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Perspectives on modern lies

Essay

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Unit: FLFI.02.073 Practical Philosophy I: Moral Philosophy

Lying, truth and truthfulness – moral, anthropological and linguistic arguments

Time: 08.06.2010

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“Even the devils themselves ... do not lie to one another, since the society of Hell could not subsist without truth any more than others” (Samuel Hutchinson, cited in Bok, 1999 pp. 18-19).

Introduction

From a practical point of view, it seems that lying does not bend itself easily for analysis (or truthfulness?). Even after introductory reading of classics on the matter, such as Augustine or Kant, it still seems a mischievous and slippery topic to discuss – without clear borders, systematic and meaningful definitions. In addition, the phenomenon of lying does not stand still. Instead, like other things in our world, it is continuously evolving and assuming unforeseen new forms, growing in complexity and sophistication.

Nevertheless, an attempt will be made here to apply that classical knowledge, and seek what guiding light, if any, it could offer in the modern market world of the early 21st century. In order to achieve that target, the first effort will go to “mapping the territory”. The aim will be to define the scope or at least to clarify the dimensions in which lying and deception generally reveal themselves. Secondly, two real-life examples of modern sophisticated deception will be taken – examples from our surrounding political and corporate environment that probably neither Augustine nor Kant could have imagined in their time. The aim will be to scrutinize them in the light of the drawn theoretical framework, and see what practical insights such philosophical approach could offer.

Two schools of thought

To start with, Alasdair Macintyre offers the following distinction about the history of philosophical exploration of lying:

“I have distinguished two rival moral traditions with respect to truth-telling and lying, one for which a lie is primarily an offense against trust and one for which it is primarily an offense against truth. For adherents of the former tradition unjustified deception is what offends against trust and unjustified lies are a species of unjustified deception. ... But for adherents of the rival tradition no lie can ever be justified, although some deceptions may be” (Macintyre, 1994 pp. 335-36).

Macintyre connects the first tradition with *utilitarianism* (Stuart Mill) and the second with Kant’s fundamental *principles of duty*. Yet, these two schools do not need to be taken as

rivals. After all, offense against truthfulness (Kant) does not exclude offence against trust (Mill). Quite the opposite – it usually involves it. Macintyre makes the effort to unite these approaches in his own paper by placing lying and truthfulness in the context of *human relationships*. In the end, that leads him to conclude that the two schools of thought are complementary:

“For to understand the rules prescribing unqualified truthfulness as governing relationships, rather than individuals apart from their relationships, is also to understand how the concern for truth and the concern for trust can become complementary. Central to my trust in you as spouse or friend or colleague, as someone to whom I stand in a relationship of commitments, ...is my confidence that on any matter relevant ... I will never be told by you anything other than what you believe to be true” (Macintyre, 1994 p. 359).

Soup of definitions

Next, to seize a stronger grasp of the topic, the definition of lying seems to be logical point to turn to. Notably, different writers use either very narrow definition for lying or, the opposite, remain quite vague about it. Augustine (1952 p. 60) concludes his introduction with a remarkably open-ended summary: “It is clear, then, that a lie is a false statement made with the desire to deceive. But, whether this alone is a lie is another question”. Kant sees lying as a more internal phenomenon – untruthfulness in one’s mind, both towards others and oneself:

“...That no intentional untruth in the expression of one’s thoughts can avoid this harsh name [i.e. lying] in ethics ... is clear of itself. ...A lie can be external lie ... or also an internal lie. – By an external lie a human being makes himself an object of contempt in the eyes of others; by an internal lie he does what is still worse: he makes himself contemptible in his own eyes and violates the dignity of humanity in his own person” (Kant, 1996 p. 182).

Sissela Bok (1999 p. 13) comes up with rather narrow definition in order to enable her focusing on the topic of lying: “...any intentionally deceptive message that is *stated*”. Christine Korsgaard (1996a) withholds from own definitions but, in her interpretation of Kant, and drawing parallels between physical coercion and deception (e.g. pp. 140-41), she seems to approach the topic in the widest sense of all. Notably, she does not distinguish lying from other forms of deception. Finally, Macintyre (1994 p. 316), while also withholding from his own definition of lying, summarises the difference of definitions from the two schools of thought above:

“Those for whom some types of lie are permissible or even required characteristically define a lie so that an intention to deceive is an essential defining property of a lie, and the wrongness of lies is the same as that of other acts of deception, while those for whom no lies are permissible characteristically define a lie in terms of an intention to assert what is false, sometimes, like Aquinas, denying that an intention to deceive is necessary for an assertion to be a lie.”

Overall, this review of classical definitions appears leading to a dead end. It raises more questions than answers. For example, from utilitarian point of view, if other forms of deception undermine trust as well, what is the point of distinguishing lying from deception, justified or not? And, from Kantian view, why does he assume the formal duty of truthfulness breached only by lies in verbal assertions, and not by other forms of deception – misleading, concealment, pretending etc? In the duty- or value-based worldview, such distinction seems strangely materialistic. And, at least from Korsgaard's (1996a, 1996b) view, deception (in its wider scope), can be seen as offence against truth in Kantian sense too. Williams (2002 p. 107) summarises these doubts in a most concise way:

“But if deceit is justified at all, as in defending the innocent fugitive, something is wrong if one thinks that it is more honourable to find some weasel words than to tell a lie.”

In conclusion, the problem with classical theories above is not that they are wrong, but that they are partial, or incomplete. They all are somewhat reductionist or limited in their nature – either limiting the theory's scope of concern with only lies (as opposed to other forms of deceit, utilitarian theory), or limiting it with only explicit verbal assertions (Kantian theory).

Dimensions of lying

When attempting to tie these loose ends, the first apparent thing about lying is its gradual nature – it is not an “all-or-nothing” question. Yet, this seems not to be the case with Kant, who has often been taken (e.g. Bok, 1999) as very rigorous about lying. One can either act in accordance with his formal duty of truthfulness, or against it. There is no middle-ground.

The second, more covered aspect is that there is a kind of multi-dimensionality in lying. Namely, from Augustine (1952) onwards, the discussion seems to involve three different worlds, or continuums, where one can dwell between absolute truth and absolute falsehood. Dimensions, pointed to us respectively by the *utility-based*, *duty-based* and *relationship-based* approaches from the above; continuums in which each of them is concentrating its respective focus of attention. None of these three continuums can be interchanged or reduced to any other – just like length cannot be substituted by weight or colour.

The first is the continuum of objectivity, best introduced by the utility-based approach from above. At this, surface-level, the external truth is revealed – to what extent does the

statement reflect the true state of affairs? This is the world in which the first component in Augustine's definition of lie – the falsehood of a statement – occurs. Or, in other words, it is the world where what Williams (2002 p. 87) calls “the virtue of Accuracy” is pursued. On this level one can measure or evaluate the message on the scale from “true” to “not true”. One needs to keep in mind that absolute truth (e.g. describing the health condition to the patient in full detail) is not possible. Often the accuracy of such objective statements (e.g. “I have a rope that is 1m long”) can be measured. But it still remains the matter of subjective evaluation since when does the message cross the line of “not true” (e.g. what if the actual length of the rope is 98 cm?).

The second, deeply subjective and internal continuum is the one of integrity, best introduced by the duty-based approach. It involves the other component of Augustine's definition of lie – intention. This is where what Augustine (1952) calls double-heartedness (p. 55) is revealed, the inner world where difference between a lie-teller and a liar (Augustine, 1952p. 79) is determined. Or, where what Williams (2002 p. 84) calls “the virtue of Sincerity” is pursued. It is the attitude towards oneself and towards the “dignity of humanity in his own person” (Kant, 1996 p. 182) that are evaluated here. It is the internal attitude toward one's own act of lying (or truth telling). Augustine (1952 p. 104) enlightens this world by the following distinction between consent and approval:

“Whatever happens to our bodies as a result of a greater force, when we are unwilling and when we give no authority for such an act, is not unchaste. A reason for permitting such an act can exist; no reason for consenting to it can be given. When we approve and desire, then we consent; but we permit when, unwillingly, we allow something for the sake of avoiding greater disgrace.”

So, the question in this space lies: does one acknowledge telling a lie in the first place? And, if yes, does he permit, or does he “approve and desire” it? On one end in this continuum, we find the story of Jacob the Liar (wikipedia, 2010b), bringing falsified good news to ghetto-Jews in Warsaw, and suffering deeply for it in his consciousness. Or the story of Dutch housewife naming a Jewish child as her own to Nazis, in order to save the child's life (MacIntyre, 1994 p. 351). On the other end, we find President Clinton, lying “in cold blood” to his family and to whole nation about his sex affairs (1999).

The third continuum is probably richest in colours but hardest to recognise. It is best introduced by the key element in MacIntyre's interpretation – human relationships (1994 p. 357). On this world one's external attitude in relationship with others is observed. It is the world in which we can evaluate the nature of the communication process, continuum in which

what Williams (2002 pp. 98 - 101) calls “implicatures” matter to the same extent as the content of the message itself. It is the world in which one communicates something, either truth or falsehood, and the other chooses how to interpret the message – is it the truth, a lie, a joke, a formal politeness? Hence, one will call it the inter-subjective continuum. Here it is the harmony between the communicator and the recipient that counts – do they understand the message in the same way? Or, does the communicator want the recipient to gain the same understanding as he has himself? Here, one either follows or works against what Williams (2002 p. 100, with reference to Grice) calls the “Co-operative principle” in communication. It is also the nature of a message – e.g. is it jocose, officious or mischievous lie? (Aquinas, 1999), or who is benefiting or offended by the truth or lie, etc – that is under observation here. This seems somewhat in contradiction with Augustine (1952) who did not recognise jocose lies, and even considered cases where mischievous liar, against his intentions, accidentally spoke the truth as not lying. However, one would argue that jokes are only jokes when both parties understand, and are in a position to take them as such. If I make a joke upon you that you do not take as funny at all (e.g. tell that you have a hole in your trousers when there is not), you would be perfectly entitled to call it a lie.

As noted, in the writings referred above all these three continuums were clearly traceable but not always distinguishable from each other (hence the need to “map the territory”). However, after drawing up the list, one found it not so original at all. There are prominent authors, not discussed above, that have followed similar path of thought. For example, Ken Wilber (2000) is citing Jürgen Habermas (1990) as he writes:

““With every speech act,” [Habermas] says, “the speaker takes up a relation to something in the objective world [it], something in a common social world [we], and something in his own subjective world [I].” And the claims made with reference to each of those worlds have their own validity criteria, namely *propositional truth* (referring to an objective state of affairs, or it), *normative rightness* (cultural justness or appropriateness, we), and *subjective truthfulness* (or sincerity, I)” (Wilber, 2000 p. 150, original italics, except in brackets)

Therefore, one finds that the three-world picture offered here fits well (at least) with Wilber’s (2000) theory of the world and evolution.

Implications

The suggested perspective enables to view the troubles with definition of lying and deception in the fresh light, making the earlier fuzzy distinctions between lie/deception and verbal/non-verbal assertion quite irrelevant. Now, deceit in general may be seen as meaning

different things in different spheres. Therefore, to clarify the framework, this paper will further on view the concept of “Truthfulness” (with capital “T”) as the aggregate of three different aspects – the three kinds of truthfulness (with minor “t”) expressed as *accuracy*, *sincerity* and *appropriateness*. Its opposite, “Falsehood”, would respectively mean deception in the form of inaccuracy, insincerity and inappropriateness. In this framework, the definition of “lie” will become radically different (and wider) from the classical definitions above. It will simply indicate a more unacceptable, vicious or brutal, act of deception, regardless of its form, or the continuum in which it is occurring. Determining when exactly does a deception turn into a lie will still remain a matter of subjective (or inter-subjective, social) judgement.

The first practical insight from such three-world picture derives from the gradual nature of truth/falsehood dichotomy. The ideal of absolute truthfulness looks neither possible nor desirable in any of the three worlds. In the first, objective world, the absolute accuracy (e.g. describing patient’s health condition in full detail, or molecular structure of a teacup) would mean drowning in the flow of information, both pointless and endless. In the second, subjective world, the absolute and rigorous sincerity in all matters would hardly enable lasting social relationships. It would presumably raise conflicts rather than bring harmony thereto. It would also render us quite defenceless in aggressive relationships. In the third, inter-subjective domain, absolutely truthful communication (i.e. without any friction or distortion whatsoever), would also mean taking down all barriers, completely opening one’s mind to be read by others. Yet, such an act would also bring along the loss of autonomy, diffusing one’s thoughts with those of others. And, inter-subjective human relationship seems hardly possible in the world, where the subject has been lost.

Secondly, it seems that classical schools of thought have traditionally been inclined to deal with lies manifested in the objective (utilitarian school) and subjective worlds (Kantian school). The inter-subjective domain seems to remain least recognised and explored.

The third, perhaps most surprising, insight might be that the ideas from the two schools of thought above are not at all weakened but, rather, strengthened and clarified by such an approach. Differentiating the three continuums enables each theory to assume its rightful place in the whole picture, and to become integrated on a new level.

For example, in the first, utilitarian perspective, deception in any of the three spheres is still damaging trust, but in different ways and extent. In the objective continuum, if I find my friend (or colleague, or companion) being inaccurate in his statement, his trustworthiness is indeed reduced in my eyes. But, probably, the reduction is not very deep if the statement resulted from an unsystematic error. In the inter-subjective continuum, when I find out that he

has informed me inappropriately out of intention (e.g. misinformed about significant details that he knows are important to me, or even uninformed at all, by silence), the damage to trust becomes deeper and harder to restore. Yet, when his reasons for such a lie become apparent, I may understand them and, partially, recover the trust. This could be the case, for example, with paternalistic lies – told by the doctor to a patient, or by parent to a child. But what trustworthiness could he hope to regain when I'd discover him lying in the subjective domain – either deceiving himself too on the road, or deceiving me for malicious joy, or greed, or out of other egoistic desire to mislead me?

In the second, Kantian school of thought, the duty for truthfulness becomes what it seems originally to have been meant for – the duty for Truthfulness. It becomes the general and highest ideal to uphold, the duty that does not indicate a required state of affairs, but the *direction of movement*, the direction of *ascent* in moral development. According to Kant, this would be the direction dictated by Pure Reason – pulling us towards higher levels of truthfulness *in all three domains*, i.e. towards greater accuracy, sincerity and appropriateness in human relations throughout our lives. It is the general direction that, according to Kant, any rationally thinking human being would choose, not a rule to be rigorously held in all particular situations. Thus, Kant's categorical imperative (wikipedia, 2010a) still provides us with the clearest general answer to the question “why not lie?”, and succeeds in doing that in all three domains. And by providing us with that direction, Kant as a philosopher still shines far above all others – his followers, interpreters and critics that came later.

Such view upon Kant would also resolve the contradiction referred above. Namely, the contradiction found between the gradual nature of lying and the rigorous “yes/no” nature of Kant's duty for truthfulness. As discussed above, one can never be “perfectly truthful” (or “perfectly wrong”). But one can, at any given moment, with any of his objective act or subjective thought, either *ascend* towards Truthfulness, or *descend* towards Falsehood. There is no third option.

This brings us to the fourth, and final, insight from the picture above: pursuing the duty for Truthfulness also becomes a balancing act between pursuing the three different kinds of truthfulness. Advancement in any of the continuums cannot be achieved by sacrificing others. Trading personal integrity or honour for objective accuracy or inter-subjective appropriateness does not move us towards higher level of Truthfulness, but away from it. The ascent needs to be harmonious. For example, when being blindly truthful to the enemy would cause a loss of life (as in the Dutch housewife case above), the “dignity of humanity in his own person” (Kant, 1949) would clearly cease to exist in the subject who is killed. In such

case, it would be absurd to believe that the same dignity is somehow advanced in the person of truth-teller (or traitor?).

It should be noted, of course, that Kant, in his time, did not follow the same path of thought. Hence, he might not necessarily agree with conclusions here, at least not with the last one. Hence it needs to be discussed closer.

Macintyre (1994 pp. 336-37) describes the story with Kant and the King Friedrich Wilhelm II, which reveals the difference in views. In this story Kant, when asked by the King “to refrain from any distortion or depreciation of Christianity”, agreed. But he also formulated an elaborated wordplay in his reply, declaring: “as your Majesty’s faithful subject, that I shall in future completely desist from all public lectures or papers concerning religion, be it natural or revealed”. His aim was to “mislead the Prussian censors without lying” and to be free from his promise after the King’s shortly-expected death. Hence the declaration was meant for the King alone, in the name of “your Majesty’s faithful subject”. In the light of the discussion above, Kant indeed avoided “asserting” what is false – i.e. he was not lying in the objective realm. However, in the inter-subjective domain, he was clearly lying – at least from the King’s and censors’ point of view who were deliberately misled. In this realm, Kant was definitely not following the “Co-operative Principle” of communication (Williams, 2002 p. 100). Quite the opposite, he was acting against it. Yet, this inter-subjective lie could easily be justified. It was simply outweighed by the need to protect Kant’s own integrity. One would argue, still, that by resorting to the wordplay Kant also committed a completely unnecessary (and unjustifiable) inner lie in the subjective realm. That way he not only “permitted”, but also “approved and desired” (Augustine, 1952) the deception – crafting it in the way to do both, to mislead the King, and satisfy the criterion of objective accuracy. The inter-subjective lie was probably unavoidable in this case, agreed. But it seems that the inner lie could have been avoided – for example, by simply answering “yes, my King” to the King’s request and assuming oneself free from the promise after the King died. Therefore one would argue that, with regard to advancing the Truthfulness, Kant did not choose the best available option.

It is only remarkable that two hundred years later, at 1999, President Clinton resorted to the similar act of wordplay when publicly announcing that he had “no sexual relations” (Clinton, 1999) when, as later revealed, the case simply involved an act of oral sex. So, however remotely and unwillingly this may be, but Kant seems to have set a negative example with his act.

The case with modern lies

Now, with this three-world framework in mind, it is time to look at our present-day surroundings with a fresh eye, seeking for latest manifestations of lying and potential implications from this picture. One case of lying in modern environment – with President Clinton (1999) as the “hero” – has already been briefly concerned above. At first sight it appears quite simplistic by nature – a clear case of lying to the public. Yet, in the eyes of the two classical theories above, the case does not constitute a lie – the President’s assertion included no objective falsehood. Then again, if anyone would catch his/her spouse at telling the same story at home, there would be no hesitation to call him/her a liar – this is simply common sense. In such case the question posed by classical theories, whether oral sex objectively qualifies as “sexual relations” or not, would simply turn out as inadequate and even ridiculous.

To complicate the picture even further, another, more sophisticated case study will be derived from Dan Ariely’s (2008) book “Predictably irrational”. Ariely is a professor in MIT, teaching a subject called “behavioural economics” to his MBA students. For introduction, he describes an experiment carried out upon his students after finding an advertisement in the Economist magazine. The advertisement offered annual subscriptions of the Economist, and invited readers to choose one of the three options: (a) full access to Economist webpage for \$59 per year, (b) subscription of paper-magazine for \$125 per year, or (c) have both, the paper-issue and webpage, for \$125 per year. As the excerpt from the book goes (Ariely, 2008 pp. 4-7):

“SO LET’S RUN through the Economist’s sleight of hand in slow motion.

As you recall, the choices were:

1. Internet-only subscription for \$59.
2. Print-only subscription for \$125.
3. Print-and-Internet subscription for \$125.

When I gave these options to 100 students at MIT’s Sloan School of Management, they opted as follows:

1. Internet-only subscription for \$59 - 16 students
2. Print-only subscription for \$125 - zero students
3. Print-and-Internet subscription for \$125 - 84 students

So far these Sloan MBAs are smart cookies. They all saw the advantage in the print-and-internet offer over the print-only offer. But were they influenced by the mere presence of the print-only option (which I will henceforth, and for good reason, call the “decoy”). In other words, suppose that I removed the decoy [so that only the first and third options remain].

...

Would the students respond as before (16 for the Internet-only and 84 for the combination)?

Certainly they would react the same way, wouldn't they? After all the option I took out was one that no one selected, so it should make no difference. Right?

Au contraire! This time, 68 of the students chose the Internet-only option for \$59, up from 16 before. And only 32 chose the combination subscription for \$125, down from 84 before.

In addition, Ariely (2008 p. 2) also explains the rationale behind the Economist's announcement:

“Now, the print-only option may have been a typographical error, but I suspect that the clever people at the Economist's London offices (and they are clever and quite mischievous in a British sort of way) were actually manipulating me.... I suspect it's because the Economist's marketing wizards (and I could just picture them in their school ties and blazers) knew something important about human behavior: humans rarely choose things in absolute terms. We don't have an internal value meter that tells us how much things are worth. Rather, we focus on the relative advantage of one thing over another, and estimate value accordingly. (For instance, we don't know how much a six-cylinder car is worth, but we can assume it's more expensive than the four-cylinder model.)”

When looking upon that case in the light of the two classical theories, everything seems right at the first glance – the advertisement includes no lie. One can actually choose the second option (i.e. the print-only subscription for \$125) and, if he did so, the magazine would probably be delivered as promised. From the utilitarian perspective, the message is not even deceptive, so it cannot be a lie and thus cannot harm trust. From the Kantian perspective, the assertion in the message appears true, so, it seems not in conflict with his duty of truthfulness. Overall, in the objective world, there seems to be nothing wrong with the announcement.

In the subjective domain the picture becomes somewhat different. Firstly, the Economist actually promotes two, not three options for a customer. Secondly, they want the choice to appear as neutral to customer, while actually manoeuvring him to prefer the third option. So, the intention to deceive is clearly evident here. Further questions would go as to what extent are the Economist's marketing people aware of the deceptive nature of their actions and what is their attitude to it? How much do they possess the “heart of a liar” (Augustine, 1952), and how much self-deception is involved in this case? These questions are deeply subjective of nature, and hard to be answered from distance. It is clear that the message content was designed with skill and deliberation, so the deception was not only permitted, but also “approved and desired” (Augustine, 1952). It is also clear that it was designed in hope to gain some advantage or profit out of it. Economist, evidently, possessed and exercised the power of knowledge (of marketing and other social technologies) upon its readers, and did it in hope to gain financial benefits. One is inclined to believe, though, that the Economist's marketing team, in accordance with classical theories, did not recognise their

practices as somehow immoral. In other words, while being aware of one's deceptive intentions, the act itself was still considered as non-deceptive. Such contradictory attitude seems to point to a certain amount of self-deception to be involved. But, whichever was the case, it still leads the analysis here to harsh conclusions. Firstly, from the utilitarian perspective, the offence against trust is likely to be even higher in the case of self-deception. Secondly, from the Kantian point of view, with internal lie, a man "...does what is still worse: he makes himself contemptible in his own eyes and violates the dignity of humanity in his own person" (Kant, 1996 p. 182).

The third, inter-subjective domain opens even direr angle to analyse the case. The Economist marketing gurus clearly had quite different understanding of what they are offering than the understanding they wanted to convey to their readers. From the utilitarian school's point of view, the deception still seems quite mild. It involves intention, does not include the "whole truth" and includes some elements from the "but the truth" domain, but it is still hardly something to be called a lie. Kantian duty-based perspective reveals much deeper troubles. The problem in the inter-subjective world is, namely, that the communicator and recipient are out of harmony. We are witnessing the Economist's attempt to exercise power on the unsuspecting reader. The message is communicated against the "Co-operative Principle" (Williams, 2002), and with clearly coercive intentions. It is communicated in order to gain power over the reader. Korsgaard (1996a pp. 138 and 140) explains why the Economist's act violates Kant's categorical imperative (the Formula of Humanity):

"Kant uses two expressions that are the key to understanding the derivation of perfect duties to others from the Formula of Humanity. One is that the other person "cannot possibly assent to my mode of acting toward him" and the second is that the other person cannot "contain the end of this action in himself." These phrases provide us with a test for the perfect duties to others: an action is contrary to perfect duty if it is not possible for the other to assent to it or to hold its end."

...

"According to the Formula of Humanity, coercion and deception are the most fundamental forms of wrongdoing to others - the roots of all evil. Coercion and deception violate the conditions of possible assent, and all actions which depend for their nature or efficacy on their coercive or deceptive character are ones that others cannot assent to".

In other words, the act of deception in the objective realm (a lie, or joke, or formal politeness) may be perfectly truthful in the inter-subjective domain if/when the other can assent to it, *and vice versa*. In order to be truthful in the inter-subjective world, the rules always need to be mutually agreed. For example, bluffing in a poker game or bargaining in the eastern bazaar may be taken as perfectly truthful in the inter-subjective world, because the rules are known to all parties. In the case above, the Economist aims to secretly introduce new

rules in the game, denying its readers from the knowledge of it. Once more in Korsgaard's (1996a p. 141) words:

“Any action which prevents or diverts you from making this initiating decision is one that treats you as a mediate rather than a first cause; hence as a mere means, a thing, a tool. Coercion and deception both do this. And deception treats you as a mediate cause in a specific way: it treats your reason as a mediate cause. ... Your reason is worked like a machine: the deceiver tries to determine what levers to pull to get the desired results from you. Physical coercion treats someone's person as a tool; lying treats someone's reason as a tool. This is why Kant finds it so horrifying, it is a direct violation of autonomy.”

As noted above, both classical theories would not have recognised the Economist's message as a lie – it included no objectively false assertion. Yet, in the inter-subjective domain, the message is contrary to Kant's perfect duty in a very clear and deep way (even “horrifying” way, to use Korsgaard's expression). Therefore, in the framework derived in this paper, the Economist's message fully deserves to be called a lie.

Conclusion

The paper above developed a three-dimensional framework to analyse the phenomenon of lying – the objective, inter-subjective (cultural-social), and subjective (individual) realms. In the background of two classical theories (utilitarian and Kantian), this framework was used to analyse the occurrence and implications of these phenomena in our surrounding world.

The first conclusion of the paper is that two classical theories of lying and truthfulness – the utilitarian and Kantian school respectively – suffer a kind of “objective fallacy”. They tend to view truthfulness only in the context of objective (verbal) assertions, leaving other more sophisticated and subtle forms largely out of concern. Due to such shortage, these theories are becoming increasingly inadequate in dealing with modern lies. In a way, they themselves are falling prey to new kinds of deception. If a theory fails to recognise even the simplest common-sense lie (e.g. the case with President Clinton above) as such, there is something wrong with it. Such theory becomes even more out-of-date when dealing with more sophisticated forms of modern deception (e.g. the case with Economist). However, the problem with classical theories was found to be not that they are wrong, but partial. The framework developed in this paper aimed to address this shortage by differentiating the dimensions in which lying occurs and, suggesting a way to integrate the classical theories on a new level. As an insight from such framework, it was also suggested to revise our understanding of the term “lying” – not to narrow it down, but to expand towards more

inclusive meaning, especially towards inclusivity of harsh deception in the world of inter-subjective human relationships (e.g. the case with the Economist).

Secondly, this “philosophical blindness” seems also to have caused a kind of modern “migration of lies” from the objective to subjective and inter-subjective realms where they can be better hidden from theoretical scrutiny. This migration has not gone completely unnoticed by society. (Increasing distrust towards politics is a clear evidence of that). However, it seems to have remained largely unnoticed by theorists, by philosophers concerned with Truthfulness, in the utilitarian or Kantian sense. Thus, the consequences of this process, such as potential harm to societal trust, have not been fully explored and understood yet. The new lies may be surprisingly sophisticated and elusive (e.g. the case with the Economist). But in the globalising world, which depends increasingly on markets’ confidence and emotions, their consequences may also be surprisingly disastrous.

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