



The Psychology of Lying

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A look at the history and character of lying, with final focus on the theories of what induces a person to not tell the truth.



Lying

We all do it –
But why?



**This is printed with
green ink.**

That is, I want you to agree with me
that it is green ink. But why do I want
you to agree to something that is
false.

Some Definitions...

- Lying is **hiding**.
- Lying has a **safety or profit motive**.
- Lying is **selfish** (usually)
- Lying is a **lazy way to solve a problem**.
- Liars **think they can get away with it**.

Who Lies?

- **Do animals lie?**
- **Do young children lie? When do they start?**
- **Do clergy lie?**
- **Do judges lie?**
- **Do politicians lie?**
- **Do lovers lie?**
- **Who doesn't lie at times?**



What does lying feel like?

- Does it feel good to lie?
- Does it feel bad to lie?
- The feeling bad of lying is less frightening than the feeling of possible shame, fright, punishment, etc., that is expected to occur if lying is not successful.
- The psychological problem is when lying is successful and becomes a strategy to an end.

Do Animals Lie to Each Other or to

Us?

- Yes then do.
- No they don't.
- They lie to their prey or to keep themselves from being eaten. But to the best of our knowledge, they do not lie to each other. Humans lie to each other.

Fraud is more legal, lying is more personal.

Common law fraud has these core elements:

There is a basic **intentional misrepresentation** of a fact.

- The speaker's knowledge of its falsity;
- The speaker's intent that it will be acted upon by the others ;
- Others have ignorance of its falsity;
- Other rely on the truth of the representation;
- Some damage(s) are suffered by others.
- ***The crime of lying is known as perjury.*** It is akin to lying.



Fraud

Fraud is an intentional deception made for personal gain or to damage another individual.

Defining Fraud

- “Courts refrain from defining fraud lest they be confronted by their own definition and it be found too broad or too narrow to cover cases that may subsequently arise” (Eugene Jones, 1916).
- Fraud is law – when a debtor transfers assets to impede debtors.
- Fraudfeasor – a neologism, one who commits fraud.
- “Failure to correct another person’s delusion is also fraud if the fraudfeasor’s silence causes the misapprehension.

Constructive or Legal Fraud


- Intentional deception or misrepresentation that are held by the unwary to be fraudulent.
- Many consider the ins and outs of insurance policies to be legal fraud – in fact, it is the lack of sophistication on the part of the reader about the realities. It is not fraud because it is clearly stated to anyone who is schooled enough to understand it.

Religion and Lies or Fraud

- R. Levi said *"God says, if you bear false witness against your neighbor, I regard it as if you declared that I had not created the world."*
- The punishment of the liar is that he is not believed when he tells the truth.
- No pupil whose 'within' is not the same as his 'without' can enter this house of study.
- The oath in a court of law can be spoken in any language.

Some Thoughts About Lying

- "Come and see, what the fire does not burn, the false oath can destroy" (source unknown).
- God to Israel: *"Be careful what you vow, and do not become addicted to making vows, for whoever is so addicted, will in the end, sin by breaking his oath, and he who breaks his oath denies Me without hope of pardon"* (source unknown).
- Samuel said: *"One must not steal the mind of one's fellowman."*
- Thou shalt not set a stumbling block before the blind.



A **lie, or prevarication**, is a type of deception using an untruthful statement with the intention to deceive others, to maintain a secret or reputation, to protect someone's feelings, or to avoid some punishment. There are great areas of overlap between fraud and lying, but in outline form:

Lie - to protect oneself

Fraud - to hurt someone else

Alchemy & Fraud

- Suggested answers: Most clients were unable to distinguish between gold and metals whose color was gold.
- Alchemists- hired to find the philosopher's stone – the elixir of life, the universal cure.
- How it is possible, for the clients, to believe in the feasibility of transmuting base metal (lead, tin, iron, copper & iron) into **gold**?
- So alchemy was fraud....
- True vs. merchant alchemists?

Religion, Alchemy, and Science

- Most alchemists were religious, so to sell a fraudulent or fake product had to pass the judgments of the clergy and deity.
- But the alchemists were often interested in the alchemical theory, from which regular chemistry grew. It was designed to help the sick – so it was endorsed. However, at the same time alchemy was 'mysticified'. But it was the beginning of scientific, procedural repeatability – the testing of a theory. That's counter to a fraud.

Denial

- In mental health, denial is a ego defense mechanism. It deal with an emotional conflict by refusing to acknowledge some aspect of external reality or subjective experience that is obvious to others. Conscious and unconscious forms exist.
- Defense mechanisms – can hide or alleviate conflicts or stresses that give rise to anxiety. Maybe a adaptive or maladaptive. Based in psychodynamics. Are these lying behaviors?

Faking – it means:

- Misleading, counterfeit, not genuine, pretend,
- A feint or aborted change of direction intended to mislead an opponent.
- To attempt to perform some magic.

Lying is:

- Wanting the receiver to accept the giver's version in order to be given something or to not to take something away (money, freedom, honor, etc.) that the receiver may not objectively deserve to get or might objectively deserve to be taken away.
- Lying is often a plea for help to survive in the manner that the liar feels is justified.



Lying- Something is 'Kosher'

- **Kosher**: the most common Hebrew word in English.
- **Kosher** means fit enough to consume, it won't hurt, it is clean, legitimate, legal, lawful, approved by a higher source, can be shown to a higher authority, reliable, trustworthy, 'the real McCoy', genuine, fair, and ethical.
- To say something is **Kosher** is to say it is not fraudulent. It is what it is.

Words give the history and struggle to offer the truth:

- Nithing – old Scandinavian legal term, someone who did something very bad, a miser or treacherous person. Later 'unnithing' meant honest or generous.
- Diligencing – to do due diligence, or to find the truth nature of a situation.
- Perspicuous – to see through, and so to get real insight

The social need to lie in order to survive

- We rely on each other to survive. So if we feel we cannot survive alone, we lie to get the herd to help. "I need you to get my food. Would I need to lie to get food if I did not need your help?"
- Our lives are now 'metaplastic' – a feedback loop outside our selves in a network of what we swap to our society and what our society swaps to us. Like parallel computer processors.
- We have the ability to modify, alter, and change in our environments. Other species have been fixed and stable. So →

How do we guarantee survival


- The great human milestones:
- Over the last 2 million years ago – the refinement of gestures and language, which lead to →
- Commitment to permanent records (which prevents lying), which lead to →
- The ability of each mind to plug into the minds of countless others through culture or technology.

But what about greed?

- The permanent records are modified, as if no one will find the real records, in an effort to fraud. Greed is an arrogance that one can cloak the permanent records such that they appear to be something other than they are when the foundations for those records are measured.
- In many ways, it is the selective presentation of data towards an end – much like much in the legal system of litigation.
- The game is to see how cleverly the cloak can be produced and maintained. The cloaker always knows he is cloaking.

Cloaking and the Internet

- The internet is the device by which we can not forget. The task of exploring the past is exponentially easier with a simple search engine. Countless days of research are reduced to hours.
- But the search results may be wrong, incomplete, tainted, un-vetted, and too easily taken as true.
- Nonetheless, the practice of lying may require tweaking given the technology.
- It may make more people more honest.



**The location and
psychology of lying is
shifting since the
location of the memory
is no longer controlled**

by the liar: "Everything you've done is now preserved forever in the world of Google."



The Internet spin offs

- We have to adapt to **the age of deathless data**. Some suggest future generations will be less upset by embarrassing information or more inclined to be more skeptical of any single data point.
- Compared to the epoch we are now leaving, it will become a **post-privacy world**.
- We will need an effective mechanism of proper expungement. How do we restore a little forgetfulness and forgiveness to our lives?

Biology of Lying:

- Computer scans with pattern detection software allow windows into what we are thinking and remembering. Researchers prefer to use the term 'neural decoding' over mind-reading.
- It is the mapping of activity patterns in the brain. **The theory – does a lie have a different neural pattern than a truth?**
- We need to start thinking about the ethical issues. Some companies already claim they can pick out liars. The hippocampus is critical in the memory process. Will we read the inventory of the hippocampal output code? Stay tuned.

Pope Gregory

- What harm would there be if in the judgment of men “our words differ superficially from the rectitude of truth when in the heart they are in accord with it.”
- “The ears of men judge our words as they sound outwardly, but the divine judgment hears them as they are uttered from within.”
- This supported dissimulation in religion.

St Augustine's Taxonomy of Lies

- Lies in religious teaching.
- Lies that harm others and help no one.
- Lies that harm others and help someone.
- Lies told for the pleasure of lying.
- Lies told to "please others in smooth discourse."
- Lies that harm no one and that save someone's life.
- Lies that harm no one and that save someone's "purity."
- Lies that harm no one and that help someone.
- By Augustine of Hippo *On Lying (De Mendacio)* and *Against Lying (Contra Mendacio)*. AD 354-430

Lying to Please:

- What if you lie so to not offend your neighbors?
- The doctrine of distinguishing between heart and tongue – *"The tongue could say what was false if one kept the truth in one's heart" – this is rationalization (source unknown).*
- St. Augustine said to do so was to dishonor the martyrs who died for truth.

OK to Lie if --

- There is a legitimacy of false appearance of conformity in contradiction to one's genuine belief, to the untrue, idolatrous or sin, if the alternative were injury or death.
- So it is okay to lie if it helps survival.
- But: is lying like sex, we know it is a human trait, yet we moralize against it – we don't know what to do about it's power over us.

Biblical Lies

- Abraham's pretense that his wife Sarah was his sister (Gen 12:11-13)
- Jacob's deception to his father that he was the first born (Gen 27:19)
- Egyptians midwives live to save Hebrew children (Exod 1:17-20)
- Jesus misled disciples on road to Emmaus that he would go further (Luke 24:28)

More Biblical Lies

- David feigning madness (Samuel 22:12-13)
- Jehu, King of Israel, worships Baal so he could kill Baal's priests (Kings 10:18-28)
- Dissimulation is allowed!



Preference Falsification

- Prevalent in any persecuting society that assumes the necessity of the elimination of dissent.

Takiya

- 'Ketman', Arabic for disguise, associated with the Islamic doctrine known as Takiya
- It permits concealment and dissimulation if confronted with the danger of death or injury from persecutors. To escape one's enemies – a key point because who are the enemies?
- Is an enemy anyone 'who simply doesn't believe as I do or who gets in my way?'

Dis-sim-u-la-tion

- The act of dissimulating, feigning, hypocrisy
- It attempts to mislead in a conscious manner, with misstatement of facts, and promises a payoff to someone.
- It is pejorative – one of the most negative of labels is that someone is a liar.
- Lying is false communication. But is can also be intentional limited information, e.g., omission and commission.

Do You Swear To Tell The Truth, The Whole Truth And Nothing But The Truth, So Help You God?

- It suggests & expects partial truths. But these are partial lies in that the whole truth is not given.
- The game is often for the looker to ask questions about the parts of the truth which may be held back. Lawyers work this way: "Don't tell them more than they ask. If they don't ask about something, it is their error."
- What about full disclosure?

Partial Truths....

- Think of a court case – a lawyer does not feel obligated to tell the whole truth about an item, but perhaps just enough to ‘leave an pejorative impression.’
- So is lying the ‘standard of care.’
- It avoids a full facing of all facts to reach an end point. Doing so is ‘clever strategy’ and rewarded with money or fame, if successful.
- Leave a doubt in the consumer’s mind about the competition’s product – a partial truth?

The games we play

- Did you catch me in my deceit?
- But why do we need to play the game of deceit?
- It shows we can survive.
- It shows how cleverly we can manipulate the world for our benefit.
- “It takes away from having to prove our point, while still trying to make our point.
- I’m a better hunter than you. So I will eat.”
- It hides weaknesses – “I am not so strong.”



Do Narcissists lie?

- They probably think they don't have to.



Long term thinking is bad

- Lying is **short-sighted** because it cannot be maintained since only truth enables systems to work over time.
- So is lying being indifferent to, or trying to ignore, a reality based future? Yes.

Defense Mechanisms & The Freuds'

- Our ego's need to defend themselves from attack. How it does so reflects the personality as well as other variables. The ego controls:
 - Instinctual drive regulation
 - Relationship to reality and personal survival
 - Anticipates consequences of actions
 - Object relationships
 - **When attacked, ego defense mechanisms erupt**

Anxiety – It's very uncomfortable

- Traditionally, anxiety develops when the ego cannot cope with some distressing stimuli.
- Most people may lie when they feel some anxiety. **“How can I get out of this?”**
- If they lie but do not feel anxiety, then they lie because of a ? personality disorder – this is very different than the common liar.
- Lying forms – a) response to short-term issue (little planning) vs. b) long term design (much planning)?

Lying by Design

- This has some long range planning. It is the common notion of fraud. The effects of a lie are considered, there is a tactic and strategy, and it is not a spur of the moment. It is designed so hopefully, even with scrutiny, the reality of the dissimulation will remain unknown. It is sophisticated.
- It is offensive malingering.
- It knows that “I could get caught, so let’s prepare.”

Murder vs. Manslaughter

- Have a goal or grudge (malice).
- Lie in wait (willful premeditation).
- Use a weapon know to be able to kill (the act).
- Escape.
- *Murder is more the fraud, manslaughter is more the lie.*

Lying in Response

- Spur of the moment dissimulation. No long term planning exists. It is not sophisticated, and often is in response to some immediate situation of 'being caught'. There are no pre-designed escape devices.
- It is primitive by comparison to fraud.
- It is defensive malingering.
- "I never gave much thought to the chances of being caught."

Defense Mechanisms

- **Rationalization** – Attempt to justify attitudes, behavior, etc
- **Reaction formulation** – Transforming an unacceptable impulse into its opposite.
- **Repression** – Hiding from consciousness an impulse. But this doesn't inactivate the impulse and it may appear symbolically.

Defense Mechanisms

- **Denial** – Avoiding some painful aspect of reality.
- **Distortion** – Reshaping external reality to suit inner needs, using sustained delusional superiority or entitlement
- **Projection** – Unacceptable impulses are felt to be outside of the self.
- **Controlling** – Minimize anxiety to resolve conflicts

Need to remember...

- That one aspect of those who lie or commit fraud is that they may be delusional or paranoid.
- Sometimes a lie can emerge from a psychosis or mania.
- Sometimes the liar is antisocial, sociopathic or has other personality concerns.
- Sometimes there are frontal lobe or other neurological dysfunctions

Need to ask: What is the person's inner reality?

Superego

- The existence of the superego explains how in every form of civilization there is a self-regulating or self-restrictive force in individuals which is indispensable for social order.
- It is the internal code of law. Without fear of punishment, the majority of people would behave less socially than they actually do. Franz Alexander 1932.

Betrayal

- Lying or fraud is an betrayal for selfish reasons of our social order. Note the word 'our', for it may mean 'my social order, not your social order.' Need to ask if liar feels he betrayed anyone. Sometimes betrayal is considered treason – lying is a treason to the social order.
- Lying is to cover up a past event.
- Fraud is to cover-up ongoing or future events – both betray the social contract.

Who has the social contract?

- To understanding lying, we need to ask: what sense of social contract is felt? Is it for the general well-being, or for the individual's?
- Betrayal is to seduce and forsake a woman –
- Maybe the person isn't lying to himself because the core contract is selfish.
- But maybe the core contract is reactive?

Basic hostility

- Protecting our defense system and sense of self-sufficiency, may drive a person to fantasy to gratify needs and create a self-image.
- A child will come to rely on fantasy and will engage in transactions to support it. Many who do this are unaware of their core needs and drive.
- Many of these people had emotional deprivation, rejection, or have flawed behavioral models.
- Then: →

Hostility – part two

- When faced with the reality of social system that is callous, indifferent, etc., they feel un-connected, and so feel hostility at themselves because they feel something is wrong with them, and they reject the rejections by others.
- The system doesn't work for them, and work to build their own images – and if that takes lying or fraud, it is ok. It enhances their physical and emotional survival.
- Think of Madoff or Hitler's ego & superego.

Development of the Conscience

- A person's conscience is the precipitate or representative of his early relations to his parents.
- Conscience can be conscious or not.
- Some terrible anxiety exists to destroy the hostile objects – which may be at the bottom of asocial and criminal tendencies (Melanie Klein 1930).



On lying in everyday life

- So lying is a means towards survival. It appears to be a core drive.
- Society had to pass laws to keep society from falsehoods in order to maintain it's own survival.
- Some leaders lie to maintain their own survival.
- Would we lie to survive or protect family? Yes.

The book:

- **Malingery – Stealing the Truth**

- Available on Amazon, in print and Kindle formats

Please email me to get a copy of this presentation –

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