God into an economic work is instructive to the rational soul in two senses.

First, Christ's example of a true, sinless life of good works demonstrates how one ought to live.³⁴ Augustine emphasizes that the specific reason the second person of the Trinity—the "Word" of God *through* whom all things were made—incarnates is to provide an example for the image of the Trinity to follow. The righteous works of the image of the Trinity *ad extra* are the outworking, into the world, of its own previously generated true and good words.

And the reason why it was not God the Father, not the Holy Spirit, not the Trinity itself, but only the Son who is the Word of God who became flesh, although it was the Trinity that accomplished this, is that we might live rightly [*recte viveremus*] by our word following and imitating his example; that is by our having no lie [*mendacium*] either in the contemplation [*contemplatione*] or in the work [*operatione*] of our word. (*Trin.* 15.11.20)

The incarnation of the Word reveals that our human words ought to be true in contemplation in order that they might be operationalized in righteous living. Where the mind willfully assigns to the sign-assuming word a signifier from the memory's knowledge of the truth about good and evil works, the *ad extra* operations of speech and the moral life incarnate this sign-assuming word, bearing the justice of one's rational soul out into the world.

What is more, the inseparable operations of the Trinity suggest another sense in which the second, sign-assuming word in the rational soul is like the Trinity creating through the Word who is the Son. Not only were all things made through the Word (John 1:3), but all God's works *ad extra* are indivisible. Likewise, the self-reflexive memory, intellect, and will are inseparably operative in all human action that flows out of the rational soul. Every human work is indivisibly the work of the entire image of the Trinity in the rational soul, albeit signified sensibly through the word generated in the mind. Each and every work is righteous or sinful depending upon

³⁴ Augustine argues that Christ's life is exemplary in these respects on the basis of John 14:6; Hebrews 4:15; and 1 Corinthians 11:1.

whether the sign-assuming word is true or a lie in relation to one's pre-linguistic knowledge of good and evil.

3.5 Ignorance, errors, and lies: finite knowledge, flawed intellect, and evil will

After exploring the Trinitarian and Christological analogues of the image of God in the pre-linguistic and sign-assuming words in the “yes, yes; no, no” of Matthew 5:37, Augustine takes up yet another collocation of terms with further analogical possibilities.³⁵ Augustine perceives the Trinitarian structure of reality nearly everywhere, including in the partition of philosophy into natural, rational, and moral (see *civ.* 11.25). The rational soul reflects this structure not only in the properly functioning inseparable operations of memory, intellect, and will, but also in the corresponding deficiencies of its fallen state: ignorance, errors, and lies. Thus, *De Trinitate* 15 explores the relationship of God's omniscience, simplicity, and omnipotence to the fallen human's finite knowledge, flawed intellect, and evil will.

3.5.1 IGNORANCE: CREATURELY FINITUDE OF KNOWLEDGE

There is nothing essentially sinful about ignorance. It is a basic feature of human finitude. Human beings were not created to be omniscient. The mind's rational nature was created with a properly functioning intellect integrated with a rightly ordered will. A properly functioning mind would correctly remember and reason about what it had come to know to be true, properly accounting for its ignorance. The first “yes” (or “no”) in its knowledge would be followed by a corresponding “yes” (or “no”) in its reasoning. In matters about which the mind was ignorant, lacking knowledge in the memory, there simply would not be a “yes” (or “no”). The things stored in the memory could come to be known either through consciousness or bodily sensation, with the testimony of others mediating additional knowledge through the latter.³⁶ Prior to the Fall, the human mind knew that it knew all that it knew without error, including those things about

³⁵ Augustine finds Trinitarian vestiges throughout the natural order. See *vera rel.* 55.112–13; *ep.* 11; *div. qu.* 38; *civ.* 11.24–28. See also Ayres 2010, 63–67, 133–41, 277–81.

³⁶ “All these things then that the human soul knows by perceiving them through itself or through the senses of the body or through the testimony of others, it holds onto where they are stacked away in the treasury of memory. From them is begotten a true word when we utter what we know, but a word before any sound, before any thought of sound. For it is then that the word is most like the thing known, and most its image . . . and it is a word of no language, a true word from a true thing, having nothing from itself, but everything from that knowledge from which it is born” (*Trin.* 15.13.22).

which it knew itself to be ignorant.³⁷ According to Augustine, for those of us who live after the Fall, it is not enough to observe the inevitability of ignorance that results from human finitude of the pre-Fall variety. Rather, we must also contend with the ways in which ignorance inevitably increases as a result of novel, post-Fall sources of falsehood—namely, error and lies.

3.5.2 ERROR: UNKNOWINGLY WILLING FALSE WORDS

Whereas ignorance is a first-order deficiency of knowledge that Augustine associates with the memory, error is a second-order deficiency of knowledge—an intellectual lack of knowledge *about* the knowledge stored in the memory. Ignorance is a lack of knowing. Error is a mis-knowing; a deletion or depletion of knowing that mistakenly takes what is true to be false and what is false to be true. Understanding ignorance as a deficiency in knowledge makes conceptualizing error difficult.

Although ignorance existed prior to the Fall, there was not yet *error* in human knowing and thinking—in the memory and the intellect. Even after the Fall, however, it is still the case that human knowledge “must all be true, otherwise it would not be known. No one knows false things except when he knows them to be false. If he knows this, he knows something true, since it is true that they are false” (*Trin.* 15.10.17). According to Augustine, the false things that one believes to be true (and true things that one believes to be false) are not properly “knowledge” but “errors,” deficiencies of knowledge. Errors are neither mere ignorances of pre-Fall human beings nor are they sinful in the way lies are. Error reflects the additional natural evil of mis-knowing by the intellect. Errors differ from ignorance in that ignorance involves only a deficiency, a lack of knowledge, and not necessarily a mistake in one’s thinking.

Even a mind that wills to express the truth to itself or to another mind regularly errs in doing so because of the intellect’s improper functioning that is an effect of inherited sin. If the intellect errs in its reasoning, then the “yes” in the knowledge of the memory may generate “error” (call this mis-knowledge: “yes*”) in the thinking attention that contains more or less than the thing known. This “yes*” is then deposited (including a partial withdrawal) in the memory as mis-knowledge about which the mind is ignorant. Over time, an improperly functioning intellect inevitably collects and deposits a vast array of mis-knowledge (yes*) in the storehouse of the mind’s memory. When this is the case, false words

³⁷ Distinct from error and lying, doubt may be involved in either. Although human knowledge is uncertain about most things, the human can be certain both that she is alive and that she wants to be happy precisely because she doubts (see *Trin.* 15.15.25; Drever 2013, 124–31).

will be generated for the thinking attention from the storehouse of memory by the willed affirmation of agreement between the thing mis-known in the memory (yes*) and its pre-linguistic word generated in thinking attention (yes*). The result is an error in memory *and* thinking attention that always includes an ignorance of the mistake attendant to such errors. Subsequently, even when the intellect functions properly, the “yes*” of the mis-knowledge in the memory is repeated as a “yes*” in the mis-knowing of thinking attention. Nothing about this phenomenon yet constitutes a lie. So far we have considered ignorance that pertains to knowledge in the memory and error in the processes of thinking that generates further error and ignorance when thought deposits mis-knowledge with knowledge in the memory.

The Trinity does not share this problem. Because of divine consubstantiality and simplicity, God’s “Yes” is always “Yes” in God’s Word and God’s “No” is always “No.” These attributes ensure that there is no falsehood in the persons of the Trinity.

What is God’s knowledge is also his wisdom, and what is his wisdom is also his being or substance, because in the wonderful simplicity of that nature . . . being wise is the same as being . . . thus [the Son] knows everything the Father knows, but his knowing comes to him from the Father just as his being does. For here knowing and being are one and the same. . . . Hence it is as though uttering himself that the Father begot the Word . . . [The Father] would not have uttered himself completely and perfectly if anything less or more were in his Word than in himself. There supremely we can recognize “yes, yes; no, no.” . . . And this Word can never have anything false in it because it unchangeably finds itself exactly as he from who it is finds himself. (*Trin.* 15.14.23)

Although the pre-linguistic human word is “something *like* that Word of God which is also God, since this one is born of our knowledge as that one was born of the Father’s,” the human word suffers from falsehood through ignorance and error whereas God’s Word is always true as a result of divine omniscience, consubstantiality, and simplicity (*Trin.* 15.14.24). The Father knows all things and the Son knows all things that the Father knows, thus there is no discrepancy in the “yes, yes; no, no” of the immanent Trinity. This is a model of the properly functioning intellect that human beings had in the garden and that will be restored in the resurrected elect. In the *saeculum*, the intellect may undergo healing and renewal but never in this lifetime will it escape error or its miserable necessities.³⁸

³⁸ Augustine offers fascinating consolation to Laurentius about the necessity of error in the political realm (see *ench.* 5.17). His counsel is roughly analogous to the contemporaneous discussion of the miserable necessities under which judgment and human action take place within Varro’s three levels of human society—household, city, and world [*domo, civitas/urbis, and orbis*] (see *civ.* 19.5–7).

3.5.3 LIES: KNOWING AND WILLING FALSE WORDS

Due to the mind's created limitations of ignorance in combination with the errors endemic to post-Fall human knowing, the mind generates a great many falsehoods. And yet it is clear that not every falsehood generated and expressed sensibly constitutes a lie. Sensibly signified falsehoods may be expressed willingly or unwillingly, and it is primarily this distinction that differentiates errors from lies in one's communication with others. False significations that are errors derive not from a willingness to convey falsehood but from a will that intends to convey truth about which the intellect happens to be mistaken. Errors are false significations willingly signified but unknowingly false—the signification is willed and known whereas the falsehood is unwilled and unknown. Lies on the other hand are false significations performed willingly and knowingly. Thus, lying presents a third-order deficiency. Lying is not a deficiency merely of ignorance, or even of ignorance and intellect, but also, necessarily, of will. With respect to the lie, it is irrelevant whether the person *really* signifies a falsehood (that is, regarding the reality that obtains in the world); what matters is whether the person *intends* to signify falsehood (that is, regarding what the agent believes to be true). Careful attention to this intention pays dividends where interpreting Augustine is concerned.

4. Conclusion: Lying and Necessity after the Image of God

How then shall we read Augustine's ethics of lying? What can we say about the hermeneutics of familiarization and defamiliarization, lying and killing as analogous or disanalogous acts, and intertextual-canonical and genetic-historical interpretive methods? From the vantage of *De Trinitate* 15, there are clear warrants for a genetic-historical reading that attends closely to developments in Augustine's moral reasoning regarding the definition of lying, its necessity, and its relation to the image of God. In the standard interpretation, the "intention to deceive" is one of two essential elements of Augustine's definition of lying.³⁹ However, in Augustine's earliest exposition of lying, the intention to deceive is not an essential feature of the definition of a lie, and for this reason jokes are considered lies in *en. Ps.* 5. Subsequently, texts from *De mendacio* to *Contra mendacium* repeatedly affirm that "a lie is a false signification told with an intention to deceive" and, because joking lacks the element of an "intention to deceive," Augustine allows it a moral sanction that he consistently withholds from lying. Significantly, in the texts prior to *De*

³⁹ See *mend.* 3.3–5.5; *qu.* 6.11; *c. mend.* 12.26, 14.29; and *ench.* 7.22. As noted above, all of these are subsequent to *en. Ps.* 5.

Trinitate 15, the second word of the “yes, yes; no, no” refers to the *external* and *sensible* signification that is either true or false to the knowledge one has in mind, so to speak, within the rational soul. Finally, in *De Trinitate* 15, the unprecedented location of both the pre-linguistic word *and* the second, sign-assuming word *within* the rational soul, alters Augustine’s conception of both the lie and its constitutive “intention to deceive” in important and often-overlooked respects that indicate developments beyond the standard interpretation.⁴⁰ Here, a lie is willingly false, but it lacks the “intention to deceive.”

If Augustine had been following the pattern of his earlier writings on lying, he would have invoked the “intention to deceive” [*fallendi voluntas*], defining lying as the knowing selection of a false sign to be assumed by the second word with an intention to *deceive* regarding the first word. However, Augustine asserts only that the second word is willingly and knowingly *false*: “When we lie we willfully [*volentes*] and knowingly

⁴⁰ Paradigmatically, the first and second words are construed in terms of thought and speech, respectively, though sensible gestures other than speech are equally signifiers in Augustine’s account. He takes scriptural references to the heart [*cor*] and to the mind [*mens*] as roughly interchangeable, understanding both as references to the “inner human” [*interior homo*] of 2 Corinthians 4:16 (see, *ep. Io. tr.* 38.10, s. 117, *nat. gr.* 77). Whereas an error is a false signification lacking a will to deceive, a lie is a false signification having a will to deceive. Identifying this distinction helps explain certain differences between the interpretations of Decosimo, Griffiths, and myself. My account maps Augustine’s distinction between intellect and will onto his use of the *falsa significatio* and *fallendi voluntas*, thereby identifying distinct relations or ‘modes of generation’ that the intellect and will exhibit in generating a lie. Decosimo and Griffiths effectively collapse knowing and willing into the mind’s generation of the *falsa significatio*, assigning the *fallendi voluntas* to intentions about the external effects on *another’s* mind (see Decosimo 2010, 663–64; Griffiths 2004, 27–31). Decosimo and Griffiths both find Augustine puzzling on this point because it is clear to both that Augustine does not consistently affirm that such effects are necessary to the lie in the manner that their interpretations of the *fallendi voluntas* would seem to require and predict. Griffiths’s response is to assert that Augustine must be mistaken in asserting the *fallendi voluntas* is an essential feature of the lie. According to Griffiths, the *fallendi voluntas* is typically present, but the *falsa significatio* suffices for a lie. Decosimo responds by accepting Augustine’s assertions regarding the necessity of the *fallendi voluntas*, and (using the same expansive definition of the *falsa significatio* as Griffiths) argues that Augustine misjudges cases as lies where they meet the *falsa significatio* criterion but clearly fail to satisfy the *fallendi voluntas* criterion as he interprets it. These apparent inconsistencies in Augustine’s expositions disappear once one recognizes that what Decosimo and Griffiths attribute to the *falsa significatio* already includes what Augustine refers to as *fallendi voluntas*. So, although my interpretation formally agrees with Decosimo and disagrees with Griffiths in affirming the *fallendi voluntas* is essential to the lie, due to materially different accounts of the *fallendi voluntas*, my account remains in basic disagreement with both Decosimo and Griffiths. For related reasons, Griffiths’s “duplicious signification,” which he uses as a synonym for false signification—“Augustine does sometimes use ‘false’ as shorthand for ‘duplicious’” (Griffiths 2004, 27)—also aggregates the two essential features of a lie (*fallendi voluntas* and *falsa significatio*), and is thus more expansive than Augustine’s *falsa significatio*.

[*scientes*] have a false [*falsum*] word, where the true word is that we are lying" (*Trin.* 15.15.24). The difference is small but key. In *De Trinitate* 15, the lie takes place within the rational soul itself. Before a word is outwardly signified, it is already a lie once the mind willingly selects a signifier knowing that the resultant sign-assuming word is false in relation to the pre-linguistic word. This false word [*falsum verbum*] is functionally analogous to the previous false signification [*falsa significatio*]. It must be willed as false, but the previously essential intention to deceive is no longer essential.⁴¹ After numerous writings on lying in which the *fallendi voluntas* is repeatedly affirmed as one of two constitutive features of the lie, Augustine drops this feature while explicating the lie within the rational soul. Instead, the willingly generated false word in the rational soul is a lie when it is generated for *any* malevolent work. And, this makes good sense given the way that Augustine explores the image of God and the "yes, yes; no, no" within *De Trinitate*. The novel and pronounced interiority of the lie suggests that something much more pernicious is at work in *De Trinitate's* account of lying than in previous definitions involving the *fallendi voluntas*.

The lie within the rational soul is *sui generis*. Willingly and knowingly generating a false sign-assuming second word about good works is not one sin among many, or simply the source of all sins of deception, but rather the genesis of *every* sin. Having located the origin of sin in a deficient or evil will (in *civ* 12.7), Augustine now projects that insight back into the rational soul's Trinitarian and Christological dynamics. Lacking the *fallendi voluntas*, a lie in the rational soul is knowingly and willingly generated not so much in order to deceive as it is generated by a rational soul that has already been deceived and now suffers the evil of that deception (see *civ.* 11.13, 14.11; *ench.* 5.17; *Trin.* 15.16.26). Each lie in the rational soul bears false witness about the triune God's true and rightful place as the *summum bonum* and the rational soul's immediately subordinate dominion over the creation as the *imago trinitatis*, the highest of all created natures. The lie's active mis-orienting of will recapitulates the Fall of Adam and of the angels, and thus unites the rational soul with the founders of the *civitas terrena*.

Given this more expansive meaning that Augustine attributes to lying—a willingly false word in the *imago trinitatis*, the genesis of every sin—he could hardly consider such a lie morally necessary. Long before this late account of

⁴¹ It might be thought, and not without some warrant, that the rational soul's willing and knowing generation of this false word is an impotent attempt to deceive the Trinity who is more intimately present to the rational soul than it is to itself (*conf.* 3.6.11). Augustine makes no mention here, however, of any attempts to deceive anyone, whether God, oneself, or others. Admittedly, Augustine's moral psychology leaves room for interesting possibilities of self-deception—perhaps even deceiving oneself that God does not see what takes place in the pre-linguistic processes of the rational soul (see Mathewes 1999).

lying, the early exposition of Psalm 5:7 presents the sole text in which Augustine allows for an exceptional case of a necessary lie. Noting that Augustine quickly and explicitly overturned this judgment, the scholarly consensus regarding Augustine's absolute prohibition of lying is correct, but only from the time of *De mendacio* forward. The Trinitarian and Christological interpretation of the *imago trinitatis* in terms of two words—one an immanent procession and one an economic mission, both within the rational soul—lends even greater support to his repeated claims that lying is never necessary. After 395, the consistent attribution of non-necessity to lying sets lying apart from the “necessities” of torture, killing, and war from which Augustine begs God's deliverance in *De civitate dei* 19.⁴²

Thus, lying and killing are morally disanalogous acts according to Augustine's moral vision. Whereas killing brings death to the body, “lying kills the rational soul” (Wisdom 1:11; see also *mend.* 6, 9, 31, 33). Our careful reading of Augustine on lying and his conception of the *imago trinitatis* indicates how he is able to affirm lying's absolute prohibition without having to affirm analogous arguments about killing (pace Decosimo and Weaver). Retracing Augustine's Trinitarian and Christological account of true words and lies within the rational soul enables us to understand how Augustine comes to see lying not only as the origin of the split between the two cities but also as the genesis of every evil work. Distinct judgments regarding the possible necessity or absolute prohibition of lying and killing are justified on the grounds that they are formally disanalogous acts in his moral reasoning.

Finally, from the vantage that *De Trinitate* 15 affords of developments in Augustine's ethics of lying, we gain an appreciation for how competing understandings of his ethics derive from distinct reading strategies and interpretive premises. Few of Augustine's readers today attend to the way that his doctrine of the Trinity and the image of God inform his moral reasoning about lying. And Griffiths is certainly correct to emphasize the particular theological commitments that underwrite and give shape to an Augustinian prohibition of lying based upon *De Trinitate* 15. On the other hand, in those writings from the previous three and a half decades, during which Augustine repeatedly returns to the question of lying, his reasoning makes no mention of the image of God or of Trinitarian analogies to the generation of true and false words in the rational soul. Thus, if we insist on reading earlier texts in light of the later *De Trinitate* 15, we threaten to import not-yet-developed insights and to distort the moral reasoning on offer. Still, at any period in Augustine's development, once we have the theological

⁴² See *civ.* 19.5–7. Such miserable necessities warrant Augustine's echo of the psalmist's plea, “Deliver me from my necessities” (Psalm 25:17) as well as other prayers for the “necessary mercy” [*misericordia necessaria*] of God (*civ.* 19.6, 9).

commitments informing Augustine's moral reasoning in view, we need not affirm their details in order to recognize that Augustine's practices of reason-giving are intelligibly familiar, much as Bowlin observes. As a result, the respects in which his moral reasoning requires familiarization and defamiliarization is a function of several variables. Such variables will include, at the very least, which of Augustine's commitments we recognize, which ones we share, and which may be anachronistic to the particular text in view.

We began with some basic questions. What is Augustine's definition of lying? Why is lying never necessary whereas killing sometimes is? And, how does the image of God inform Augustine's moral reasoning about lying? In conversation with other interpretations of Augustine, we have found it necessary to interrogate the implicit assumptions of such questions. Across his corpus, Augustine does not present readers with only one definition of lying, a single treatment of lying's necessity, or a consistent mapping vis-à-vis the image of God. As a result, answering questions about Augustine's ethics of lying requires that we first seek to understand Augustine in his historical and moral complexity. Whose Augustine? Which moral reasoning? At what point in his development?

Augustine's writings on lying are not univocal, even if the vast majority align with the standard scholarly interpretation. Augustine's earliest and final writings exhibit departures from, and developments before and after, the canonical account—in their definitions of lying and its essential features, in affirming lying's non-necessity, and in the role played by the image of God in his ethics. Both the definition of a lie and its constitutive features exhibit development across Augustine's writings—from *en. Ps. 5*, through texts informing the standard interpretation, to the internalization of the image of God in the account of *De Trinitate 15*, inflected with Augustine's Trinitarian and Christological commitments. Likewise, the possible necessity of lying constitutes a formal similarity to killing in the earliest writings, a necessity that is subsequently denied in texts that inform the standard interpretation, and whose arguments are only bolstered by theological expositions of lying in the rational soul. Retracing Augustine's ethics of lying and explaining manifestly divergent judgments such as these necessitates careful attention to developments in his moral reasoning and to the image of God therein.⁴³

⁴³ I am grateful to the Ethics Colloquium at Villanova University and to the 2015 Augustine and Politics Colloquium for their thoughtful engagements with earlier drafts of this article.

Abbreviations

	LATIN TITLE	ENGLISH TRANSLATION
<i>Acad.</i>	<i>Contra Academicos</i>	<i>Answer to Skeptics</i>
<i>c. mend</i>	<i>Contra mendacium</i>	<i>Against Lying</i>
<i>civ.</i>	<i>De civitate Dei</i>	<i>The City of God</i>
<i>conf.</i>	<i>Confessiones</i>	<i>The Confessions</i>
<i>div. qu.</i>	<i>De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus</i>	<i>Miscellany of Eighty-Three Questions</i>
<i>en. Ps.</i>	<i>Enarrationes in Psalmos</i>	<i>Expositions of the Psalms</i>
<i>ench.</i>	<i>Enchiridion de fide et spe et caritate</i>	<i>Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Charity</i>
<i>ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae</i>	<i>Letters</i>
<i>ep. Io. tr.</i>	<i>In epistolam Iohannis tractatus</i>	<i>Homilies on the First Epistle of John</i>
<i>Gn. litt.</i>	<i>De Genesi ad litteram</i>	<i>The Literal Meaning of Genesis</i>
<i>Gn. litt. inp.</i>	<i>De Genesi ad litteram imperfectus</i>	<i>Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis</i>
<i>lib. arb.</i>	<i>De libero arbitrio</i>	<i>The Freedom of the Will</i>
<i>mend.</i>	<i>De mendacio</i>	<i>Lying</i>
<i>op. mon.</i>	<i>De opere monachorum</i>	<i>The Works of Monks</i>
<i>persev.</i>	<i>De dono perseverantiae</i>	<i>The Gift of Perseverance</i>
<i>qu.</i>	<i>Quaestiones in Heptateuchum</i>	<i>Questions Concerning the Heptateuch</i>
<i>s.</i>	<i>Sermones</i>	<i>Sermons</i>
<i>s. Dom. mon.</i>	<i>De sermone Domini in monte</i>	<i>The Sermon on the Mount</i>
<i>spir. et litt.</i>	<i>De spiritu et litteram</i>	<i>The Spirit and the Letter</i>
<i>Trin.</i>	<i>De Trinitate</i>	<i>The Trinity</i>
<i>vera rel.</i>	<i>De vera religione</i>	<i>True Religion</i>

*All abbreviations for Augustine's texts follow Pollmann and Ottem 2013, xiii–xvi.

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