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Moussa Maireche
Abbas Laghrour University Khenchela, Algeria
https://orcid.org/0009-0003-0163-8938
momaireche@univ-khenchela.dz
Menar Maireche
Hassiba Ben Bouali University Chlef, Algeria
https://orcid.org/0009-0006-8566-5133
memaireche@gmail.com

The Problem of Lying in Augustine's Philosophy Critical and Analytical Research

Abstract

This research paper aims to examine a significant issue that concerned Augustine in many of his writings and intrigued him due to the epistemological questions it raised regarding the understanding of Christianity: the issue of lying. Augustine discussed this subject to resolve apparent contradictions in certain Biblical texts and to address the conflict between Paul and Peter in interpreting these texts. By exploring his analysis, we seek to understand Augustine's approach to the topic and the conclusions he reached.

The issue of lying is notably important and complex because of the beliefs, attitudes, and actions influences, all of which are directly tied to human behavior across all times. Exploring this issue, especially regarding its legitimacy and boundaries, can help answer various pressing questions that confront humanity, regardless of one's beliefs, be they Christian, adherents of other faiths, or even those lacking faith. These questions include those related to the nature of lying, its extent, legitimacy, and the outcomes associated with it.

To accomplish this, we return to Augustine's sources on the topic as a whole, rather than limiting ourselves to his works "About Lying" and "Against Lying", as many studies do. Instead, we examine sources where he addressed the topic indirectly, offering a more comprehensive view.

This study employs a critical analytical method, which not only involves analyzing Augustine's view but also evaluating and reconstructing it, providing a nuanced and insightful perspective rather than a mere summary.

Keywords: *Augustine, lying, Against Lying, the legitimacy of lying, forms of lying*

Moussa Maireche
Abbas Laghrour Universiteti Khenchela, Əlcəzair
https://orcid.org/0009-0003-0163-8938
momaireche@univ-khenchela.dz
Menar Maireche
Hassiba Ben Bouali Universiteti Chlef, Əlcəzair
https://orcid.org/0009-0006-8566-5133
memaireche@gmail.com

Avqustin fəlsəfəsində yalan problemi. Tənqidi və analitik tədqiqat

Xülasə

Bu tədqiqat işi, Avqustinin çoxsaylı əsərlərində toxunduğu və xristianlığın anlaşılması ilə bağlı epistemoloji suallar doğurduğu üçün onu maraqlandıran mühüm bir məsələyə — yalan məsələsinə — baxmağı məqsəd qoyur. Avqustin bu mövzunu müəyyən Bibliya mətnlərindəki zahiri ziddiyyətləri aradan qaldırmaq və bu mətnlərin şərhində Pavel ilə Peter arasındakı fikir ayrılığını

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izah etmək üçün müzakirə etmişdir. Onun təhlilini araşdırmaqla, Avqustinin mövzuya yanaşmasını və gəldiyi nəticələri anlamağa çalışırıq.

Yalan problemi inanclar, münasibətlər və hərəkətlər üzərində təsirinə görə xüsusilə mühüm və mürəkkəbdir, çünki bu amillər bütün dövrlərdə insan davranışı ilə birbaşa bağlıdır. Bu məsələnin qanuniliyi və sərhədləri baxımından araşdırılması insanlığı — istər xristian olsun, istər başqa dinlərin tərəfdarı, istərsə də inancı olmayanlar — daim düşündürən müxtəlif fundamental suallara cavab tapmağa kömək edə bilər. Bu suallar yalana dair mahiyyət, miqyas, qanunilik və onunla bağlı nəticələr kimi məsələləri əhatə edir.

Bu məqsədə çatmaq üçün biz yalnız "Yalan haqqında" və "Yalana qarşı" əsərləri ilə məhdudlaşmırıq, çünki bir çox tədqiqatlar məhz bu əsərlərlə kifayətlənmişdir. Əksinə, Avqustinin mövzuya dolayı yolla toxunduğu digər mənbələrə də müraciət edərək daha əhatəli bir baxış bucağı təqdim edirik.

Bu tədqiqat tənqidi-analitik metoddan istifadə edir ki, bu da yalnız Avqustinin baxışlarını təhlil etməklə kifayətlənməyib, həm də onları qiymətləndirmək və yenidən qurmaq imkanı verir. Beləliklə, sadəcə bir xülasə deyil, dərin və düşünülmüş bir yanaşma ortaya qoyulur.

Açar sözlər: *Avqustin, yalan, "Yalana qarşı", yalanın qanuniliyi, yalanın formaları*

Introduction

Augustine represents a unique philosophical and religious phenomenon in the history of the philosophy of religion, given the philosophical and religious works he left behind. These works were the result of discussions and debates that led to numerous writings and correspondences addressing various theological and epistemological issues. Some of these issues are ancient, with relevance extending to his time and even to the ages that followed, while others are connected solely to his era. What unites them all is their connection to human life and concerns.

When examining Augustine's philosophy and interests, one finds that they largely revolve around real problems posed by his era. Among these significant issues that occupied him is the problem of lying, which caught his attention and led him to place it at the core of his primary topics. Although this subject is ancient and had already been addressed by philosophy, and was also a well-known topic among Christian theologians due to its connection to religious doctrines and the sensitivities and debates it provokes (Sarr, 2010, p. 9-29), Augustine's interest is evident in the works he left behind. These works have remained subjects of appreciation and study by those interested in his philosophy and theology in the different ages that followed, regardless of their orientations and beliefs.

In this context, Yuhanna al-Hilu wrote in the preface to his translation of Augustine's book "On Lying", saying: "Saint Augustine devoted two treatises to lying: the first appeared in 395 under the title "On Lying", and the second appeared in 420 under the title "Against Lying".

His discussion of lying was not limited to these two treatises; he also included his views on lying in his various letters due to the importance of this subject in defending the truth, to which he dedicated himself" (Augustine, 2007, p. 115).

Moreover, he returned to discuss the topic in his book "Reconsiderations" (Les Rétractations), where we find him saying: "I also wrote a book on lying; although it requires some effort to be understood, it can serve as a useful exercise for the mind and intelligence, and even more so be beneficial to morals by fostering a love for sincerity in speech. I had also decided to withdraw this book from my works because it is obscure and full of complexities; it seemed quite unbearable to me, and so I had not published it. Later, when I wrote another one titled "Against Lying", I had even more strictly decided and ordered it to be destroyed. This was not carried out. I found it intact during the revision of my works; and after reviewing it, I decided it should remain, for there are indeed some very necessary points in it that are not in the other. The title of the latter is "Against Lying"; the title of the former is "On Lying". The former is entirely an open attack against lying, while the latter is largely an inquiry and discussion. Nonetheless, the aim of both is the same. The work begins as follows: 'It is a great question, that of lying".

Which reveals the clear importance of the subject

Study Problem:

The issue this study discusses revolves around the nature of lying in Augustine's philosophy in its various manifestations. We address it by answering several specific questions, the most important of which are: What is the reason behind Augustine's interest in lying? Is this interest driven by a passion for knowledge, or is it to address an important theological issue? Then, are there multiple forms of lying, or is there only one form? Can lying be considered legitimate under certain specific circumstances, or is it condemned in all cases? Did the Bible address this issue, and how did Augustine handle this discussion? Since Augustine sparked numerous controversies, did he accuse his opponents of lying? Finally, in his writings and personal life, did he avoid lying, or was he a liar himself?

Study Methodology:

From a methodological perspective, it is clear that a methodology should be an end in itself rather than a mere means. Therefore, our study does not aim to apply a pre-prepared method to our research on Augustine's philosophy of lying; instead, we seek to find a method that suits the nature of the study.

To clarify, we found no method more suitable for addressing the study's problem than the critical-analytical method. The subject requires a critical-analytical study because we are not merely aiming to define Augustine's perspective on the problem at hand; we also intend to discuss it further. This is especially relevant given the argumentative nature of Augustine's method in his writings in general and in his discussion of the issue of lying in particular.

Study Objectives:

This study aims to reveal three main objectives:

1. The motivations behind Augustine's study of lying.
2. Highlighting the nature of Augustine's concept of lying.
3. Assessing the significance of what Augustine wrote on the subject and its impact on those who came after him.

Previous Studies:

To study the issue of lying in Augustine, due to its significance, it is necessary for the researcher to be familiar with the key studies that have previously addressed it. Methodologically, two types of studies can be considered:

- The first type includes similar studies, meaning those that addressed the topic of lying in general, or Augustine's studies other than those on lying. In this context, many studies can be cited, to the extent that it can be said that interest in Augustine has been prominent and evident. This is reflected in the vast number of studies and research. However, most of these studies have neglected fundamental aspects of Augustine’s interests, including our topic, which leaves us without a convincing scientific explanation. What distinguishes these studies is that they have aimed to reveal the general contours of Augustine’s thinking rather than its specific details.

To emphasize our point, we can refer to some of the works that have overlooked the topic of lying. For instance, Christian Nado dedicated many pages in her book "Vocabulary and Style in Saint Augustine" to various values and topics that preoccupied the man she writes about, including: cities, the soul, love and desire, authority, bliss, beauty, goodness, charity, thought, lust, the creator, the expansion of souls, eternity, being, the end, mercy, pleasure and benefit, justice, freedom and will, natural law, the inner master, evil, Manichaeism, memory, order, feelings and emotions, Pelagianism, philosophy, the mind, the region, difference, wisdom, revelation and sign, time, the Trinity, the mind, truth, and will" (Nadal, 2014, p. 6-5).

And this is also observed in Étienne Gilson's book titled "Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages" (Gilson, 2009), where he neglects the topic of lying. The same applies to Peter Brown's book on the life and philosophy of Augustine (Brown, 1971).

As for Arab researchers, both Muslim and Christian, their writings have not deviated from this trend. For instance, the Christian thinker Youssef Karam overlooks the topic in his book "The History of European Philosophy in the Middle Ages" (Karam, 2012). The same applies to the

Muslim Ali Zayour in his book "Augustine with Introductions to Christian Doctrine and Medieval Philosophy" (Zayour, 1983), in addition to the book "Philosophy of the Middle Ages" by Abdel Rahman Badawi (Badawi, 1979).

Regarding studies that have addressed the topic of lying in general, they are limited despite their importance. These include Jacques Derrida's study on the history of lying (Derrida, 2012), Frederick A. Siegler's article "Lying," published in the "American Philosophical Quarterly" in 1966 (Siegler, 1966, pp. 128-136), and Don Fallis's article "What Is Lying?" published in 2009 in "The Journal of Philosophy" (Fallis, 2009, pp. 29-56).

The second category of previous studies is comparative studies, referring to those that address the topic of lying in Augustine. We did not find books or chapters specifically dedicated to this topic, but rather, we encountered a few published studies in academic journals. These include: "Lying from Plato to Augustine" by the Senegalese researcher (Sarr, 2010, pp. 9-29), "Augustine on Lying" (Hermanowicz, 2018), and "Augustine on Lying: A Theoretical Framework for the Study of Types of Falsehood," which is an attempt by the author to apply semiotic methods to Augustine's view on lying (Gramigna, December 2013, pp. 446-486). Although these articles are limited in number, they are very important for studying our topic. However, they are not without shortcomings in addressing the subject and rely on specific sources from Augustine without consulting his other works. This justifies our study, which aims to pose new, deeper, more comprehensive, and precise questions.

Study Steps:

To achieve the intended goal of this paper and address the problem it raises with clarity and distinction, it has been divided as follows:

- Introduction: This section covers the importance of the study, its issues, methodology, previous studies, as well as its objectives, results, and steps.

1. Augustine's concept of lying, its legitimacy, and its forms.

2. The way Augustine addressed the problem of lying in the Bible and Christian tradition.

3. The mutual accusations between Augustine and his opponents regarding the practice of lying.

- Conclusion: This section presents the results reached in this study.

Study Results:

1. The relevance of Augustine's thinking: Although the topic of lying was not new, it was relevant in his time.

2. The courage to address and discuss contemporary issues.

3. The religious and methodological commitment of the man, and the consistency of his vision with his beliefs.

Research

1.Augustine's Concept of Lying, Its Legitimacy, Forms, and Limits:

It is very important to discuss Augustine's concept of lying, its legitimacy, and its limits, as this forms the theoretical framework for our issue. This prompts us to first question the motives that led him to focus on it.

1.1. Motivations for Augustine's Interest in Lying:

Regardless of the motivations behind the interest of researchers and philosophers before Augustine in the topic of lying, it is essential to question the reasons why Augustine himself focused on it. The legitimacy of this question stems from the nature and role of Augustine; he was not an ordinary figure. On the contrary, his religious, theological, and even philosophical status made him influential. Additionally, each philosopher has their own reasons for addressing specific issues, and the reasons for one philosopher's interest in a topic may not necessarily justify another's interest in the same subject.

John the Sweet attributes Augustine's interest in studying lying as a moral and religious value to objective reasons born from historical circumstances, rather than intellectual luxury. He notes that the first article supports Paul's position against Peter, while the second letter, or rather the second article, was written in response to and criticism of the followers of Priscillian (Augustine, "On Lying, 2007, p. 125).

This shows that the topic of lying was not exclusively Augustinian but was also previously addressed. It had sparked debate and discussion among earlier leaders of Christian thought and theology. This stimulates our curiosity to understand the perspectives that preceded Augustine on this subject.

After gathering the two articles into one book, Augustine introduced them with two questions to frame the issue and precisely outline the steps he would take in the book. He states: "Where does lying lie? Is it permissible to commit it from time to time? This is what we aim to discuss later, based on various examples and motivations. Therefore, we will present eight types of lying that we will study, reject completely, and prove that lying is strictly forbidden" (Augustine, "On Lying, 2007, p. 125).

On the other hand, a researcher in Augustine's philosophy and theology cannot ignore or overlook the discussion of the sources of his culture that shape his thinking and determine his stance on this issue, or others. These sources undoubtedly fall into the following areas:

- The prevailing philosophical heritage of his time, which Augustine was well-acquainted with, whether this philosophical knowledge came before or after his conversion to Christianity. This can be seen in his own "Confessions".

- The sacred Christian and Jewish heritage, which is evident from his explanations and studies of this tradition. In this context, one can refer to some of Augustine's works related to this, such as his "Sermons on the Psalms".

- The correspondence between Augustine and many bishops and prominent clergy, such as Jerome (Hieronymus), and others. Therefore, it is logical and methodological to incorporate these elements into our discussion of the topic.

However, the question that naturally arises here has two aspects: the first concerns the possibility of Augustine adhering to a particular pre-existing perspective, and the second involves how Augustine justified various forms of lying found in the Bible, despite them being attributed to individuals expected to embody absolute truth.

1.2. Augustine's Concept of Lying and Its Forms:

Augustine approaches the issue of lying by attempting to define it, distinguishing it from error and from jest—though he sometimes conflates them in other studies. Lying is not merely saying something wrong and believing it; it involves the intention behind it. He clarifies this by stating: "A liar is someone who thinks one thing and presents another through words—or any kind of signs and gestures. It is said that a liar deceives in his heart, as he harbors two meanings in his mind: he accepts and retains what he knows to be true, without saying it, while simultaneously presenting an alternative, knowing it to be false" (Augustine, "On Lying, 2007, p. 125).

He adds elsewhere that lying involves a person saying "something that does not correspond to his knowledge and thought," and speech is only considered lying if the speaker intends to deceive others through it. However, if someone says something incorrect but is aware of its falsehood in order to prevent the listener from being deceived—because he knows that his interlocutor does not believe him or at least thinks that he will not be believed—he is not considered a liar (Augustine, 2007, p.125).

So, did Augustine adhere to this conception of lying and its forms in his discussions, or not? Answering this question leads us to understand the forms or types of lying he defined and how we should interpret them.

We cannot fully grasp Augustine's stance on lying unless we investigate whether he conflates different recognized forms of lying or distinguishes between them. This necessitates a direct examination of the texts he wrote in his various relevant works, particularly in his book on lying.

We found that Augustine identifies eight forms of lying, which can be outlined as follows (Augustine, "On Lying, 2007, p. 125):

- Basic Lying: Generally refers to lying related to matters of divinity and everything sacred, which should be avoided completely, regardless of the reasons behind it.

- Harmful Lying: Described as causing harm to the target, constituting aggression and injustice, and cannot be accepted. Despite its harmful nature, it does not benefit the liar.

- Self-Serving Lying: This type of lying benefits the liar while harming others. It is used to gain advantages for the liar at the expense of the target's well-being.

- Authentic Lying Arising from a Desire to Deceive: Lying that originates from an inherent desire to deceive and cheat.

- Lying to Gain Approval: This type aims to please others by distorting the truth to avoid causing them distress. It is often observed among employees or advisors seeking to gain the trust of their superiors.

- Lying That Benefits Without Harm: This type of lying achieves an advantage for the liar without causing harm to the target.

- Lying That Does Not Harm but Benefits Others: This form of lying does not harm either the liar or the target of the lie but benefits the subject of the lie itself.

- Lying That Does Not Harm Anyone but Protects from Sensory Filth: This type of lying does not cause any harm and serves to protect from sensory impurities.

So, did Augustine limit himself to these forms, or did he include others? In fact, upon reviewing Augustine's other writings, including his sermons, we find that he mentions two additional types. He also adds three more types in his correspondence with Hieronymus, making a total of five additional forms. Consequently, we encounter thirteen types of lying, not just eight, as outlined below:

- Joking Lying: This is noted in his "Sermons on the Psalms", where he says: "The nature of joking lying does not carry serious danger, as the person we lie to is fully aware that our lie is meant to be playful" (Augustine, "Sermons on the Psalms", Volume 1 (1-36)). Contrary to what is mentioned in his book "On Lying", this type is not considered deceitful. In "On Lying", Augustine excludes joking from lying, arguing that "the nature of someone who jokes should not involve deceit in their speech... we should not include those who do not engage in lying on the list of liars" (Augustine, "On Lying", 2007).

- Lying to Perform a Service.

Regarding these two types or forms of lying, Augustine believes they do not pose a danger to the liar or to others, although they are not without sin. In his attempt to clarify these concepts, his Greek cultural background and familiarity with Plato's dialogues become apparent. He even borrows the same illustrative examples used by Plato through Socrates in "The Republic" when discussing justice. Augustine uses the example of a sword entrusted to a friend, which should not be returned during moments of anger or insanity to avoid harming others or oneself (Augustine, 1-36, p. 39). This is akin to Plato's view in "The Republic", where it is argued that justice does not require returning a sword to its owner in such circumstances (Plato, 1994, p. 46).

- White Lies: Augustine uses this term in the correspondence between him and Hieronymus, saying: "It is enough to accept a white lie, so that nothing remains from the text. Every time we face a judgment that is difficult to apply or a doctrine that is open to doubt, we try to avoid it by resorting to the notion of the malicious white lie" (Hieronymus, 2011).

- Instrumental Lying: This type of lying is used in certain cases, reflecting some of Paul's writings in his texts (Hieronymus, 2011). It is the magical solution Augustine resorts to in order to justify some forms of lying that he cannot ignore.

To summarize the previous types, we can refer to earlier classifications, such as the one provided by researcher Pierre Sarr, who divided them into four categories (Sarr, 2010, pp. 9-29):

- Blasphemous lies
- Unjust lies
- Honest lies
- Gratuitous lies

However, this classification seems imprecise, leading us to refine it into three categories as follows:

- The first type is beneficial lying.
- The second type is harmful lying.
- The third type is neutral lying.

It appears to us that this variation is due to the difference in the period during which the man's works appeared and the evolution of his thought. This aligns with his vision that we have seen in many of his writings, where he, for instance, admits in his book "Reviews" that he was not fully satisfied with what he wrote in his two essays on lying. He even recommended at one point in his life that they be destroyed. However, he later saw the necessity of keeping and publishing them, without this stance preventing him from discussing the topic in other works, as we can see.

However, the question that remains before us concerns Augustine's ability to provide a comprehensive and definitive concept of lying in his various works. The truth is that answering this question does not seem easy. Augustine's persistent attempts to define the concept of lying were always met with previous texts and preconceived notions, making it difficult to reach the intended goal. Nonetheless, his ability to discuss his topics and his skill in argumentation and persuasion allow him to convince his listeners or readers, even if he himself is not convinced by what he says. This leads to a contradiction within himself. It is enough to consider this statement to understand the dilemma he faced: "Speech is considered lying only if the speaker intends to deceive others through it. Knowing that someone who says something incorrect is not lying, even if they are aware of it, in order to persuade the listener or to reject belief in it, or at least to make them think that they will not believe it" (Augustine, On Lying, 2007, p. 125).

It becomes clear to us the man's encyclopedic knowledge and his clear understanding of his subject, which qualifies him to discuss it, as well as the relevance of his topics and his ability to debate and persuade his opponents. The man is a distinguished debater with a great capacity to lead his followers to his views, being an old master of the art of rhetoric. The purpose of rhetoric is to sway the audience to the speaker's opinion.

From the above, it can be said that Augustine's concept of lying in his book "On Lying" was not adhered to strictly. Thus, he extended beyond the eight types of lying he initially outlined to include five additional types, resulting in a classification of thirteen forms of lying.

1.3. The legitimacy and limits of Augustinian lying:

One who examines the texts related to lying in both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible will find that it addresses the topic of lying in various forms previously defined by Augustine. It is even mentioned that many prophets and saints either practiced it or accused others of practicing it. At the same time, the commandments of this book are filled with exhortations to be truthful, reveal the truth, and avoid deceit, both outwardly and inwardly. This leads us to attempt to interpret and overcome this contradiction.

Certainly, Augustine's awareness of these truths is not in doubt, as he himself expresses when he says: "Divine commandments prohibit lying... Teachings and principles drawn from the lives of the saints—the divine commandment urges you to turn the other cheek to someone who strikes you... The commandment forbids swearing altogether... The commandment advises not to worry about tomorrow... A commandment to the apostles not to take anything with them" (Augustine, "On Lying, 2007, p. 125).

In general, Augustine rejects various forms of lying and finds no justification for them, regardless of what is stated in the Bible. To resolve the contradiction that appears in the Bible regarding this issue, Augustine resorts to interpretation. This is understood from his statement: "Indeed, when the Bible speaks of the mouth, it often means the heart, the vessel where what is expressed in words is determined and established. When we speak the truth from the heart, someone who decides to lie is lying. A person can also lie without the involvement of the heart when their spoken words do not match what is in their heart, as someone who wants to avoid a great evil might commit a wrong with their freedom and hate both" (Augustine, "On Lying, 2007, p. 125).

The man concludes in his book on lying that: "Lying within the scope of religious belief is absolutely prohibited; it is a grave sin and one of the most detestable forms of lying. The second most abhorrent form of lying is also condemned, which is the case of the third type of lie, where it is not permissible to degrade one person to help another. Similarly, the fourth type of lie is condemned because any desire to lie is itself shameful and a vice, and its realization is undesirable. The fifth type is also forbidden, as if telling the truth is unacceptable for a certain group, then lying

is even worse, as it is systematically abhorred and rejected. The sixth type of lie is rejected because one who distorts the truth by providing a specific testimony for temporal service and the salvation of a person should not lead anyone to eternal salvation through a lie. The seventh type is also rejected, as we should not prioritize personal benefit or temporal safety over the establishment of complete and total truth. Finally, the eighth type of lie is condemned, and it is preferable in this area to maintain sound thinking and a pure body" (Augustine, "On Lying, 2007, p. 125).

2. Augustine's Position on Lying in the Bible and Christian Tradition:

We previously mentioned that one of the fundamental references for Augustine after his conversion to Christianity is the Christian Bible, without disregarding the Jewish religious tradition and the legacy left by his predecessors and contemporaries among the great churchmen. This raises a fundamental question about how Augustine viewed the problem of lying in these references. This leads us first to return to the Bible to investigate our topic, where we find two types of texts: the first condemns lying in general, as evidenced in the following passages (Augustine, 2015):

- Some purely Christian texts, meaning texts that are believed in only by Christians.
- Shared texts, meaning Jewish texts that are believed in by both Christians and Jews.

If we want to go into detail, Augustine encountered many texts in the Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments, that discuss lying, either condemning and rejecting it, or praising it. It is worthwhile to mention these texts, or at least some of them, as follows:

Regarding the texts in the Old Testament that praise lying, there are many examples, including: In the Book of Genesis, chapter 3, when discussing sin, we find the serpent accusing the Lord of lying to Adam by saying that eating from the tree of knowledge would lead to death (Genesis 3). Additionally, Jacob and his mother lie to Isaac through the scheme they devised to deprive Esau of his father's blessing and take it for themselves (Genesis 27). Moreover, Sarah lied to her husband's guests, and her husband also lied to Pharaoh by claiming that Sarah was his sister rather than his wife (Genesis 18:15).

As for the texts that condemn lying and warn against it, there are many examples, including: those found in Exodus (Exodus 9:5, 23:7), Deuteronomy (Deuteronomy 19:18), Judges (Judges 16:10), as well as numerous texts in the Psalms, appearing sixteen times in total, specifically in Psalms (63, 62, 52, 41, 40, 31, 12, 5, 4, 139, 120, 119, 101). Additionally, there are many other texts in the books of Proverbs, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Micah, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and Zechariah. In the New Testament, several texts also reject lying, including those found in Matthew (15:7), Luke (6:26), and John (8:44). Regarding Paul's epistles, lying is condemned in the following letters: Romans (1:25), Galatians (2:4), Ephesians (4:25), 2 Thessalonians (2:11), and his letter to Titus (1:2). Finally, lying is also condemned in the Book of Revelation, specifically in Revelation (21:8).

The numerous texts we have mentioned clearly show that the issue of lying was not a marginal topic that could be overlooked, but rather an important one. This led to a dilemma for the followers of the Church and its supporters regarding the apparent contradictions in views on the subject. Augustine could not ignore this, and he made significant efforts to resolve the apparent contradictions. In this context, we can refer to what he wrote in the Book of Psalms, where he attempts to interpret the contradictions that a researcher or even a simple believer might encounter. Lying, in principle, is rejected as it falls under unacceptable values, and its seriousness is comparable to sins such as injustice, deceit, bloodshed, foolishness, and treachery (Augustine, 1-36).

However, he soon finds himself confronted with some texts that seem to praise lying, as seen in various sacred texts. He then attempts to re-read the texts and reconsider lying from another perspective, aiming to produce a new interpretation. He suggests that there is a type of lying not previously discussed, which is lying intended for the good of others and arises from compassion rather than deceit. This is how he justifies the midwives' response to Pharaoh in the Book of Exodus (Exodus 1:19), as they sought to save the male infants of the Israelites. Here, Augustine associates lying with intention rather than action. However, this form of lying is considered temporary and

should not persist. Therefore, he asserts that these individuals should avoid lying in the future and deal with similar situations with discretion instead. What is the difference between the two?

Lying is considered to be false testimony, while discretion is the suppression of truth. Therefore: "If we do not want to reveal a person who is meant to die physically, we should conceal the truth, not lie, so as not to disclose something that could result in killing a soul through lying while saving another's life. And if we are not yet prepared for such situations, let us at least strive not to lie beyond these pressing circumstances, so that God may save us even from these minor lies" (Augustine, 1-36, p. 39).

It is worth noting that many studies addressing Augustine's view on lying have accused him of ignoring these emergency situations, concluding that he did not consider such critical cases. Such studies often rely solely on Augustine's book on lying without consulting his other texts where he discusses the topic, which were published later.

Augustine draws from the Gospel of John his view on lying and truth. He believes that the truthful are blessed, while the liar expresses his own nature through his lies (John 8:44). According to him, lying is essentially a manifestation of a psychological illness (Augustine, 37-60, p. 524). Even those who bear false witness to harm others contribute to the glorification of those who wish to do harm, even if it results in injury (Augustine, (61-79), 2015, p. 424).

In a letter to Hieronymus, Augustine categorically rejects the existence of lies in the sacred texts. In this context, he states: "Nothing is more dangerous than to believe in the possibility of lies in the sacred scriptures, that is, that those whom God used to give the scriptures lied about anything" (Hieronymus, 2011, p.18).

From the above, it can be said that Augustine's significant efforts in addressing the problem of lying in certain sacred texts led him to seek to justify and interpret some of these texts, considering that metaphorical meaning predominates in ancient texts (Augustine, On Lying, 2007, p. 125). He even believes that all texts presented to support the existence of lies in the Bible must be reinterpreted in a way that denies this attribute (Hieronymus, 2011, p. 18).

3.Lying between Augustine and his Opponents:

The topic of lying cannot be fully explored without considering the mutual accusations of lying between Augustine and his opponents. What is the legitimacy and truth of these accusations?

3.1. Augustine's Opponents and Lying:

One who studies Augustine's life and his various writings will find an undeniable truth: the man had numerous enemies and opponents as well as many admirers and followers. It is important to note that the animosities Augustine faced were not personal but rather resulted from differences in theological viewpoints. In this context, we can categorize his opponents into three types:

1. Enemies of Christianity, including skeptics, Manichaeans, academics, and others.

2. Followers of certain Christian sects opposed to Catholicism, whom he described as heretics, such as the Donatists.

3. Followers of Catholicism with whom he disagreed on the understanding and interpretation of certain texts, such as Jerome.

Augustine's friends were not spared from his accusations of lying. For instance, Hieronymus, whom Augustine had previously referred to as a brother in some of his letters: "From Augustine to his dear brother and colleague in the priesthood, Hieronymus (Jerome), worthy of respect and sincere love" (Hieronymus, 2011, p. 18), is described by Augustine as not understanding the texts well and is indirectly accused of supporting falsehood. Augustine warns him of the severe consequences of his stance, leading Hieronymus to remind Augustine that he is merely a servant of Rome, tasked with bringing benefits to it, much like other young clergy appointed in North Africa. The situation escalated to Hieronymus threatening Augustine clearly, showing that he was stronger and even capable of destroying him (Jerome).

This warning is similar to the one Jerome had previously given about the translation of the Bible, which Augustine considered had stirred much controversy and skepticism among people, rendering him unable to defend it. Consequently, he had to correspond with its author, protesting and awaiting clarification. His arguments were not always strong in the correspondence; some were

weak and inconsistent. Researcher Annemaré Kotzé, in her study "Augustine, Jerome, and the Septuagint", indicates that the weakness of his arguments was due to his attachment to the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament (Kotzé) and his inability to adapt to and comprehend the new translation.

Regarding non-Christians, Augustine believed that some of them practice lying. For instance, he considered astrologers to be engaged in falsehood, seeing their activities as neither scientific nor related to scientific truths, but rather the result of fabrications and lies contrary to the truth. The same applied to the ancient Egyptian sages, who, according to Augustine, shifted people from worshipping the Creator to the worship of created beings, thus practicing deceit (Augustine, "Confessions").

With the Manichaeans, the conflict is greater and more serious, and the accusations are clear and specific. This is evident in his work "Against the Manichaeans" ("Contre les Manichéens"), where Augustine addresses the failings of their leader, Faustus the Manichaean, who had previously authored a book criticizing Christianity titled "Against Christianity". Faustus accused Catholics of false belief, and Augustine responded by labeling him as a deceiver and liar (Augustine, 1874, p. 1).

Augustine also attacks the Donatists in his work "Against the Donatists" ("Contre les Donatistes"), revealing what he sees as the lies of persecution and deviation expressed by their leader, Petilian. He exposes how these individuals seek to distort the truth, especially after his visit to Constantine, Algeria, where the Donatist bishop, Pelagian, presides. Augustine describes this group as being characterized by deviation, lying, and heresy (Augustine, "Œuvres Complètes du Saint Augustin", 1872, p. 144).

From this, we can say that Augustine, through the examples we have mentioned, frequently accused his opponents of lying, bearing false witness, and distorting the truth, regardless of whether they were heretics, non-believers, or even Catholic clergy with whom he disagreed.

It is worth noting that the practice of accusing others of lying, especially if they differ from oneself, was not new to Augustine. It was an expression of a culture that was well-known, as evidenced by figures such as Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Hilary of Poitiers, and John Chrysostom (Sarr, 2010, pp. 9-29).

3.2. Was Augustine a liar?

We cannot discuss the issue of lying with Augustine without questioning the possibility that he might have lied in his life or his works. Augustine did not address a theoretical theological topic related to concepts and assumptions, but rather, his discussion on lying is directly connected to his life and those around him, making it crucial to question and answer this issue. It is important to return to what he wrote in his Confessions about himself and various stages of his life, revealing his experiences, his struggles before converting to Christianity, and the transformations he underwent. Does he admit, within his confessions, to lies he may have practiced in his life?

In a letter to Heronymus, the elder Augustine denies having written a letter criticizing and attacking him. He claims that the person who informed him did not convey the truth, even though he acknowledges that this individual is a close associate. Augustine mentions that this information came from someone close to him. However, the letter was later found and caused many issues regarding the man. Regardless of that, we should not burden him with more than he can bear. The man is not infallible, and there is no doubt that this truth places him within the human framework of fallibility.

Conclusion

As previously mentioned, the topic of lying was one of the subjects that occupied Augustine's attention at various stages of his life. The perspectives and ideas he presented on lying represented a significant leap in theological and philosophical studies, particularly in the philosophy of religion. This can be directly observed in the debates he stirred during his time, evident in the exchanged letters between him, his supporters, and his opponents.

In this context, it can be said that by rejecting lying outright, Augustine deviated from the traditional views that preceded him, whether Greek, Roman, or even Catholic Christian. Recognition, acceptance, and endorsement of lying were positions held by Plato, the Stoics, and many church figures, such as Clement, John Chrysostom (Sarr, 2010, pp. 9-29), and even Jerome, who was a contemporary of Augustine.

Although some, like Plato, acknowledged and permitted lying outside divine matters, many Church Fathers and ecclesiastical figures did not reject it; rather, they accepted it even in sacred matters, considering it potentially useful for achieving benefits and converting people to Christianity. Augustine, however, rejected this entirely.

This epistemological and ethical stance did not prevent him from addressing the issues posed by texts left by prominent Church figures, especially his teacher and role model, Paul, who devoted many texts to defending his views. Augustine resorted to reinterpreting these texts and the relevant sacred texts in a different, more interpretative way.

From this, it can be inferred that in his defense against lying in all its forms, Augustine was striving to be a Christian at peace with himself, his values, his convictions, and his perceptions. He aimed for his issues to be truthful, aligning thought with reality—both realistically and not merely symbolically. Virtue and perfection related to faith require abandoning all vices, of which lying is one, if not the most important. In addition to the above, the culture Augustine acquired throughout his life, especially before Christianity, whether Greek or Manichean, did not fade from him, nor did he abandon it after converting to the new religion. This can be observed in his various defensive texts where he turns to Plato's Republic to explain and justify his views, even if he does not explicitly reference it. This confirms and reveals the breadth of his cultural knowledge and extensive reading, showing that the Greek philosophy he had long opposed became part of his mind and way of thinking, and its presence cannot be ignored or denied.

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