AUGUSTINE, ARISTOTLE, AND FRANCISCANS ON LYING: A STUDY ON TEXTS BY FRANCIS OF MEYRONNES AND GERALD ODONIS

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INTRODUCTION

Boccaccio's *Decameron* (1349-53) opens with a tale of a man of exceptional moral decrepitude.[1] On his deathbed, Ciapelletto spun lies upon lies to a friar to pass as a most pious and morally upright man, so much so that his professed deeds earned him posthumous sainthood. The story is a highly stylised exercise of hyperbolic absurdity, but it reveals, together with many other tales in the *Decameron*, an extremely complicated and nuanced attitude towards mendacity and moral rectitude in general.[2] A fourteenth-century reader with an interest in moral philosophy would readily find resonance of several themes discussed by the wider scholastic community: the idea of a dutiful lie that benefits others, as demonstrated by Ciapelletto's reasonably noble intention of saving his companions, and the notion of a lover of falsehood and deception, when Ciapelletto's lies leapt beyond the threshold of necessity into demonstrating his prowess of cunning deceit and his delight in telling falsehood.

While vernacular literature is often used as a prism through which to view late medieval urban society and its mentality, it makes for a compelling case to provide an alternative perspective from another profoundly urban and intellectually influential institution – the scholastic community of the universities and the mendicant orders – with their moral axiology on truth and mendacity. The question of mendacity was an integral part of the curriculum of the theology faculties in the form of *Sentences* commentaries, where Distinction 38 of Book III offered an opportunity for discussing the nature of lies. In such discussions, the moral rigorism of Saint Augustine loomed large.[3] However, scholastic masters and mendicant friars were also

[1] GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO, *The Decameron*, Day 1, Story 1, trans. W.A. REBHORN, New York 2016, 18-27.
[2] This point, however, may be called into question: Boccaccio defended his poetic licence (through Dioneo's speech on Day Six and Boccaccio's own apology at the book's closure), and the setting of the storytelling in a fantastical garden is meant to keep the realities of the outside world away. For a discussion on Boccaccio's realism and verisimilitude, see J. STEINBERG, *Mimesis on Trial: Legal and Literary Verisimilitude in Boccaccio's* Decameron, in *Representation* 139 (2017) 118-45.
[3] For a study on the influence of Augustine's theories of mendacity on the Middle Ages, see I. ROSIER, *Les développements médiévaux de la théorie augustinienne du mensonge*, in *Hermès* 15 (1995) 91-103; also C. MARMO, *La définition du mensonge au Moyen Âge et dans le débat contemporain*, in J.-P. GENET (ed.), *La vérité. Vérité et crédibilité : construire la vérité dans le système de communication de l'Occident (XIII^e-XVII^e siècle)*, Paris-Rome 2015, 81-94.

compelled to jostle with the realities and practical needs of daily life. Emily Corran's recent book on lying and perjury, where she focuses primarily on confessors' manuals and legal casebooks, traces the rise of the casuistical literature in the later Middle Ages and places the turning point at the end of the twelfth century.[4] Silvana Vecchio, in her study on lying in theological texts of the thirteenth century, sketches a narrative of an Aristotelian challenge to the dominant Augustinian *doxa*, while she also highlights the Franciscans as those who persisted with the moral rigorism inherited from Augustine against lying.[5]

This article seeks to develop a more extensive survey of Franciscan writings of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, with a special focus on two hitherto under-explored authors – Francis of Meyronnes with his commentary on the Decalogue (before 1320),[6] and Gerald Odonis with his commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1322-25).[7] The aim is to set out the late medieval Franciscan take on the parameters of mendacity when confronted with the authorities of Augustine and Aristotle, especially in the context of the Franciscan *studium* in Toulouse, where both Meyronnes and Odonis lectured.[8] Together, they form part of the early

[4] E. CORRAN, *Lying and Perjury in Medieval Practical Thought: A Study in the History of Casuistry*, Oxford 2018, 48-65.

[5] S. VECCHIO, *Mensonge, simulation, dissimulation. Primauté de l'intention et ambiguïté du langage dans la théologie morale du bas moyen ag*', in C. MARMO (ed.), *Vestigia, Imagines, Verba: Semiotics and Logic in Medieval Theological Texts (XIIth-XIVth Century*), Turnhout 1997, 117-32: 125-6.

[6] FRANCISCUS DE MARONIS, *Decalogi seu decem preceptorum domini explanatio*, ed. J. BADIUS, [Paris] 1520 (henceforth **MARONIS, *Decalogi explanatio***). Checked against Salins-les-Bains, Bibliothèque municipale, ms. 9, which is the only manuscript that contains the entirety of Meyronnes's Decalogue commentary. All quotations are taken from the Paris edition, and all manuscript variants that are significant enough to alter the meaning of the text are reported in square brackets. For studies on Francis of Meyronnes, the most extensive biographic and bibliographic survey is by B. ROTH, *Franz von Mayronis O.F.M. Sein Leben, seine Werke, seine Lehre von Formalunterschied in Gott*, Münster 1936; see also, M. BARBU, *La formation universitaire et l'univers culturel de François de Meyronnes*, in MATZ - DE CEVINS (eds.), *Formation intellectuelle et culture du clergé dans les territoires angevins (milieu du XIIIe-fin du XVe siècle)*, Rome 1972, 253-63; P. DE LAPPARENT, *L'œuvre politique de François de Meyronnes, ses rapports avec celle de Dante*, in *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge* [**AHDLMA**] 13 (1940-42) 5-151. A more recent bibliographical survey can be found in B. ROEST, *Freedom and Contingency in the "Sentences" Commentary of Francis of Meyronnes*, in *Franciscan Studies* 67 (2019) 323-46.

[7] GERALDUS ODONIS, *Sententia et Expositio cum questionibus super libros ethicorum,* ed. S. DE LUERE, Venetiis 1500 [henceforth, **ODONIS, *Expositio ethicorum***]. Checked against Vatican, BAV vat. lat. 2168. I have identified two architypes within the manuscript tradition. This Vatican manuscript is derived from an architype different from the two printed editions. Despite its relatively late confection, it contains a version of the texts with very few errors; URL=<https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.lat.2168>. All quotations are taken from the Venice edition, and all manuscript variants that are significant enough to alter the meaning of the text are reported in square brackets. For a survey of Odonis's commentary, see C. PORTER, 'Gerald Odonis' Commentary on the *Ethics*', *Vivarium*, 47 (2009), 241-94. For a dating hypothesis, see Z. CHEN - C.D. SCHABEL, *Aristotle's* Ethics *in Guiral Ot's Commentary on I Corinthians*, in AHDLMA 88 (2021) 213-86. For studies on the commentary, see B. KENT, *Aristotle and the Franciscans: Gerald Odonis' Commentary on the* Nicomachean Ethics, doctoral thesis, Columbia University, New York 1984.

[8] For a study on the Toulouse *studium* in the early fourteenth century and the works produced in this period, see S. PIRON, 'Les *studia* franciscains de Provence et d'Aquitaine', in K. EMERY - W.J. COURTENAY - S.M. METZGER (eds.), *Philosophy and Theology in the Studia of the Religious Orders and at the Papal and Royal Courts*, Leiden 2008, 303-58: 321-35 and 342-9.

fourteenth-century mendicant intellectual activities produced outside of the traditional centres of Paris and Oxford. As the paper demonstrates, both Francis of Meyronnes and Gerald Odonis are part of a continuation of the Augustinian tradition in their use of Augustinian language, their defence of Augustine's intention-centric definition of lying, and their adherence to Augustinian moral rigorism. However, they also set themselves apart from the tradition by thoroughly examining the teachings of Aristotle in relation to the *doxa* on mendacity and by dissecting traditionally theological problems through Aristotelian terms.

Francis of Meyronnes was born in Provence c. 1288. He studied in Digne and Paris, then taught in the Franciscan *studia* network, including Toulouse, where he lectured in 1318-20 (if not for a longer period), before returning to Paris to lecture on the *Sentences 'pro gradu'* in 1320-21.[9] Meyronnes oddly did not discuss the problem of mendacity in his *Sentences* commentary – or at least the question was not included in the final version (*Conflatus*). The present study therefore draws from Meyronnes's voluminous commentary on the Decalogue, where he discussed various aspects of lying extensively in the section related to the Eighth Commandment against bearing false witness.[10]

Gerald Odonis was born c. 1285 in Camboulit in Lot, and wrote his commentary on the *Ethics* between 1322 and 1325 while he was lecturing in Toulouse, before being sent to Paris in 1326 to lecture on the *Sentences.* Odonis copied many questions from his *Ethics* commentary into his work on the *Sentences*, including the questions on truth and lying.[11] I have primarily resorted to the text presented in the *Ethics* commentary, which in addition contains Odonis's gloss on Aristotle's passages on truth and falsehood.

The main part of the paper is divided into three chapters. Chapter I provides an intellectual backdrop to the discussions on lying by presenting a general survey of the Augustinian *doxa* in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It traces the transmission of Augustine's works through the mediation of Peter Lombard into individual scholastic treatises,

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[9] ROTH, *Franz von Mayronis*, 32-40. See also, C. SCHABEL, *Parisian Commentaries from Peter Auriol to Gregory of Rimini, and the Problem of Predestination*, in G.R. EVANS (ed.), *Medieval Commentaries on the* Sentences *of Peter Lombard*, vol. 1, Leiden, 2002, 221-66: 237-40. ROEST, *Freedom and Contingency*, 324; PIRON, *Les* studia *franciscains*, 348.

[10] More research is needed to date the text, which does not contain evident dating references. Bert Roest's theory that the Decalogue commentary is an expansion of related sections in the *Sentences* commentary faces the challenge of the fact that, despite common practices, Meyronnes's *Conflatus* contained neither questions on the nature of the Decalogue in general, nor the question on mendacity in particular. One hypothesis is that he did not feel the need to include extensive discussions on the Decalogue in his *Sentences* commentary as he had already written a voluminous tome on it. Sylvain Piron's research shows that the Franciscan *studium* in Toulouse had the unique tradition of commenting on canon law, and this could provide a cogent backdrop for Meyronnes's Decalogue commentary, which is a dense collection of canon law articles. See PIRON, *Les* studia *franciscains*, 345-8.

[11] PORTER, *Odonis' Ethics Commentary*, 278.

and focuses on Meyronnes's and Odonis's reception of Augustine's teachings. Chapter II explores the challenges posed by Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* to the prevailing Augustinian positions, and studies how both Meyronnes and Odonis confronted and reconciled the differences between the authorities. Chapter III discusses the moral axiology of mendacity through the question of whether lying is always a sin. Augustine's doctrine presented several difficulties and thus invited a number of attempts to redress them. Odonis offered an especially interesting solution where he defended Augustine's doctrine with terms and arguments taken from Aristotle.

I. DEFINING LIES THROUGH AUGUSTINE'S DOCTRINE

The question of the permissibility of lying is a recurrent problem in the history of ethics and moral thought that never ceases to provoke and fascinate.[12] As a testimony to the complexity of the problematics, the canonical texts of western moral thought cannot seem to agree. The Scripture is a case at hand. The Bible's precepts sternly condemn all lies and falsehoods: the Decalogue's prohibition of bearing false witness (Exod. 20:16; Deut. 5:20) has been frequently interpreted as a proscription on lying.[13] Yet, one also finds a plethora of biblical tales where the use of lie and deception is seemingly condoned.[14] This apparent irresolution is also found in classical authorities. Plato's Socrates values truth and wisdom as the highest goods for the soul that are loved by the philosophers,[15] but also proposes the use of "noble lies" (*gennaion pseudos*) in order to instil what is in fact truthful and noble in the mind of the audience.[16] Aristotle, on the other hand, is quite absolute in his condemnation of falsity: "falsehood is in itself mean and culpable, and truth noble and worthy of praise."[17]

A diversity of teachings can also be found in the Patristic tradition. Augustine and Gregory the Great hold that lying is inherently and unequivocally sinful and no lie is

[12] Some notable discussions on lying in contemporary philosophy include A. MCINTYRE, *Truthfulness, Lies, and Moral Philosophers: What Can We Learn from Mill and Kant?*, Princeton 1994; B. WILLIAMS, *Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy*, Princeton, NJ 2002; H. ARENDT, *Lying in Politics: Reflections on the Pentagon Papers*, in EAD., *Crises of the Republic*, New York 1972, 3-47.

[13] For a survey on medieval commentaries on the Decalogue, see L.J. SMITH, *The Ten Commandments: Interpreting the Bible in the Medieval World*, Leiden,2014, esp. 154-74. Elsewhere in the Scripture: "You destroy those who speak lies; the Lord abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man" (Psal. 5:6); "There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood […]." (Prov. 6:16-17).

[14] To cite a few examples commonly used in the later Middle Ages: Abraham lied and told that Sarah was his sister rather than his wife (Gen. 20:12); Jacob lied to Isaac for his blessing (Gen. 27:27-29); the Egyptian midwives lied to save the Jewish children, and "God built them houses" (Exod. 1:21).

[15] PLATO, *Republic*, 581b, trans. R. WATERFIELD, Oxford 2008, 327.

[16] PLATO, *Republic*, 414b-415c, 118-9.

[17] ARISTOTELES, *Nicomachean Ethics* [***NE***], IV. 7, 1127a29, trans. D. ROSS, Oxford 2009, 76.

permissible, while Ambrose considers that certain lies are not only permissible but also in themselves righteous.[18] However, it was the Augustinian position that ended up dominating much of the later discussions.[19] Augustine's writings on the problem of mendacity are extensive, and reveal a moral theology that is complex, nuanced, and sometimes self-contradictory.[20] Yet, Augustine's doctrines were often circulated in a more piece-meal fashion.[21] Irène Rosier-Catach notes that late medieval discussions on mendacity revolved around a few key passages taken from Augustine's treatises, mostly mediated, and arguably skewed, through Peter Lombard's *Sentences* (III, dist. 38) and Gratian's *Decretum* (IIa pars ca. 22 q. 2).[22] Silvana Vecchio summarises the legacy of Augustine on two fronts: an almost universal adherence to Augustine's definition of *mendacium*, and a nearly unanimous agreement with Augustine's absolute proscription of lying.[23]

Peter Lombard cites Augustine's definition of lying in *Contra mendacium* ("mendacium est quippe falsa significatio cum voluntate fallendi"[24]) in a somewhat misconstrued fashion: "Mendacium, ut ait Augustinus, falsa **vocis** significatio cum **intentione** fallendi".[25] A collation against medieval sources quickly reveals that Peter Lombard's formulation is far more prevalent in scholastic discussions, and many – such as Alexander of Hales[26] and Thomas

[18] For an extensive study on the Patristics and their discussion of lying, see M. COLISH, *The Stoic Theory of Verbal Signification and the Problem of Lies and False Statements from Antiquity to Saint Anselm*, in L. BRIND'AMOUR - A. VANCE (eds.), *Archéologie du signe*, Toronto 1983, 17-43; For a recent study on Augustine's theory of lying and communication, see R. GRAMIGNA, *Augustine's Theory of Signs, Signification, and Lying*, Berlin 2020.

[19] G. MÜLLER, *Die Wahrhaftigkeitspflicht und die Problematik der Lüge*, Freiburg 1962, esp. 27-88, where he presents Augustine's arguments as the normative building blocks for both the Patristics and the Scholastics alike; see also, M. COLISH, *Rethinking Lying in the Twelfth Century*, in I. BEJCZY - R. NEWHAUSER (eds.), *Virtue and Ethics in the Twelfth Century*, Leiden 2005, 155-73: 159-60.

[20] Augustine wrote two treatises that are primarily concerned with lying – *De Mendacio* and later *Contra Mendacium* –, but elsewhere, *De Trinitate, De doctrina Christiana*, *De magistro*, and *Enchiridion* all contain discussions on mendacity.

[21] Erika Hermanowicz suggests that Augustine's position on lying is more cited than read. See E.T. HERMANOWICZ, *Augustine on Lying*, in *Speculum* 93 (2018) 699-727: 700.

[22] ROSIER, *Les développements médiévaux*, 91-2.

[23] VECCHIO, *Mensonge, simulation, dissimulation*, 118.

[24] AURELIUS AUGUSTINUS, *Ad Consentium contra mendacium*, XII.26, ed. I. ZYCHA (*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* [**CSEL**] 41), Pragae-Vindobonae-Lipsiae 1900, 507.

[25] PETRUS LOMBARDUS, *Sententiae in IV libris distinctae*, lib. 3, dist. 38, cap. 3, ed. COLL. S. BONAVENTURAE (*Spicilegium Bonaventurianum* **[SpicBon**] 5), Grottaferrata 1981, 215.

[26] Alexander of Hales adopts Lombard's formula but misattributes it to *De mendacio*, see ALEXANDER DE HALES, *Quaestiones disputatae de moralibus*, q. 6, mem. 1, ed. H.M. WIERZBICKI (*Bibliotheca Franciscana Scholastica Medii Aevi* [**BFSMA**] 33), Roma 2020, 374.

Aquinas[27] – confuse Augustine's two treatises on lying.[28] Both Francis of Meyronnes[29] and Gerald Odonis[30] adopt the *falsa vocis significatio* and repeat Alexander of Hales's mis-attribution to *De mendacio*. While Augustine himself probably intends his discussion to analyse lying as a primarily linguistic expression, it is not explicit at the outset.[31] Lombard's insertion of *vocis* instead highlights the verbal dimension of lying, to the extent that, when confronted with Aristotle's text, which states that truthfulness and falsehood (*pseudon*, rendered into Latin as *mendacium*) are manifested through both words and deeds, it becomes incumbent on the medieval scholastics to define *mendacium* as exclusively verbal, while the falsehood in deeds should be properly termed *simulatio.*

These citation errors and the prevalence of Lombard's iteration over Augustine's original wording raise the question of how carefully medieval masters of theology were in fact reading Augustine's texts beyond what was transmitted through the *Sentences.* With this in mind, we can propose a much simpler model of scholastic reading of Augustine based on the broad strokes of Rosier-Catach's and Vecchio's studies: the Augustinian legacy was anchored around a selection of key passages transmitted through the *Sentences*, and the medieval discussions of mendacity were pinned by these passages and the doctrines they reflected, without much heed to the subtle nuances and shifts in positions across Augustine's corpus.[32]

The points to be taken from a direct reading of Augustine's one-line definition are therefore twofold: (1) the *falsa (vocis) significatio*, and (2) the intention of deceit. Lombard further confounds this tandem of falsehood and intentional deceit with a notion of duplicity or disequilibrium between the tongue and the conscience, citing Augustine (*Enchiridion* VI.18): "hoc enim malum est proprium mentientis, aliud habere clausum in pectore, aliud promptum in lingua".[33] Understanding *falsa significatio* as duplicity would mean defining lying as a double

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[27] Thomas writes "dicitur quod mendacium est falsa vocis significatio", and goes on to add another definition used in *De mendacio* (IV.5), which he mis-attributes to *Contra mendacium*: "Quapropter enuntiationem falsi cum voluntate ad fallendum prolatam, manifestum est esse mendacium". See THOMAS DE AQUINO, *Summa theologiae* [***STh***], II2ae, q. 110, art. 1, sed contra, in *Opera omnia*, vol. IX, ed. LEONINA, Romae 1897, 421. *Cf.* AUGUSTINUS, *De mendacio*, IV.5, ed. I. ZYCHA (CSEL 41, 419).

[28] Duns Scotus also cites Lombard's definition, but without attributing it to a specific work of Augustine. See IOANNES DUNS SCOTUS, *Ordinatio*, III, dist. 38, q. uni., n. 20, in *Opera omnia*, tom. X, ed. COMMISSIO SCOTISTICA, Civitas Vaticana, 2007, 301.

[29] MARONIS, *Decalogi explanatio*, prec. VIII, art. 1, vid. 1, diff. 1, f. 53v.

[30] ODONIS, *Expositio ethicorum*, IV, q. 40, f. 89vb.

[31] ROSIER, *Les développements médiévaux*, 94.

[32] A study instead on such 'subtle nuances' can be found in M. Colish, who suggests that Augustine's primary task in *De mendacio* is to distinguish lies from simply falsehoods by underlying the intentionality and duplicitous nature of lies, while in *Contra mendacium* Augustine examines lying as a rhetorical strategy and emphasises that no end, however noble, can justify the means of lying; see COLISH, *Stoic Theory of Verbal Signification*, 31-6. For a study on the centrality of intention in Augustine's theory and Augustine's various exegeses of the notion of intention, see also G. JEANMART, *Le mensonge et les vertus de la vérité. Une histoire*, Turnhout 2012, 104-12.

[33] PETRUS LOMBARDUS, *Sent.* III, dist. 38, cap. 3 (SpicBon 5, 215).

intention: both an intention to deceive others, understood socially, and an intention to speak against one's own mind, understood psychologically. In *De mendacio* (III.3), Augustine argues that speaking a falsehood while believing it to be true *is not* a lie, but speaking truth while believing it to be false (and intending to deceive) *is* a lie.[34] This rather odd scenario, where one can be considered as lying even when communicating an objective truth, is telling of the centrality of the moral agent's intention in Augustine's considerations. Whether the hearer is effectively misled with falsity is not of concern – it is the moral agent's duplicity and discord between the conscience and the tongue, as well as his deceptive intention that make for a mendacious message.

It therefore comes as no surprise that many medieval readers of Augustine would go as far as arguing that intention is all that counts in defining a lie, regardless of the truthfulness or falsity of the utterance. Alexander of Hales and Bonaventure both argue that intention alone suffices to define a lie. However, the intention of deceit and the intention of duplicity are often confused. The *intentio fallendi* pertains to a social interaction, where the aim is to mislead one's interlocutor; the notion of duplicity, on the other hand, is introspective, and describes an internal disorder on the part of the speaker. Alexander of Hales, for example, truncates Augustine's definition and proposes that *falsa significatio* is the material (*materia*) of a lie, while *intentio fallendi* is its form. Yet, this *intentio fallendi* is at its root a duplicity rather than a deception: one who speaks truth while intending to speak falsehood does not fulfil the *material* condition, but fulfils the *formal* definition, which is in itself sufficient to define a lie.[35] Bonaventure takes a similar stance, making a distinction between the material and formal. He argues that the intention of deceit, which bears the *formal* falsehood, is sufficient to consider the speaker a liar.[36] He goes on to delineate the notion of intention, and posits that the word *mentiri* is really

[34] AUGUSTINUS, *De mendacio*, III.3 (CSEL 41, 414-5): "Quisquis autem hoc enuntiat quod uel creditum animo uel opinatum tenet, etiamsi falsum sit, non mentitur." Jeanmart uses these passages in *De mendacio* to argue the centrality of intention in Augustine' definition and moral axiology of lying. See JEANMART, *Le mensonge et la vérité*, 104-12.

[35] ALEXANDER DE HALES, *Quaestiones disputatae de moralibus*, q. 6, mem. 1, ad obiecta 3 (BFSMA 33, 383-4): "Ad aliud quod queritur de illo qui dicit uerum intendens dicere falsum, dicendum quod peccatum eius reducitur ad mendacium. […] hoc peccatum reducitur ad peccatum mendacii, quia conicit cum mendacio in intentione mentiendi que est quasi formalis differentia mendacii; non tamen conicit in materia, quia non est ibi falsa vocis significatio; licet ergo non habeat totum esse mendacii ex parte materie et forme, tamen ratione forme, scilicet intentionis que dat specie operi, dicitur esse in specie mendacii."

[36] BONAVENTURA, *Commentarium in III librum Sententiarum*, dist. 38, art. uni., q. 1, resp., in *Opera Omnia*, tom. III, ed. COLLEGIUM S. BONAVENTURAE, Quaracchi 1887, 840: "Licet sola intentio fallendi sufficiat ad hoc, ut quis dicatur mentiri, ad completam tamen mendacii rationem requiritur duplex falsitas, scilicet respectu intentionis et rei. […] Quoniam igitur mendacium nominat ipsum dictum per comparationem ad *rem* et ad ipsum *dicentem*; hinc est, quod ad *completam* mendacii rationem duplex falsitas concurrit: una per comparationem ad *rem*, et altera per comparationem ad *intentionem loquentis*. […] Prima autem falsitas tenet in ipso mendacio rationem *materialis*; secunda vero rationem *formalis*, et ab illa secunda denominatur quis *mendax*.".

ire (contra) mentem.[37] This etymologisation is evidence enough that duplicity alone defined lying.[38] The element of human ignorance is very much present in Augustine, and readily taken up by Bonaventure. As Rosier-Catach points out, for Bonaventure, it is not within human power to have the perfect mastery of truth, and lying can only be defined as a *voluntary* deviation in regard to truth.[39]

Obviously, the Franciscans had their detractors.[40] Albertus Magnus, for example, accepts the material-formal distinction between falsehood and intention, but still tries to anchor the idea of *mendacium* to a falsehood *ad rem*. He proposes an alternative formulation: **a lie** (*mendacium*), as a noun, is defined in relation to the object or objective truth referred to, while **to lie** (*mentiri*) as a verb, is defined in relation to the speaker.[41] Thomas Aquinas offers a more complex argument.[42] He considers not only the material and formal aspects of lying, but also notes the social effect – that is, the deceptive intention beyond a mere mental duplicity.[43] He rejects Albertus's attempt at anchoring *mendacium* with an objective falsehood, and argues that a lie's relationship to the objective truth or falsehood is only accidental. What matters is the *formal* falsehood, that is, the duplicity between speech and mind. Here, he takes up Bonaventure's notion that *mendacium* is so named because it is *contra mentem*, and ties the falsehood firmly to the speaker's duplicity: if the statement turns out to be objectively true, it is truth merely by accident.[44]

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[37] BONAVENTURA, *In III Sent.*, dist. 38, art. uni., q. 1, resp. (*Opera omnia* 3, 840): "Unde ad hoc, quod aliquis dicatur *mentiri*, sufficit falsitas, quae concurrit ex discordia vocis et intentionis; et hoc patet ex ipsa definitione vocabuli, quia *mentiri* est *contra mentem ire*."

[38] Like many medieval attempts at etymologisation, this is wrong. *Mentiri* is in fact derived from PIE root *mend-*, meaning 'defect' or 'fault'. The Quaracchi edition suggests that Bonaventure may have taken this definition from Gulielmus Altissiodorensis's *Summa aurea*, see GUILLELMUS ALTISSIODORENSIS, *Summa aurea*, lib. 3/2, tr. 45, cap. 2, solut., ed. J. RIBAILLIER (SpicBon 18B), Paris-Grottaferrata 1986, 852: "Stricte sumitur mentiri, secundum quod mentiri est contra mentem ire in verbo, et talis proprie duplex dicitur, quia aliud habet in ore, aliud in corde."

[39] ROSIER, *Les développements médiévaux*, 93.

[40] For a brief overview, see MARMO, *La définition du mensonge*, 83-7.

[41] ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *Commentarii in III Sententiarum*, dist. 38, art. 8, solut., *Opera Omnia*, vol. 28, ed. C.A. BORGNET, Parisiis 1894, 724: "Ad id autem quod ulterius quaeritur, dicendum quod mentiri quod dicit processum mendacii ab agente, et ideo non contrahit substantialem rationem ex parte dicentis: et ideo potest esse verum, et tamen mendacium: quia illud verum est in dicente, et quoad dicentem est ut falsum: sed mendacium dicit in quiete et abstractione: et ideo materiam habet ex parte rei, et non ex parte dicentis : et ideo est, quod oportet esse falsum secundum rem, si debeat esse mendacium."

[42] See MARMO, *La définition du mensonge*, 87.

[43] THOMAS DE AQUINO, *STh* II2ae, q. 110, art. 1, resp. (*Opera omnia* 9, 422): "Quod autem aliquis intendat falsitatem in opinione alterius constituere fallendo ipsum, non pertinet ad speciem mendacii, sed ad quandam perfectionem ipsius".

[44] Silvana Vecchio argues that Aquinas attempts to reconcile Augustine's positions with those of Aristotle, whose text challenges Augustine on several fronts. Although Aquinas builds his discussions on lying on Aristotelian elements, at the end he arrives at a conclusion that confirms Augustine's positions. VECCHIO, *Mensonge, simulation, dissimilation*, 123-5.

Writing in the early fourteenth century, Francis of Meyronnes tried to tackle the question of the relationship between lying and truth, straddling the definitions of Bonaventure, Albertus, and Aquinas in his commentary on the Decalogue. While Meyronnes broadly adheres to Bonaventure's intention-centric definition of lying, he also leans on the necessity of material falsehood within a lie. For Meyronnes – similar to the distinction between truth and truthfulness – false speech is false either because of its variance from truth, which gives a *sermo falsus*, that is, its material falsehood, or false because of the disparity between speech and conscience, which leads to a *sermo fallax*, that is, the formal falsehood.[45] An utterance is only a lie (*mendacium*) when it is both materially and formally false. This rather rigorist definition of lie leads to the case where the speaker, intending to deceive, 'accidentally' speaks the truth, which for Meyronnes does not constitute an incidence of *mendacium.*

Meyronnes adopts a distinction similar to that of Albertus Magnus between *mendacium* as a noun and *mentiri* as a verb, but also adds a third element in the way of a verbal phrase: *mendacium dicere.* A duplicitous intention is sufficient to constitute the act of lying (*mentiri*), as *mentiri* is, to repeat the mantra, *contra mentem ire.* But a lie (*mendacium*), in its fullest sense, is both materially and formally false. Addressing the question of whether lying (*mentiri*) and telling a lie (*mendacium dicere*) are the same, Meyronnes argues that one who speaks against what he holds in mind is considered to be lying (*dicatur mentiri*) but he does not necessarily tell a lie.[46] Therefore, although a duplicitous intention is sufficient to define the act of lying, it is a mere part of a lie in its fullest sense (*plena ratio mendacii*), which entails both the material and formal falsehood. In reverse, speaking a falsehood is not necessarily a lie, if one lacks the intentional duplicity. Therefore, Meyronnes considers the two aspects of mendacity separately. From the moral perspective, an act of lying is defined through the speaker's subjective intention and the manifested duplicity between his speech and his mind. In this respect Meyronnes very much follows his Franciscan predecessors. However, he also argues that a lie, in its most

[45] MARONIS, *Decalogi explanatio*, prec. VIII, art. 1, vid. 1, diff. 1, ff. 53v-54r: "Comparatur enim ad ipsam rem significatam per ipsum et ad intentionem ipsius verbum proferentis, et secundum istos duos respectus verbum sortitur rationem duplicis veritatis. Nam per comparationem verbi prolati ad ipsam rem quam exprimit cum est ibi debita adequatio dicitur sermo verus. Per comparationem autem verbi prolati ad intentionem dicentis cum est ibi debita adequatio dicitur sermo verax. Sic eodem modo duplex est falsitas circa sermonem, nam per comparationem ad rem quam exprimit, si non est adequatio rei et sermonis dicitur sermo falsus. Per comparationem vero sermonis ad intentionem dicentis, si non est adequatio sermonis et intentionis dicitur sermo mendax sive fallax."

[46] MARONIS, *Decalogi explanatio*, prec. VIII, art. 1, vid. 1, diff. 2, f. 54r: "Nam mentiri est contra mentem ire, hoc est loqui contra hoc quod animo sentit, sive illud quod loquitur sit verum sive falsum. Nam contra mentem dicit non solum qui dicit falsum scienter, sed etiam qui dicit verum credens se dicere falsum […]. Ex predictis patet, quod minus importatur cum dicimus aliquem mentiri quam quando dicimus aliquem dicere mendacium. Quamvis enim sola intentio fallendi sufficiat ad hoc quod aliquis dicatur mentiri, non tamen sufficit ad plenam rationem mendacii, et ideo omnis qui loquitur mendacium mentitur."

complete form, should also be false *ad rem*. The implication is that while duplicity is sufficient to morally indict the liar, we should also consider a lie in its fullest sense in relationship to the propositional truth of the speech. The consequences of this argument are twofold: first, the centrality of intention bears the unmistakable marks of a voluntarist moral philosophy, where the will to speak against the mind defines an act of lying, regardless of the intellectual comprehensions of truth; second, by tying the noun form *mendacium* to both material and formal falsehood, Meyronnes envisions a perfected form of lie, where the speaker has both the knowledge of truth and the will to deceive. In this sense, Meyronnes starts with a path similar to that of Aquinas, who suggests a distinction between imperfect and perfect forms of lying, albeit finishing at a different end point. Meyronnes's formulation seems to be one that is widely accepted among the Franciscans. Odonis, a few years later, reaffirms the distinction between a more general consideration of the act of lying and a more rigorous definition of the noun *mendacium*, arguing that while the iniquity between speech and mind constitutes an act of lying, only a false statement intended as false constitutes a proper lie.[47]

Overall, late Medieval scholastic discussions on the definitional aspect of lying remained firmly within the parameters set out by Augustine, but the terms and nuances of the debate have evolved far beyond the original texts. One important mutation: the very social notion of deceit (*intentio fallendi*) gave way to the far more internal understanding of duplicity. Augustine considers the social consequences of lying as one of the central tenets of his definition, as is evident in his eight-fold categorisation of lies in *De mendacio*; yet medieval scholastics, especially the Franciscans, come to define mendacity almost exclusively in terms of the discord between speech and mind, and the social effects are considered mostly secondarily, if at all. On the surface, the medieval sources structured their discussion almost uniformly through the Augustine's terms of *falsitas* and *intentio fallendi*, but the definitional front had shifted from the social to the psychological, from the external to the internal.

II. AN ARISTOTELIAN CHALLENGE TO THE AUGUSTINIAN *DOXA*

One catalyst that propelled the scholastic philosophers to review the Augustinian orthodoxy on mendacity was obviously the newly available Latin translation of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. While Aristotle's discussions are framed in completely different terms from Augustine, two salient challenges are most pertinent to our discussion: that lying should

[47] ODONIS, *Expositio ethicorum*, IV, q. 40, f. 89va: "Et contingit quod dicit verum credens dicere falsum et iste mentitur, non tamen adhuc dicit mendacium. Contingit autem quod dicit falsum, credens dicere falsum [*ms.* verum], et iste dicit proprie mendacium."

be considered as a deviation from objective truth, and that moral truthfulness and falsity fundamentally concern one's self-presentation to others.[48] The former negates Augustine's focus on intentionality and duplicity, and the latter flips the centre of discussion from the psychological back to the social.

Rather than Augustine's concept of duplicitous speech and the intention to impart falsehood on the audience, Aristotle measures a lie by the degree and direction with which one deviates from the truth, which is the virtuous mean: either one professes less than what is true, or one claims more than what is true.[49] Furthermore, Aristotle examines truthfulness as a moral quality in relation to the truth of one's qualities and attributes, as evinced by his division of *pseudon* (*mendacium*) into boastfulness (*iactantia*) and fake modesty (*ironia*). Aristotle's discussion on lying and truthfulness is rather short, and it focuses on the moral agent's social self-presentation. Many of Augustine's nuances, such as when one can be ignorant of truth while speaking, are not considered by Aristotle.[50]

Robert Grosseteste's translation of Aristotle's *pseudon* into *mendacium* obliged the medieval scholastics to confront the discrepancies between the authorities. Aquinas's attempt is perhaps a prime example, where he jettisons the self-regarding element of Aristotle's definition and focuses instead on the excess or deficiency of truth. For Aquinas, boastfulness (*iactantia*) and fake modesty (*ironia*) are two categories that form the essential division (*secundum ipsam rationem*) of lies.[51] The essence of lie is its deviation from the virtuous mean, which is the truth.[52] Yet, as we have noted above, it is the formal falsehood (i.e. intention) that determines a lie, and this deviation is not necessarily measured in relation to the objective truth, but from the truth known to the speaker. In this respect, as presented by Aquinas, Aristotle's

[48] For an analysis of other challenges posed by Aristotle, see VECCHIO, *Mensonge, simulation, dissimulation*, 122, where she argues that Aristotle's text challenges Augustine's doctrines on three fronts: lying is not limited to speech, lying can be defined quantitatively, and lying should be defined in terms of its deviation from truth.

[49] ARISTOTELES, *NE*, IV.7, 1127a20-25, trans. ROSS, 76: "The boastful man, then, is thought to be apt to claim the things that bring glory, when he has not got them, or to claim more of them than he has, and the mock-modest man, on the other hand, is seen to disclaim what he has or belittle it, while the man who observes the mean is one who calls a thing by its own name, being truthful both in life and in word, owning to what he has, neither to more nor to less."

[50] Indeed, the Aristotelian schema does not allow for such a scenario. In the context of truthfulness and falsity as a social presentation of oneself, Aristotle leaves no room for the ignorance of the self, which is not a simple lack of intellectual capacity, but should rather be a state of delusion. Instead, the man who does not know himself or his own worth is "unduly humble" or "unduly retiring" (pusillanimous), which is a far cry from a deliberate misrepresentation of oneself through boastfulness or fake modesty. See ARISTOTELES, *NE*, IV.3, 1125a17-23, trans. ROSS, 71. For a discussion on humility, pusillanimity, and magnanimity, see I. ZAVATTERO, Omnis magnanimus est humilis. *The Doctrine of Humility in Gerald Odonis' Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*, in S. NEGRI (ed.), *Representations of Humility and the Humble*, Firenze 2021, 141-65.

[51] THOMAS DE AQUINO, *STh* II2ae, q.110, art. 2, resp. (*Opera omnia* 9, 423).

[52] THOMAS DE AQUINO, *STh* II2ae, q.110, art. 1, resp. (*Opera omnia* 9, 421).

definition is perfectly coherent with that of Augustine, and simply supplements another descriptive facet.

The Franciscans, however, had more problems with Aristotle's analysis. Nonetheless, they presented a more faithful reading of the Philosopher. Gerald Odonis, in his commentary on Aristotle's *Ethics*, feels the urge to clarify Aristotle's text by underlining the self-regarding aspect of truth and falsehood. In Book IV, question 41, Odonis affirms that *veritas* as expounded by Aristotle is indeed a moral virtue, but this *veritas* should not be confused with the theological and canon law concept of *triplex veritas*,[53] that is, the truth of doctrine, the truth of justice, or the truth of life.[54] Instead, *veritas* as a moral virtue is a habit born out of voluntary choice (*habitus electivus*) that concerns nothing more than the social manifestation of one's own goodness (or the lack thereof), and should be considered separately from the *triplex veritas.*[55] Having defined *veritas* as such, it should follow that its opposite, *mendacium*, is the wrongful presentation of one's own goods and honours to others in socialised contexts. However, while Odonis underlines Aristotle's self-regarding aspect of truth and falsehood, he does not incorporate these elements in his discussion on lying. Instead, Question 41 of Book IV on *veritas* seems a necessary detour to explain that Aristotle's *veritas* as presented in Book IV is not the same as the common theological triad of truths of doctrine, justice, and life; and the student should therefore not confound the two.

Similarly, Odonis suggests that Aristotle's idea of lying as either *iactantia* or *ironia* should be taken with a pinch of salt. However, the text in *Nicomachean Ethics* has probably compelled Odonis to a greater precision with his definition of lying and his subsequent analysis of a lie's sinfulness, as well as to revisit the social consequences of mendacity, beyond the psycholinguistic focus of his predecessors. Yes, for Odonis, the Philosopher is correct in identifying the excess or deficiency of truth as lies, but neither *iactantia* nor *ironia* can be properly considered as lies without studying the speaker's intention.

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[53] For a brief overview of the *triplex veritas*, see C. NEMO-PEKELMAN, *Scandale et verité dans la doctrine canonique médiévale (XII^e^-XIII^e^ siècles)*, in *Revue historique de droit français et étranger* 85 (2007) 491-504: 500-4.

[54] ODONIS, *Expositio ethicorum*, IV, q. 41, f. 89vb: "dicendum quod veritas ut est moralis virtus, nec est veritas doctrine, nec veritas iustitie, nec veritas vite, sicut sumitur apud theologos. […] Veritas autem ut hic sumitur, nec ad scientiam, nec ad artem, nec ad disciplinam pertinet, quare non est veritas doctrine, nec ad iudicium nec ad iudicem plusquam ad unum alium, quare nec est veritas iustitie, nec ad vivere secundum legem vel sine lege, nec ad vivere sic vel sic. Sed ad manifestare qualiter vivit ipse qui seipsum et vitam propriam monstrat, quare nec est veritas vite."

[55] ODONIS, *Expositio ethicorum*, IV, q. 41, f. 89vb: "Est ergo sciendum quod veritas ut est moralis virtus de qua nunc agitur est habitus electivus manifestationis vere propriorum bonorum, cum oportuerit faciendo non fingendo maiora nec simulando minora medians, inter yroniam et iactantiam reddens moderatum hominem et boni amatorem, veridicum et horrentem mendacium, laudabilem, et in incertis ad minora prudentius declinantem."

Odonis agrees with Aristotle that the habit of truthfulness (*veracitas*) is the inclination to speak the truth precisely, without ulterior considerations or intentions.[56] However, a simple deviation from truth does not sufficiently constitute mendacity. A boastful person who boasts for no ulterior motive is vain rather than evil or depraved, as this is a self-regarding act and he boasts without intending evil on others.[57] The use of irony does not necessarily constitute the sin of lying either, but can even be, as expounded by Aristotle himself, virtuous. The magnanimous person uses irony but without intending to deceive. (By the same token, the quick-witted person tells a jocose lie without intending to affirm its truthfulness.)[58]

Therefore, neither species of Aristotle's *pseudon*, as a manner of self-presentation, can be properly considered lies, unless they are fortified with a deceptive intention against others. Odonis, in his analysis of Aristotle's positions, comes back to revisit Augustine's notion of *intentio fallendi* at the expense of the notion of duplicity by underlining the social consequences of lies. Indeed, both *iactantia* and *ironia* can be construed as duplicitous: one pretends to hold more, or less, than what one holds to be true in mind. However, one can argue that neither *iactantia* nor *ironia* are truly *contra mentem ire.* Instead, they either reach beyond or fall short of the mental truth. Ultimately, the self-regarding aspect of Aristotle's theory of truthfulness and mendacity is insufficient and unsatisfactory. The Philosopher may illuminate one facet of lying, but taken by itself, it is far from an overarching theory of lying that one may hope to find in the *Ethics*. Instead, for Odonis, any discussions of mendacity must be grounded within the framework set out by Augustine, albeit enriched by an Aristotelian perspective.

Francis of Meyronnes in his Decalogue commentary offers a more extensive discussion over Aristotle's two species of lies. The conundrum of fitting the Aristotelian *iactantia* and *ironia* into a predominantly theological paradigm is confronted head-on, with two separate questions (or *difficultates*) that interrogate whether they are prohibited by the eighth commandment (against bearing false witness). What makes Meyronnes's analysis especially interesting is that he also accommodates Aristotle's notion of the habitual liar, who takes pleasure in telling falsehood and has no ulterior motives but for the love of falsity. Aristotle

[56] ODONIS, *Expositio ethicorum*, IV, lect. 21, f. 88vb: "Sed in sermone simpliciter sumpto et in vita propria appetit manifestationem veri eo, quod talis est secundum habitum veracitatis, qui precise inclinat ad verum dicere, nulla alia consideratione vel intentione habita."

[57] ODONIS, *Expositio ethicorum*, IV, lect. 21, f. 89ra: "Dicit ergo primo de iactatore puro [...]. Est autem sciendum quod talis iactator dicitur non pravus non malus, sed vanus, quia pravus et malus intendit aliquam turpitudinem vel [*ms. om.* aliquam turpitudinem vel] turpem utilitatem vel voluptatem quam profert simpliciter honestati et innocentie, talis autem iactator nihil horum intendit, quare nec simpliciter pravus, nec simpliciter malus est. Est tunc vanus quia [*ms. add.* nichil] appetit [*ms. add.* nisi] quod [*ms. add.* vanus est vel quod] nihil est."

[58] ODONIS*, Expositio ethicorum*, IV, q. 40, f. 89vb: "Ad tertium autem dicendum quod nullus virtute utens dicit mendacium, magnanimus autem utens yronia non utitur ea cum expresso mendacio. […] Quare nec iste dicit mendacium eutrapelus autem non utitur iocoso mendacio formaliter, idest asserens ita esse."

considers such a person to be of base character, but ultimately finds it "futile (*mataios*) rather than bad (*kakos*)".[59] This would place the Philosopher at odds with Augustine, who always assumed a deceptive motive behind all kinds of lies, be it pernicious or beneficial. For Augustine, even the type of lie told purely out of the desire to deceive (*libido fallendi*) is intended to mislead the liar's interlocutor.[60] The notion of a lover of falsehood would pose a challenge to the Augustinian doctrine, where the sinfulness of mendacity is based on its deceitful intention. Aristotle's lover of falsehood lies simply for the pleasure of telling a falsity, without necessarily intending any consequences.

As we have noted above, Meyronnes considers separately the duplicitous intention and the falsity *ad rem* in a speech, marking the former as the essence of *mentiri* and the latter as necessary component for a *mendacium* in its fullest sense. Boastfulness (*iactantia*) as defined by Aristotle[61] is opposed to truth, and therefore falls under the prohibition of the Eighth Commandment.[62]

Facing the conceptual challenges of Aristotle, Meyronnes turns (similarly to Odonis) to a social-moral analysis, with a discussion on causal reasoning (*secundum causam*) of lies, instead of focusing on the themes of intention and duplicity. Meyronnes posits that the kind of boastfulness which arises out of arrogance is not properly speaking *iactantia*, as arrogant boastfulness does not befit the species of a lie (a deviation from truth with intentional duplicity), but rather a self-misappropriation that arises from a delusion. Instead, Aristotle's habitual liar, who takes pleasure in lying *per se* and not for ulterior motives, is in effect motivated by vanity.[63] Therefore, while boastfulness is a self-regarding act of mendacity without an intended consequence on others, it is still fundamentally social, where the speaker is ultimately seeking

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[59] ARISTOTELES, *NE*, IV. 7, 1127b9-11, ed. ROSS, 76.
[60] AUGUSTINUS, *De mendacio*, XIV.25 (CSEL 41, 444).
[61] Francis of Meyronnes takes care to exclude several biblical usages of the term from the Aristotelian definition, and argues that they are not properly opposed to truth, and therefore not prohibited by the Decalogue. MARONIS, *Decalogi explanatio*, prec. VIII, art. 1, vid. 4, diff. 5, f. 60v: "Uno modo cum aliquis loquitur de se non supra id quod in se est, sed supra [*ms.* contra] illud quod de se homines opiniantur, quam iactantiam Apostolus refugiens dicit ii Corinthios xii: Parco autem ne quis me existimet supra id quod videt in me aut audit aliquid ex me. Et de iactantia dicitur Hester i quod: Assuerus fecit grande convivium, etc, ut ostenderet divitias, [*ms. add.* glorie sue ac regni sui] magnitudinem atque iactantiam potentie sue. Et ista iactantia non opponitur directe veritati."
[62] MARONIS, *Decalogi explanatio*, prec. VIII, art. 1, vid. 4, diff. 5, ff. 60v-61r: "Alio modo dicitur aliquis de se aliquid supra se dicere quando per verbum se extollit loquens de seipso superia illud quod in se est secundum rei veritatem, et quia magis est aliquid iudicandum secundum illud quod in se est quam secundum illud quod in opinione aliorum. Ideo magis proprie dicitur iactantia quando aliquis effert se supra secundum illud quod est in se quam quando effert se supra illud quod est in opinione aliorum quamvis viroque modo iactantia dicit possit, et ideo iactantia opponitur proprie veritati per modum excessus, et per consequens hoc precepto prohibetur."
[63] MARONIS, *Decalogi explanatio*, prec. VIII, art. 1, vid. 4, diff. 5, f. 61r: "Sequitur plerumque: quod exterius maiora de se iactet quod habeat in seipso, licet etiam quandoque non ex arrogantia, sed ex quadam vanitate, aliquis ad iactantiam procedat, et in hoc delectetur quod talis est secundum habitum ex frequenti iactantia in se generatum, et ideo arrogantia per quam supra se quis extollitur est species superbie, non tamen est idem formaliter iactantie."

to impart a false impression upon the audience for the sake of praise and vainglory.[64] Meyronnes thus brings Aristotle's idea of lying and especially the notion of the habitual liar back into Augustine's idea of intentional deceit. The self-regarding aspect of Aristotelian mendacity ultimately has a social consequence, albeit subtle and elusive. The habitual liar, while lying out of the delectation for falsehood, is fundamentally motivated by vanity and the desire for inane praises. Meyronnes finishes his *difficultas* with an argument that perhaps best recapitulates his Augustinian revision of Aristotelian lies: the genre of *iactantia* that does not seek to harm others should belong to the category of *mendacium officiosum* (dutiful deceit), as it seeks either vainglory or even material benefit without harming others.[65] Therefore, while *iactantia* concerns first and foremost the speaker himself, it is ultimately but one of Augustine's octet of lies, which seeks to benefit oneself without harming others ("et nulli obest et prodest alicui").[66]

Ironia, or fake modesty, however, is viewed much more favourably by Meyronnes. While the question on *iactantia* pivots on whether boastfulness is a mortal sin, the discussion surrounding *ironia* interrogates instead whether *ironia* is a sin at all. Perhaps two earlier authorities can be placed here to contextualise Meyronnes's response. Aquinas argues that speaking irony while safeguarding the truth is not a sin – and it cannot even be considered irony.[67] Henry of Ghent, on the other hand, when asked in his *Quodlibet* whether lying out of humility is a sin, answers that a lie, even motivated by humility, is still sinful.[68]

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[64] MARONIS, *Decalogi explanatio*, prec. VIII, art. 1, vid. 4, diff. 5, f. 61r (here he cites Gregory with a stretch): "Iactantia oritur ex inani gloria, sed inanis gloria non est semper peccatum mortale, sed quandoque veniale quod vitare secundum Gregorium est valde perfectorum, dicit enim sic: valde perfectorum est ostenso opere suo, auctoris gloriam querere, ut de illata privata nesciant exultatione gaudere." *Cf.* GREGORIUS MAGNUS, *Moralia in Iob*, lib. VIII, cap. xlviii, 84, ed. M. ADRIAEN (*Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* [**CCSL**] 143), Turnholti 1979, 448.

[65] MARONIS, *Decalogi explanatio*, prec. VIII, art. 1, vid. 4, diff. 5, f. 61v: "Dicendum quod iactantia non semper importat mendacium perniciosum, sed solum quando est contra charitatem Dei aut proximi, aut secundum se aut secundum suam causam sicut fuit declaratum. Contingit enim quod aliquis se iactet quandoque quasi hoc delectatus, unde reducitur ad mendacium iocosum, nisi forte hanc delectationem divine dilectioni preferret, ut si propter hoc precepta Dei contemneret, sic enim esset contra charitatem Dei, in quo solo nostra mens quiescere debet sicut in ultimo fine, vel potest dici quod reducitur ad mendacium officiosum dum quis se iactat ut gloriam vel lucrum acquirat, dum sit sine damno alterius."

[66] AUGUSTINUS, *De mendacio*, XIV.25 (CSEL 41, 445).

[67] THOMAS DE AQUINO, *STh* II2ae, q. 113, art. 1, resp. (*Opera omnia* 9, 437): "Respondeo dicendum quod hoc quod aliqui minora de se dicant, potest contingere dupliciter. Uno modo, salva veritate: dum scilicet maiora quae sunt in seipsis, reticent; quaedam vero minora detegunt et de se proferunt, quae tamen in se esse recognoscunt. Et sic minora de se dicere non pertinet ad ironiam: nec est peccatum secundum genus suum, nisi per alicuius circumstantiae corruptionem. Alio modo aliquis dicit minora a veritate declinans: puta cum asserit de se aliquid vile quod in se non recognoscit; aut cum negat de se aliquid magnum quod tamen percipit in seipso esse. Et sic pertinet ad ironiam, et est semper peccatum."

[68] HENRICUS DE GANDAVO, *Quodlibet* III, q. 25, ms. Paris, Bibl. nat. de France, ms. latin 3119, f. 50ra-rb: "Et ideo in nullo casu licet mentiri pro quocumlibet adipi<s>cendo. Licet in casu posset attenuari [*ms*. actenuciari, *exp*. ci] ut ne male fiat, unde causa humilitatis mentiendum non est, quia nec id pro quo mentitur vera humilitas, sed ficta superbia." See also CORRAN, *Lying and Perjury*, 121.

Meyronnes starts approaching the *difficultas* with a distinction between two types of *ironia*: the *ironia* of reticence, and the *ironia* of assertion. The result is extremely similar to the argument of Aquinas. The *ironia* of reticence has truth preserved (*salua veritate*) but offers less than the complete truth, as the speaker does not seek to impress such *ironia* upon the audience as the complete truth. This, argues Meyronnes, is not *ironia* properly speaking, that is, it is not a lie, but pertains rather to the virtue of humility.[69] The crux seems to be that of quantity: by withholding parts of the complete truth, one does not commit a sin of lying, but can instead be praised for humility.[70] The *ironia* of assertion, on the other hand, differs from truth qualitatively, where the deficiency of truth is not merely the absence of certain parts of the truth, but rather a qualitative divergence: an example here is of someone pretending to be morally vile while he does not in fact think so.[71] Meyronnes thus cuts the Aristotelian gordian knot in two. On the one hand, there is a quantitative deficiency of truth, insofar as such truths can be quantified or compartmentalised, such as the quantity of one's wealth or the degree of one's virtue; and on the other hand there is the qualitative deficiency of truth, where a more base and egregious version of the truth is offered, such as claiming a virtuous person to be vicious, a godly man to be in the snarls of the devil, and so on.

Here it is perhaps pertinent to note that Odonis presents a broadly similar argument. Although Odonis never defines the boundary between the *ironia* of the magnanimous and the *ironia* that is plainly deceitful, he nevertheless underlines the aspect of precision in one's presentation of truth or falsehood, but nonetheless arrives at a comparable conclusion. In the literal commentary on the *Ethics* passages, Odonis states that it is more prudent to proffer less than to proffer more, since an understatement still contains the truth, while an overstatement misses the truth. However, asserting the understatement to be the complete truth would be a lie in the same way as an overstatement: assuming one has ten apples, to say simply that one has five is not lying, but to claim one has *no more than* five apples is lying, and the gravity of this

[69] MARONIS, *Decalogi explanatio*, prec. VIII, art. 1, vid. 4, diff. 6, f. 61v: "Uno modo salua veritate dum scilicet maiora que sunt in seipso reticet, quedam vero minora detegit et de seipso profert, que tamen in se esse recognoscit, et sic minora de se dicere non pertinet proprie ad ironiam, sed magis est quedam species humilitatis, nec est peccatum secundum genus, nisi per alicuius circumstantie corruptionem."

[70] MARONIS, *Decalogi explanatio*, prec. VIII, art. 1, vid. 4, diff. 6, f. 62r: "Dicendum est quod dicere minus de se cum veritate, tamen ut dictum est prius, humilitas quedam est, sed dicere minora cum falsitate non est humilitas, quia homo non debet facere unum peccatum ut aliud vitet."

[71] MARONIS, *Decalogi explanatio*, prec. VIII, art. 1, vid. 4, diff. 6, f. 61v: "Alio modo contingit aliquem de seipso minora dicere a veritate declinans, ut cum quis asserit de se aliquid vile quod in se [*ms. add.* esse non recogniscit, aut tamen negat de se aliquid magnum quod] tamen non [*ms.* esse] percipit esse [*ms.* seipso] et sic pertinet ad ironiam, et est semper peccatum."

lie is no different from claiming that one has fifteen.[72] Compare this with Odonis's stance on the irony used in jokes and by the magnanimous, and it would be reasonable to argue that Odonis takes a similar stance on the permissibility of *ironia* as long as it holds truth in it.

Overall, the Franciscan masters seem to agree that a quantitative deficiency of truth, as long as it contains partial truth and without asserting otherwise, does not constitute a lie and therefore not a sin. Although both Meyronnes and Odonis disagree with Aristotle's tenets on mendacity, they are nonetheless compelled to revisit Augustine's notion of a lie as something that seeks to mislead and impart falsehood on the audience. In keeping with Augustine's arguments, a simple deviation from the truth does not define a lie; instead, it takes a deceitful intention and duplicity, which asserts a falsehood as truth, to define a lie.

It is worth discussing how this position squares with another of Augustine's theses, namely, one should never tell a lie even to save a life.[73] Such a lie would be categorised as one that harms no one but benefits someone, which, while being a lesser offense, is still a sin. In the context of the *De mendacio*, Augustine does not offer a discussion on taciturnity or equivocation in this scenario, but instead proposes a solution that one can proffer a partial truth to the pursuer who pursues a fugitive: "I know where the person is, but I will not show you."[74] Obviously, the solution is hardly practical. Emily Corran argues that Augustine's rigorism starts to be undermined by the emergence of casuistical literature and the notion of equivocation at the end of the twelfth century, whereby one can equivocate in order to avoid telling a lie while also avoiding a public scandal.[75] Hostiensis, writing from a legal perspective, suggests equivocation as a response to the murderous pursuer, and concludes that it may even be licit to lie in this case.[76] Is this reflected in the Franciscans' writings? Obviously, the problem with transposing the *ironia* discussion to this problem is that, *ironia*, as defined by Aristotle and read by Francis of Meyronnes and Gerald Odonis, is an understatement about the goodness of *oneself*, rather than a deficiency of descriptive truth of an objective fact, that is, in this case the whereabouts of the man being pursued. Therefore, offering a partial version of the truth does not pertain to either the virtue of humility or magnanimity; rather, it is motivated out of a desire

[72] ODONIS, *Expositio ethicorum*, IV, lect. 21, f. 89ra: "Huius autem causa est, quia prudentius est dicere minus quam magis, propter superabundantias esse onerosas audientibus, talis ergo preelegit si oporteat dicere minus quam dicere magis. Et specialiter, quia quod est minus medio includitur in ipso. Sed quod est maius medio non includitur in eo, sed potius econverso. Tamen si dicat minus, negando amplius in idem reddit quantum ad mentiri. Si enim habens x, tamen dicat uni habeo xv, et alteri dicat non habeo nisi v, tunc utrobique equaliter mentietur, quare sufficit ratio philosophi."
[73] AUGUSTINUS, *De mendacio*, XIII.24 (CSEL 41, 443-4).
[74] For a discussion on the medieval and modern-day readings of Augustine and the problem of the lying to a pursuer, see HERMANOWICZ, *Augustine on Lying*, 699-727.
[75] CORRAN, *Lying and Perjury*, 48-88.
[76] VECCHIO, *Mensonge, simulation, dissimulation*, 117.

to save another person's life. Meyronnes offers an exegetical response addressing the classic problem of Egyptian midwives who lied to save the Jewish children. What the midwives told the Pharaoh is categorically a lie – Meyronnes does not equivocate about this and indeed it is difficult to define it as anything other than fabrication. However, the lie is told not out of a mortal appetite (*libido mortalis*), but out of a venial appetite (*libido venialis*), which here is their piety and love of God.[77] For a virtuous and pious cause, a lie can be reduced to a venial sin. Nonetheless, even though his arguments on *ironia* may suggest so, Meyronnes here does not offer us the possibility that one can present a reduced version of the whole truth in such a scenario in order to spare oneself from the sin of lying while also saving another life. Odonis, on the other hand, prefers silence. When asked whether it is licit to lie in order to save the life of a friend, Odonis responds briefly and resolutely that one should rather remain silent than tell a lie, for lying is in no case licit.[78] Although Odonis considers taciturnity a privation or concealment of truth, which may lead the listener astray should he hear the opposite elsewhere, guarding one's silence still does not constitute lying, as silence merely conceals rather than negates truth.[79]

This example illustrates how Aristotle's theory of mendacity proved unsatisfactory to the Franciscan masters, or perhaps to the wider medieval scholastic movement. Modrak, in her study on Aristotle's theory of language and meaning, states that truth is a generally unproblematic notion for Aristotle,[80] and we see that in the *Ethics* mendacity is discussed mostly in reference to the self. Comparing Aristotle's brief analysis of moral truth and mendacity with Augustine's immense and complex works on lying, it comes as no surprise that the Aristotelian notions should do little to supplant Augustine's *doxa* among scholastics. Nevertheless, as amply demonstrated by the texts analysed, the Philosopher left an indelible

[77] MARONIS, *Decalogi explanatio*, prec. VIII, art. 1, vid. 4, diff. 1, f. 58v: "Quinto instatur exemplo obstetricum que mentire sunt Pharaoni ut saluarent pueros hebreorum, et sequitur Exo. i, quod dominus edificavit illis domos, ex quo patet quod fuerunt remunerate propter pium mendacium. Ergo earum mendacium fuit licitum. Respondetur quod earum mendacium potuit esse mortale et veniale, […]. Si vero radix fuit libido venialis, id est, amor vite hebreorum sub deo, sic fuit mendacium officiosum veniale, nulli nocens et hebreis proficiens, et sic loquitur Hieronymus, supponens eas ex pietate mentitas fuisse [*ms. add.* sub Deo dilexisse vitam infantium] et ideo meruisse vitam eternam."

[78] ODONIS, *Expositio ethicorum*, I, q. 15, f. 10vb: "Secundum dubium si quis requisitus cum suo mendacio possit saluare vitam amici, queritur an sit mendacium aut non. Dicendum quod in tali modo tacere debet, mentiri vero non licet, sicut dicendum est supra."

[79] ODONIS, *Expositio ethicorum*, I, q. 15, f. 10va: "Si generali hoc est quia veritas ignoratur vel quia celatur, vel quia negatur, vel quia impugnatur. Si quia ignoratur sic est falsum, quod est falsa vocis signatio per proferentem ignorata cum credit dicere verum. Si quia celatur hoc duplciter vel positive vel privative. Si privative sic est taciturnitas, que committitur cum quis audit falsitatem cuius opposita veritas ad audientem pertinet defensare. Si positive sic est duplicitas que aliud pretendit et aliud signat. Si veritas negatur sic est mendacium, id est falsa vocis signatio cum intentione fallendi."

[80] D.K.W. MODRAK, *Aristotle, Theory of Language and Meaning*, Cambridge 2001, 4.

mark on the Franciscan discussions of mendacity, not least where truth and lies can be considered quantitatively, but also as a vice that is essentially self-regarding, without considering the societal and doctrinal consequences.

III. Is Lying Always a Sin? A Moral Axiology

Augustine's rigorous condemnation of lying as a sin pervaded medieval scholastic discussions. The central tenets of Augustine's axiology are that lying violates charity, where one is always bound to hold good faith and sincerity towards another.[81] The other facet of a lie's sinfulness, as supplemented by Peter Lombard, taken from Augustine's *Enchiridion*, is that lying is contrary to the order of human speech, which is endowed by God for expressing what one holds in mind.[82] Based on Peter Lombard, one would easily arrive at a two-fold conclusion about Augustine's reasoning over a lie's sinfulness: (1) lying is injurious to others, and (2) even if it does not cause injury, it is against the divinely instituted order of speech: "Os autem, quod mentitur, occidit animam."[83] However, a reader of Augustine may find his arguments against the 'noble lie' rather weak and unsubstantiated, not to mention the prevalent cases of contradictions in the Scripture. Aquinas, for example, finds it necessary to fortify Augustine's argument with the authority of Aristotle, who states, "Secundum se ipsum autem mendacium quidem pravum et fugiendum."[84] The Angelic Doctor arrives at a conclusion that reformulates Augustine's arguments in an Aristotelian fashion: lying is sinful not only because of its injustice to others, but also because of its inordinate use of speech, even when intended for the good of others.[85]

Bonaventure, in his turn, accepts Augustine's total interdiction of lying but admits that Augustine's reasoning is rather difficult and unsatisfactory.[86] The common arguments on the

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[81] For an analysis on lying and charity, see JEANMART, *Le mensonge et la vérité*, 108-12.
[82] PETRUS LOMBARDUS, *Sent.* III, dist. 38, cap. 5 (SpicBon 5, 216), quoting AUGUSTINUS, *Enchiridion ad Laurentium de fide et spe et caritate*, VI, 18, ed. E. EVANS (CCSL 46), Turnholti 1969, 58.
[83] AUGUSTINUS, *De mendacio*, XVI.31 (CSEL 41, 450), citing Sap. 1:11.
[84] ARISTOTELES, *NE*, IV.7, 1127a27, trans. ROSS, 76; *Aristoteles Latinus*, XXVI/3, ed. R. GAUTHIER, Leiden 1972, 221; *cf*. THOMAS DE AQUINO, *STh* II2ae, q. 110, art. 3, resp. (*Opera omnia* 9, 425).
[85] THOMAS DE AQUINO, *STh* II2ae, q. 110, art. 3, resp.: "Ad quartum dicendum quod mendacium non solum habet rationem peccati ex damno quod infert proximo, sed ex sua inordinatione, ut dictum est. Non licet autem aliqua illicita inordinatione ut ad impedimendum nocumenta et defectus aliorum: sicut non licet furari ad hoc quod homo eleemosynam faciat (nisi forte in casu necessitatis, in quo omnia sunt communia), Et ideo non est licitum mendacium dicere ad hoc quod aliquis alium a quocumque periculo liberet."
[86] BONAVENTURA, *In III Sent.*, dist. 38, art. uni., q. 2, resp. (*Opera omnia* 3, 843): "Dicendum, quod absque dubio omne mendacium est peccatum; et adeo est ipsi mendacio essentiale esse peccatum, ut nullo pacto, nullo fine, nulla dispensatione, nec humana nec divina, possit fieri bene. Et hoc Augustinus dicit expresse et nititur multipliciter probare; et in hoc communiter concordant doctores. Sed *rationem* huius difficile est assignare, et ad hoc possumus niti diversimode."

essentially sinful nature of *mendacium*, posits Bonaventure, do not seem sufficient.[87] The Seraphic Doctor ends up settling for a circular argument: lying is sinful not so much because of its material falsity, but because of its intention of deceit, which is what is evil and culpable.[88] Let us remind ourselves that this is precisely how Bonaventure defines *mendacium* in the first place! Having rejected all other arguments, this conclusion essentially amounts to 'lying is sinful, because it is a lie'. Duns Scotus takes on Bonaventure's reasoning and develops it into an essentialist argument. Almost in anticipation of the nominalist turn, Scotus states that the term *mendacium* itself presupposes sinfulness. The crux of the matter becomes identifying what is properly *mendacium* and what is not, in order to determine the sinfulness of the act.[89] Imposing the term *mendacium* upon speech is equivalent to judging the act as a sin. Silvana Vecchio argues that the Franciscans are staunch supporters of Augustine's rigorist approach to mendacity.[90] She is right to the extent that the likes of Bonaventure and Scotus, whom she includes, as well as later Meyronnes and Odonis, whom she does not study, all condemn lying as a sin and justifiable by no means. However, a closer reading of both Bonaventure and Scotus may reveal that, although they adhere to Augustine's absolute prohibition of *mendacium*, they do not seem to agree with his reasoning. Duns Scotus even questions the very perdurability of the biblical precepts, which form the bedrock of Augustine's argument: the revocability of natural law and divine command means that even the most pernicious lie can be considered as licit should God revoke his precept against lying.[91]

Neither Bonaventure nor Scotus is entirely convinced with Augustine's arguments for condemning every act of lying as a sin, but they find themselves unable to break free of the

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[87] Bonaventure lists three principal arguments against lying: (i) lying is injurious to truth; (ii) the inordinate nature of a lie as a discordance between heart and mouth; and (iii) lying is injurious to others. Bonaventure considers all of them insufficient: (i) the created good can sometimes be licitly injured, and some lies injure the created truth; (ii) speech and intellect can sometimes be discordant, and such discord is not necessarily a sin; (iii) lying may sometimes be intended for the good of others, and thus does not injure others. BONAVENTURA, *In III Sent.*, dist. 38, art. uni., q. 2, resp. (*Opera omnia* 3, 843).

[88] BONAVENTURA, *In III Sent.*, dist. 38, art. uni., q. 2, resp. (*Opera omnia* 3, 843): "Nam mendacium non solummodo dicit malum ex hoc, quod actus *transit super materiam indebitam*, sed etiam ex *intentione* indirecta, quoniam ad *esse* mendacii ista duo concurrunt, videlicet dicere falsum et intentio fallendi. Et primum est malum *in se* et potest bene fieri ab eo qui ignoranter dicit falsum. Ratione vero secundi est malum *secundum se* et nullo fine potest bene fieri, nec circa ipsum potest dispensari; sicut nullo modo potest bene fieri, quod aliquis cognoscat alienam intentione adulterandi sive ex improbitate voluntatis."

[89] IOANNES DUNS SCOTUS, *Ordinatio*, III, dist. 38, q. uni., n. 21 (*Opera omnia* 10, 301-2).

[90] VECCHIO, *Mensonge, simulation, dissimulation*, 125-6.

[91] IOANNES DUNS SCOTUS, *Ordinatio*, III, dist. 38, q. uni., n. 21 (*Opera omnia* 10, 299-300): "Non magis est indebita vel illicita materia locutionis quando creduntur omnia esse falsa quam sit illicita materia occisionis 'homo innocens et utilis reipublicae'. Sed istis condicionibus stantibus ex parte materiae sic illicitae (puta hominis), potest fieri licitum occidere talem hominem, puta si Deus revocet illud praeceptum *Non occides* (sicut dictum fuit in quaestione praecedente), et non solum licitum, sed meritorium, puta si Deus praecipiat occidere, sicut praecepit Abraham de Isaac. Igitur a simili, vel per locum a minore, potest fieri licitum proferre orationem creditam esse falsam, si praeceptum revocetur quod videtur esse de 'non decipiendo proximum'.

weighty legacy of Augustine's *doxa*. Come the first decades of the fourteenth century, Francis of Meyronnes does not have much more to say regarding the subject.[92] Meyronnes, addressing the *difficultas* of whether every lie is a sin, presents a brief paragraph repeating Augustine's notion of the inordinate nature of lies and Aristotle's maxim that lying is in itself depraved and culpable, before moving on to question whether every lie is a mortal sin.[93]

It is with the *Ethics* commentary of Gerald Odonis that we see a fresh attempt at a systematic response to the question among the Franciscans. Although the sinfulness of lying is essentially a question of moral theology, Odonis presents a series of arguments that are for the most part Aristotelian in their outlook, with only skeletal references to Augustine and the Scripture. Such propensity for the *corpus aristotelicum* may be explained by the genre of an *Ethics* commentary, but the question was later copied verbatim into his Paris *Sentences* commentary (III dist. 27 q. 1), a more theological text.[94] We may even argue that Odonis is Aristotelianising this classic theological question and framing his solution in the language of natural teleology, harmony, the notion of truth as a human good, as well as the very Aristotelian scheme of *prohairesis* (*electio*). Certainly, most of the building blocks of Odonis's arguments are taken from the existing discussions, as we shall see, but what is innovative is the complete re-organisation of the pre-existing material into a piece of ethical reasoning that would have an impact far beyond the walls of the Franciscan convents. His argument was, for example, taken by up John Buridan in his much more influential commentary on the *Ethics*. [95]

Odonis argues that lying is sinful on three accounts: perversity, iniquity, and inhumanity.[96] Odonis expounds on perversity by positing the well-rehearsed argument that lying is against the instituted purpose of speech, which is given to men in order to express

[92] Meyronnes is not alone in treating the question with extreme brevity. His Toulouse predecessor, Peter of Auriol, also answers the question with a very short section in his *Sentences* commentary, where Auriol incorporates Aristotelian themes and argues that lying is sinful because it is not only a deprivation of truth, but also, contrary to the moral virtues of humility, affability, wit (*eutrapelia*), and modesty. PETRUS AUREOLUS, *Commentarium in libros sententiarum*, III, dist. 38, q. unica, Romae 1605, 536-7.

[93] MARONIS, *Decalogi explanatio*, prec. VIII, vid. 3, diff. 1, ff. 55v-56r.

[94] PORTER, *Odonis' Ethics Commentary*, 278.

[95] IOHANNES BURIDANUS, *Questiones super X libros ethicorum Aristotelis*, IV, q. 18, ed. E. DELFUS, Parisiis 1513 (reprint, Frankfurt 1968), ff. 87rb-88rb, especially f. 87va, where Buridan repeats Odonis's triad of *perversitas*, *iniquitas*, *inhumanitas*.

[96] ODONIS, *Expositio ethicorum*, IV. q. 40, f. 89va: "Dicendum ergo cum eo et cum Augustino libro *de Doctrina Christiana* et *in enchiridion*, et libro *de Mendacio*, quod omne mendacium est peccatum et malum. Hoc autem apparet ex tripici malitia inclusa in omni mendacio. Includitur enim in omni mendacio perversitas, iniquitas, et inhumanitas, quoniam mendacium pervertit ordinem sermonis ad finem suum, et sic habet perversitatem, pervertit etiam ordinem sermonis ad intellectum et sic habet iniquitatem, pervertit etiam ordinem loquentis ad audientem et sic habet inhumanitatem."

truth.[97] However, instead of citing the classic passage of Augustine, the *Doctor Moralis* supports his argument with a citation from Aristotle's *Politics.*[98] Yet, he loops back into Augustinianism to argue that the power of speech is a divine institution (*divinitus ordinata*), a gift of God to man, whereas in Aristotle speech is endowed by nature. Thus, the act of lying is not only a perversion of the Aristotelian idea of natural order, but also of the divine order. In other words, lying is a violation against what is due for each and every person in accordance with nature and to divine precepts: to lie is to misuse and abuse the God-given power.

The iniquity of lying reiterates the much-repeated Augustinian argument that a lie is a discord and disconformity between the mouth and the mind.[99] Odonis risks falling back into the circularity trap of Bonaventure, as the essence of such iniquity is the duplicitousness between speech and intellect, which is the definition of *mendacium*. He resorts to Aristotle's *On Interpretation*, where the Philosopher states that spoken words then are symbols of affections of the soul (*De Interp.* I. 16a3-8), and argues that there should be a natural equality between mind and speech. The duplicity of lies offends such natural order and harmony, and it is therefore a violation against one's natural duty (*contra debitum naturalem*).

The third facet of a lie's sinfulness, *inhumanitas*, is formulated through the perspective of justice and love, which makes this part of the question rather unique.[100] The common discussion of mendacity considers it a sin on account of the injury it does to others in terms of wealth, honour, and bodily and spiritual wellbeing, especially in the case of *mendacium perniciosum* (and indeed Augustine himself classifies lies into different genres on account of

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[97] ODONIS, *Expositio ethicorum*, IV. q. 40, f. 89va: "Primum probatur quia uti re ad oppositum sui finis ad quem est divinitus ordinata est pervertere ordinem divinitus institutum. Sed in omni mendacio sic utimur vel abutimur, quare divinum ordinem pervertimus. Sermo namque datus est hominibus ad signandum veritatem de tristi et delectabili, de nocivo et utili, de iusto et iniusto, et universaliter de bono et malo, ut habetur primo *Politice*. Nos autem in mendacio utimur sermone ad oppositum finis huius quoniam ad falsitatem."

[98] This is another example of Odonis's very liberal reading of Aristotle, where Aristotle does not intend this passage as a prescriptive order of speech, but rather as a basis for a political community. See ARISTOTLE, *Politics*, I. 2, 1253a14-18, trans. C.D.C. REEVE, Cambridge 1998, 4.

[99] ODONIS, *Expositio ethicorum*, IV. q. 40, f. 89va: "Secundum autem quoniam in omni mendacio sit iniquitas probatur, quoniam inter quecumque est inequalitas inter que debet esse conformitas et equalitas, ibi est iniquitas et maxime in electione qua eligimus talem inequalitatem contra debitum naturalem. Sed in omni mendacio est huius inequalitas, constat enim quod inter vocem et mentem debet esse conformitas et equalitas, sicut inter signum et signatum, quia ea que sunt in voce sunt earum que sunt in anima passionum note, idest signa conceptuum, primo *Peri Hermeneias*. Mendacium autem includit inter hanc inequalitatem et difformitatem, quia homo mentiens unum dicit voce et oppositum dicit mente. Et cum hoc eligit huius inequalitatem contra debitum naturale, contingit omnem quod aliquis dicet falsum credens dicere verum, et iste dicit falsum non autem mendacium. Et contingit quod dicit verum credens dicere falsum et iste mentitur, non tamen adhuc dicit mendacium, contingit autem quod dicit falsum, credens dicere falsum. Et iste dicit proprie mendacium, secundum quod Augustinus describit ipsum dicens, mendacium est falsa vocis signatio cum intentione fallendi, libro *de Mendacio*. Et sic patent omnia que faciunt ad illam inequalitatem, que hoc modo sumpta, ut sumitur in mendacio est iniquitas."

[100] Compared to Aquinas, as we have seen above, who annexes truthfulness and lying to the virtue of justice but considered that the injustice of lying is not a reason worthy of condemnation *per se*. *Cf. supra* fn. 85. [verify before final version and DELETE]

the gravity of their injury). This line of reasoning obviously runs into problems when considering the 'noble lie'. Odonis pushes for a different argument and frames it in the Aristotelian language of justice, understood as a series of duties and obligations towards one another. Through justice, one owes truth to another, and lying is therefore unjust because it violates one's social obligation towards another.[101] The injustice of *mendacium* is not quite the loss of material wealth or honour (which only the pernicious lies achieve), but rather the intrinsic diminishment of others, that is to say, lying diminishes the *truth* of others, which is universally a good in its own right. One ought to love others with the disposition of *philanthropia*, and such love means to will others' betterment rather than detriment.

Odonis juxtaposes the injustice of lies with Aristotle's notion that the pursuit of truth is the highest human good,[102] and seems to arrive at a conclusion that truth is the most sacrosanct and most inviolable good found in human life. We should bear in mind that in the very next question, Odonis rightly diagnoses that the *veritas* of Book IV is not the truth understood generally as the theological triad (*veritas doctrinae*, *veritas iustitiae*, *veritas vitae*), but is rather the social habit of truthfulness regarding oneself. Therefore, it seems that Odonis is treating the two notions of *veritas* found in Aristotle quite separately: one that is truthfulness in one's self-presentation, which Odonis quickly discards, and the other that is truth understood generally, as consisting of truth of doctrine, justice, and life, which is a lie's object of injury. Truth as understood generally is an intrinsic and inherent good in humanity, and an act injurious to truth diminishes one's humanity as it is detrimental to one's goodness in an ontological sense. Indeed, *mendacium* was frequently compared with homicide in medieval moral discussions, not least in Odonis's own commentary. But Odonis takes a radical step and posits that truth is more sacrosanct than bodily life. In his response to the first objection, Odonis argues that while the detriment of the body may be justified for the good of the soul, the detriment of truth can never be justified because truth is in itself perfect and innocent, therefore it is never licit to injure truth

[101] ODONIS, *Expositio ethicorum*, IV. q. 40, f. 89va: "Tertium autem quod in omni mendacio sit inhumanitas probatur, quia voluntarie proximum hominem deteriorem facere est inhumanum, et opus inhumanitatis que opponitur humanitati philantropie, per quam quisque amat vel amare debet omnem hominem. Qui autem facit ipsum deteriorem, facit contra illum amorem contra quem nec Deus nec aliquis sapiens facit, dicente Augustinus quod nullo sapiente auctore, homo sit deterior, nec similiter auctore Deo in *Libro 83 Questionum*, questione 4. Sed omnis dicens mendacium quantum in eo est, facit hominem deteriorem, fallens ipsum. Bonum enim hominis consistit in intellectu et voluntate. Bonum autem intellectus universaliter est veritas, ut infra libro 6. Mendacium autem quantum in eo est informat audientem de malo opposito, scilicet falsitate, quare facit ipsum esse deteriorem, et per consequens committit inhumanitatem."

[102] ARISTOTELES, *NE*, 1096a14-17 and 1177a24-25, *inter al.*

with lies.[103] This stance is echoed in the question of whether truth is preferable to friendship, which we have discussed briefly above: Odonis posits that one should never lie even to save the life of a friend, for the destruction of truth is a greater evil than the destruction of life.

Clearly, Odonis adheres to the spirit of Augustine's arguments, not only in considering all lies essentially and absolutely sinful, but also in justifying Augustine's underlying reasoning for the sinfulness of lies. He does so with minimal references to Augustine, but all the while plastering his question text with citations from Aristotle. However, just how Aristotelian is Odonis's response? Bonnie Kent argues that Odonis's commentary is a Franciscanisation of Aristotle's *Ethics*, rather than an Aristotelisation of Franciscan moral thought.[104] This statement largely stands true here. Just like elsewhere in his commentary, Odonis takes a passage from Aristotle out of its context, and spins it to suit his argumentation. The discussion itself is quite detached from the *Ethics* text, as Odonis readily discards Aristotle's ideas of *iactantia* and *ironia* in favour of a more classic – and Augustinian – discussion on lying as an intentional deceit. However, we must also note that the question itself, "utrum omne mendacium sit peccatum", is taken out of its normal theological context of a *Sentences* commentary and planted into a discussion of moral philosophy. Any commentator of the *Ethics* would find Aristotle a ready ally of Augustine when it comes to lying, as the Philosopher also condemns *mendacium* (*pseudon*) absolutely. What Odonis does is a decomposition of existing arguments and ideas, which are framed in the Augustinian language of theology; and he reconstructs it in a novel, Aristotelian format, presented as a question inspired by Aristotle's text, and richly adorned with references to the *corpus aristotelicum*. It is a transformation of a theological question into a philosophical text. A closer look, however, reveals an adherence to Augustine's paradigm of rigorism on the subject of mendacity.

CONCLUSION

The two Franciscans' analyses on mendacity are similar in some ways: they both confront the Aristotelian challenge head-on and engage fully with the Philosopher's text; they both defend Augustine's *doxa* of an intention-centric definition of lying; and they both end up adhering to Augustine's moral rigorism against lies. Despite these similarities, the differences

[103] ODONIS, *Expositio ethicorum*, IV, q. 40, f. 89va: "Ad primum ergo dicendum quod homicidium potest bene fieri tanquam opus iustum. Ibi enim potest deteriorari corpus propter bonum anime vel animarum, quia in hoc non sit homo simpliciter deterior. Sed mendacium non potest bene fieri, quia hoc ledit veritas que simpliciter est innocens, et ideo non potest iuste ledi, sicut vita noxia hominis mendosi. Item per mendacium sit anima deterior, punitio autem iusta debet fieri ad meliorationem animarum, non autem ad deteriorationem. Quare non est simile de mendacio et homicidio."
[104] KENT, *Aristotle and Franciscans*, 626.

between their approaches remains stark. Meyronnes spills much ink over the definition of lying, making distinctions between the verbal *mentiri* and the nominal *mendacium*, separating the material falsehood from the intentional, formal falsehood, and engaging profoundly with Aristotle's division of *iactantia* and *ironia*, along with the consequential implications of the qualitative and quantitative deviations from truth. Odonis, on the other hand, devotes his question to an Aristotelian reconstruction of the Augustinian tenets on the sinfulness of lying, presenting his readers an example of an intellectual exercise where a tried and tested theological problem is dissected through Aristotelian terms. Together, they represent the earliest instances within late medieval Franciscan philosophical and theological writing where Aristotle's discussions on lying and falsity are examined directly and systematically against the prevailing Augustinian *doxa*, and where the traditional intellectual focus on the internal and psychological aspects of mendacity among the scholastics, especially the Franciscans, is shifted towards the external and societal dimensions.

Placed against the broader context of Franciscan moral theology and the late medieval scholastic discussions in general, both commentary texts studied here are examples of extensive and innovative attempts at the tackling the question of mendacity. Yet they are also typical, as they both remain within the parameters set out by Augustine. Aristotle-inspired forays never succeed in challenging the dominance of the Augustinian tenets, even though Aristotle's doctrines have managed to compel them to revisit the social aspect of Augustine's definitions. Most starkly, lying is always considered as a singular act with a particular intent, phrased with the language of sin or, as in the case of Odonis sometimes, of choice. The authors have occasionally flirted with the more Aristotelian notion of a habitual vice of mendaciousness, but it is quickly dismissed or subjected to another vice (as we see in Meyronnes, who considers the habitual liar as either arrogant or vane). If Bonaventure and Scotus had doubts over the arguments of the sinfulness of lying, it seems that such doubts are very much cast aside in Meyronnes and Odonis. As Scotus astutely observes, the word *mendacium* itself carries the notion of sin and moral decrepitude, with the sinful nature of lies almost worthy of a moral first principle. What remains is how we should define a lie, and it is precisely with the definition that we see interesting evolutions from Augustine's pillars of *falsa significatio* and *voluntas fallendi*. Meyronnes and Odonis inherited the Franciscan focus on the centrality of duplicity, but they each had their own take on the falsehood of things. Meyronnes insists that *mendacium* properly speaking should include both the material and formal falsehood, and argues that in the case of *ironia*, an understatement of partial truth is not a lie. Odonis touches on a similar line and goes as far as to argue that the *ironia* used by the magnanimous and the jokes of the

eutrapelous are not properly speaking lies, as they have no intention of deceit. Broadly, the core tenets of the sinfulness of lying stand, but the perimeters of how to define a lie remain in flux.

If we take a step back from the world of mendicants and the theology faculties, however, we are soon confronted by a stark chasm between what was propagated in the philosophical and theological texts and the lax attitude towards mendacity among literary and urban circles, as seen in the *Decameron*, where sometimes the ability to tell a good lie in order to get one's way is considered a sign of sharp wit and practical intelligence. Is it a case where the academic world was completely divorced from practical life, most of all on a question with profound social and spiritual pertinence? Beyond the well-referenced theoretical arguments, neither Meyronnes nor Odonis – nor indeed most of the theological and ethics discussions on mendacity in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries – offered much practical advice on cases of lying. It is worth noting, however, that there existed in parallel an extensive body of penitential and legal literature that was far more practically oriented, which has been expertly studied by Emily Corran in her 2018 monograph on lying and perjury. It is in these genres of practical literature, such as confessors' manuals and legal casebooks, that we start seeing a softening approach to mendacity from the late twelfth-century, in the texts of Peter the Chanter and Robert Courson, for example, where equivocation and mental reservation are frequently suggested as a solution to a complex moral dilemma involving significant social consequences.[105]

Compared to the evolution of the practical text genres, theological discussions seem to have remained, *prima facie*, remarkably conservative and stable in their general attitude to mendacity. However, subtle traces of evolution can be observed, as we have analysed above, especially in the discussion on irony, where mental reservation and partial truths seem permissible, as long as they 'hold truth'. Corran posits that the quodlibetal literature produced by the theology faculties offered a platform for the university masters to engage in the practical ethics of deception, and indeed classic motifs such as the question of the judge's conscience confronted with contrary legal proofs showcase a wide range of arguments and opinions.[106] However, we should note that behind the myriad of solutions and advice offered for practical cases, the core Augustinian tenets of the sinfulness of lying and the centrality of duplicitous intention have remained unchanged. Indeed, Odonis also tackles the question of whether a judge should follow his conscience (Book V, q. 20, *Utrum iudici liceat contra veritatem sibi notam iudicare sequendo proposita et probate*). He resolutely prefers the absolute truth to the 'legal

[105] CORRAN, *Lying and Perjury*, 66-88, also 96-113.
[106] CORRAN, *Lying and Perjury*, 123-7.

fiction' of court proceedings, a position that would pit him against most of the contemporary discussions on this particular question.[107] Despite the subtle or dramatic shifts in the practical handlings of cases of mendacity and deception in practical literature, it seems that Augustine's *doxa* on lying, reinforced and enriched by Aristotle's text, still dominated the intellectual landscape of the later medieval scholastic world.

[107] The text is edited in CHEN - SCHABEL, *Aristotle's* Ethics, 263-86. I have not discussed this question at length in the main body of this article because it is mainly a piece of legal reasoning, complicated by the principles of the juridical order and the legal and political significance of the judge. Moreover, Odonis in this question does not discuss lying *per se*, but rather the prudential reasoning of the judge *vis-à-vis* the institutional reasoning of the juridical edifice, as well as the judge's obligation to a relentless pursuit of truth, even at the cost of causing scandals.