

WHAT IS LYING?

DON FALLIS (2009)

Definition of Lying

- Conceptual Analysis: reliance on intuition to create a definition of lying which "rules in everything that is a lie and that rules out everything that is not a lie" (Fallis, 31).
- You lie when you assert something that you believe to be false
- You *lie* to *X* if and only if:
 - You assert that *p* to *X*
 - You believe that *p* is false

Assertion

- You *assert* something when
 - You say something
 - You believe that you are in a situation where you should not say things that you believe to be false
- In other words, you believe the Maxim of Quality is in effect in the conversation
- You *lie* to *X* if and only if:
 - You state that *p* to *X*
 - You believe that you make this statement in a context where the following norm of conversation is in effect: *Do not make statements that you believe to be false*
 - You believe that *p* is false
- To lie, you must make a statement of some kind--however, this does not have to be explicitly verbal
- One could nod their head, write something down, etc.

Intention to Deceive

- Some philosophers include the intention to deceive in their definition of lying--Fallis (2009) does not think this inclusion is necessary and in fact makes the definition too narrow
- One example which shows this is a "bald -faced lie," which is a lie where all parties know it is untrue
- "A student has been accused of plagiarism and the student knows that the dean knows that he did it. But the student also knows (based on the dean's reputation) that he will not be punished unless he confesses. So, when the student is called into the dean's office, he denies having plagiarized. Although the student does not expect the dean to be deceived, he is pretty clearly lying to the dean" (Fallis, 43).
- While the intention to deceive is often there in instances of lying, it is not required and therefore does not need to be included in the definition

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Warranting the Truth

- Some philosophers argue that lying is *warranting the truth* of something that you believe to be false
- *Warranting the truth* of something is when you make a statement in a context where one promises or guarantees, either explicitly or implicitly, that what one says is true
- Whether or not the speaker *believes* they are warranting the truth is also a key component in judging this definition of a lie
- Example; a witness in a trial says "Tony was with me at the time of the murder," but continues "but I am really bad with dates and times."
 - This person is not warranting the truth nor do they believe they are, as they are not promising that their words are truth
 - However, if they know for a fact that they were not with Tony during the murder, then they are still lying
- For this reason, Fallis (2009) thinks this definition of lying is too narrow

Grice's Maxim of Quality

- Grice's Maxim of Quality comes into play when we discuss lying
- The default when we engage in conversation is that Grice's Maxim's are in play-- however, we can do certain things to "turn off" the maxims
- For example, winking is a common way of "turning off" the Maxim of Quality when you say something untrue but want to signal that the truth is not expected
- In contrast, a liar or bald-faced liar does not signal this, and therefore the definition of lying holds

Unified Account of Lying

- Though Fallis (2009) holds that the intention to deceive should not be included in the definition of lying, he writes that "philosophers typically are interested in lies that are intended to deceive" (Fallis, 56).
- For these purposes, Fallis (2009) proposes a definition of *deceptive lying*, which is a subset of lying
- This includes the intent to deceive

Conclusion

- "Incorrect" definitions of lying according to Fallis (2009)
 - Saying something you believe to be false with the intent to deceive
 - Asserting something you believe to be false
- Fallis's (2009) definition of lying:
 - You say something you believe to be false
 - You believe that you are in a situation where the following norm of conversation is in effect: "*Do not say what you believe to be false*"

ASSERTION AND LYING

JORG MEIBAUER (2014)

Definition of Assertion

- When *asserting*, the speaker:
 - expresses, in a responsible manner, their belief that p
 - and wants the hearer to recognize and take over this belief that p
- An assertion is different than a statement in that a statement relies on the assumption that it is the result of prior knowledge of the facts
- An assertion's evidence for truth must be given only in the future

The Sincerity Condition

- Meibauer writes that "lying essentially has to do with asserting the truth of propositional content" (Meibauer, 2014).
- Therefore, in order to discern whether someone is lying, we must be able to define whether they are sincerely asserting the truth
- Meibauer proposes the following sincerity condition for assertions:
 - S intends that the utterance of T will make him responsible for the truth of p

Common Ground

- Common ground: "the set of propositions that are believed by both the speaker and the hearer" (Meibauer, 50).
- These propositions that are part of the common ground must be mutually known by both parties--they must both know that they both know it
- False propositions can be part of the common ground, but lies can never be part of the common ground
- This is because a lie is something the speaker does not believe but behaves as if they do--so the false proposition could be part of the listener's belief set but not the speaker's
- Contradictory with Fallis's (2009) example of the plagiarism bald-faced lie

Indirect Assertions

- Meibauer (2014) argues that it is possible to lie using indirect assertions
- For example, if someone asks, "Am I responsible for this disaster?" while knowing full well that they are, they indirectly assert that they believe that are not responsible for it and therefore they are lying

Revisiting the Definition of Assertion

- At the end of the chapter, Meibauer revisits the definition of assertion after looking at different types of assertions
- S asserted at t that p iff
 - S uttered at t the declarative sentence meaning p
 - by uttering the declarative sentence, S presented p as true
 - by uttering the declarative sentence, S intended that an addressee H to whom S uttered p actively believes that p

DEFINING LYING

JORG MEIBAUER (2014)

Definition of Lying Based on Assertion

- Following the definition of asserting that Meibauer (2014) previously laid out, they propose a definition of lying
- S lied at t if and only if
 - S asserted at t that p
 - S actively believed at t that not p
- Meibauer immediately finds a problem with this definition: someone can lie without being sure that they don't believe the assertion
- For example, if I think that I failed a test but I am not sure, and yet I tell someone I passed, I am lying. However, this doesn't fit within the previously given definition of lying

Intention to Deceive

- Meibauer (2014) puts forth the following definition of lying from Carson (2010):
- A person S tells a lie to another person $S1$ iff:
 - S makes a false statement X to $S1$
 - S believes that X is false or probably false
 - S intends to warrant the truth of X to $S1$
- Once again, to warrant the truth is to make a statement in a context where sincerity is expected
- This definition does not include the intent to deceive, and Meibauer (2014) agrees with this

Bald-Faced Lies

- A bald-faced lie is when "the speaker presents a proposition p as true, does not believe p is true, yet does not deceive the hearer, for it is mutually known to the participants of the discourse that p is false" (Meibauer, 2014).
- An example of a bald-faced lie could be if someone says something that they want to be "on the record," but everyone in the situation knows it isn't true and the only intent of the lie is to have proof that they said it
- However, Meibauer (2014) argues that bald-faced lies are actually not lies at all, as the two speakers share the common ground of mutually knowing that the assertion is false

Conversational Implicature

- Meibauer (2014) illustrates that a lie can be made by way of conversational implicature
- An example of this is the captain's logbook story which we have seen before: A captain writes *Today, the mate is drunk* in his logbook. The mate sees this and becomes offended, so he writes, *Today, the captain is not drunk* in the logbook. By writing this, the mate implies that the captain is usually drunk.
- Suppose the captain is not usually drunk; now, the mate has lied via implicature and also while stating the truth!

DEFINING LYING

JORG MEIBAUER (2014)

Falsely Presupposing

- Meibauer (2014) also attempts to show that false presuppositions can be lies
- For example, if someone says "Ken has quit smoking," they presuppose that Ken was smoking at some point
- If Ken in fact never smoked, someone could say the statement was a lie
- Meibauer concludes that "to deliberately bring a false presupposition into play may be a refined strategy of lying" (Meibauer, 76).

Underdeterminacy

- Continuing to show how many different ways there are to lie, Meibauer (2014) examines how underdeterminate statements can be lies
- For example, say that two men, A and B, are hiking and A is bitten by a snake. B says "You are not going to die [from this bite]" and A correctly interprets the meaning of the sentence to say that the snake was not venomous. However, B is actually lying because he knows that the snake is venomous. Crucially, this is not a lie in that he is telling A that he is immortal and won't die ever--he is specifically lying about whether A will die from the snake bite as both were able to correctly interpret the meaning of the underdeterminate sentence.

Vagueness

- Vagueness poses an interesting situation for lying: lying is sometimes less possible the more vague a speaker is
- If someone says "The distance between Amsterdam and Vienna 1000KM" but the actual distance is 965KM, most people would not intuit that the speaker is lying but rather being vague
- However, if someone says "The distance between Amsterdam and Vienna is 972KM" and the actual distance is 965KM, it seems more likely that the speaker is lying since they chose a less vague number
- Sometimes people use vagueness to avoid questioning about their lies for this very reason

Prosocial Lies

- Meibauer (2014) avoids moral judgements on lying as they discuss the definition of lying, but they do define three types of prosocial or "white lies"
- Benevolent lying: lying to protect someone's feelings
- Lying in self defense: lying to protect yourself from harm
- Lying to protect the private sphere

INTENTION TO DECEIVE, BALD-FACED LIES, AND DECEPTIVE IMPLICATURE

MARTA DYNEL (2015)

Introduction

- Dynel's (2015) paper responds to Meibauer (2014) and includes some insights from Fallis (2009) as well
- Their paper emphasizes the possibility of the intention to deceive as a precondition for lying, unlike Meibauer (2014) and Fallis (2009)
- This calls into question the lie status of bald-faced lies

Intention to Deceive

- Dynel (2015) notes that Meibauer's (2014) definition of lying does not include the intention to deceive, but the intention is often there in cases of lying anyway
- However, Dynel (2015) brings up something not mentioned by Meibauer (2014): the intention to make the listener believe that the speaker believes what they are saying
- This is not about the content of the lie, but rather if the listener thinks that the speaker believes what they say
- Dynel (2015) notes that many include this aspect in the definition of lying

Bald-Faced Lies

- Dynel (2015) compares Meibauer (2014) and Fallis's later (2012) work on lies and their differing opinions on whether bald-faced lies are actually lies
- As we know, Meibauer (2014) states that bald-faced lies are not lies, as the speaker and hearer share common information about the truth and who believes/intends to convey the truth
- However, Fallis (2012) asserts that bald-faced lies are lies, as they write that the speaker still intends to convey something false even if their violation of the Maxim of Quality is known to the listener

Deceptive Implicature

- Dynel (2015) summarizes Meibauer's (2014) arguments about lying via implicature, showing that an implicature can serve as a lie
- Dynel (2015) goes on to note that some types of implicatures are not seen as lying, such as choosing to withhold information deceptively (lying by omission)
- It is widely acknowledged that creating untruthful implicatures is deceptive, but not all seem to intuitively qualify as lies
- There needs to be some kind of assertion made for it to be a lie
- Metaphor, irony, litotes, and other similar devices are types of implicatures where the speaker says something they don't believe is true, but these are not commonly considered lies
- This is because they flout Grice's Maxims, and therefore truthfulness/sincerity is not expected in the context

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