

# Communication on the difficult route of lie

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## ABSTRACT

The study explores the phenomenon of deception. It proves that lies are communications with fictional content focused on the expectations of a person or social group and aim at a problematic situation. The untrue communicative instance lacks figure: nobody is depicted a liar when they lie. The productions do not have a producer presenting itself as a liar, but it is always emphasised by a certain recipient. They have a content related to the current cognitive, practical interests of the target. The liar acts in two directions: by distorting a correct thinking, by perverting the language. It is a man lacking language responsibility and a profiteer of cogitation.

**Keywords:** communication; fiction; persuasion; lie

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the dictionary *Larousse encyclopédique* (1957), a lie is considered to be the “sentence contrary to the truth”. In the *Explanatory Dictionary of Romanian Language*, the lie is seen as a deliberate distortion of truth, usually aimed to deceive someone. The synonyms of the term “lie” would be: untruth, deceit, wile, dissimulation, simulation, duplicity etc. The idea of untruth in the sense of lie, history encounters it for the first time in the European culture in *Iliad* by Homer. In Book IX of the Homeric description, Achilles moralises: “I hate that man like the very Gaea of Deaun who says one thing but hides another in his heart”. Later, the problem of the untruth is debated by Plato in *Hippias Minor*; here, the idea of language falseness, showing that the lie is a force in relation to its object. In its turn, the liar gains power by promoting the lie: “the false are strong and prudent and skilled and prudent with those things in relation to which they are fake”. Thinking the lie as immoral enterprise is also encountered at St. Augustine in *De Mendacio*. He shows that a “lie is the deliberate expression of a clear untruth” (David Steiner, 1983, p. 266).

## 2. TRUTH AND REALITY

“Philosophers of suspicion” (as Paul Ricœur calls Nietzsche, Marx and Freud) have the problematic of truth in their preoccupations. Inertially, they are forced towards thinking about lie exactly through this. Of the three, Friedrich Nietzsche is the one that raises most radically the problem of the truth-lie ratio. “What is the truth?” he wonders in “On Truth and Lies in an

Extra-moral Sense” (Nietzsche, 1998, p. 45): the truth is “a moving army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms, in short an assembly of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically reasoned, transformed and made more gladsome: (...) the truths are illusions which it has been forgotten they would be such a thing. What we consider to be true represents an illusion which we do not remember as illusion and which consists of metaphors. “We possess nothing but metaphors of things” (Nietzsche, 1998, p. 39).

All beings are beneath underlie illusions and metaphors, and what distinguishes man from the animal depends on this faculty of dissolving the intuitive metaphors in a scheme, meaning to bring an image to the concept. “The world seems logical to us, because we have made it logical”, shows Nietzsche in *The Will to Power*, aphorism 521 (Nietzsche, 2000, p. 287). Admitting that we could however reach the truth in the world of metaphors, in this world made logical, Nietzsche wonders what would truth be necessary for. We find the answer in the extra-moral “On Truth and Lies in an Extra-moral Sense”.

The truth is necessary in terms of the indications provided to us by its function of bringing liberation to man, therefore freedom (Avrigan, 2009; Bok, 2011; Botezat, Oprea & Iliescu, 2013; Borowski, 2014). The truth liberates. It imposes the more difficult, as it is already settled on a false truth. The system of metaphors was crowned as a unique valid way to describe the world. There however remains an existing possibility: to distinguish between the man who honestly tells the truth and the liar who hides it. “The lie and not the truth - is divine!”, exclaims Nietzsche (Apud Steiner, 1983, p. 269). Seeking the truth is done by lying. Nietzsche states that “The liar uses the valid designations, the words, to make the unreal appear as real; he says, for example, “I am rich”, when the word “poor” would be the correct designation for his situation (Nietzsche, 1998, p. 33). Besides distorting the reality, the liar also distorts language: “he abuses the fixed conventions by arbitrary changes or even by reversals of the names” (Nietzsche, 1998, p. 33). Consequently, the liar acts in two directions: by distorting a correct thinking, by perverting the language. He is a man lacking language responsibility and a profiteer of cogitation. For Nietzsche, the truth is nothing but a language obligation. The human subject is responsible for language and thinking.

The liar is a liar in a selfish manner and, seeing this, the only punishment the society gives him is to cease to trust him”. The lie is no longer moral or immoral, but “extra-moral”. The liar is extra-moral because he is just excluded and because he is excluded only when he becomes harmful. The lie is moral to the point where it harms, becoming extra-moral from that point onwards. This statute of the lie fixes and enables an undeniable reality to it: “Thereby men do not flee from being deceived as much as from being damaged by deception” (Nietzsche, 1998, p. 33). In an extra-moral sense, the lie is unavoidable. In *The Will to Power* (aphorism 493), a justification is given on truth in its relation to a certain type of lie called error: “Truth is the kind of error without which a certain species of life could not live” (Nietzsche, 2000, p. 276).

The criterion of truth is its value for life, and not the adherence to reality. Man feels morally obliged to tell the truth or to lie according to a convention set forth to the extent where one or another of the options is functional for the existence of society. The truth should be extra-moral, because people have the right to lie: “Neither Manu nor Plato nor Confucius nor the Jewish and Christian teachers have ever doubted their right to lie”, he concludes in the *Twilight of the Idols* (Nietzsche F., 1994, p. 491). For Nietzsche, the truth and the lie are mutually supportive. When both fall, nihilism remains. Denying the truth by lying, denying then the truth and the lie, nihilism is reached. A cause of the lie would be the impulsiveness and deterioration of the feeling of truth (Avrigan, 2009; Bok, 2011; Botezat, Oprea & Iliescu, 2013; Borowski, 2014).

The dissimulations and simulations result from here. At other times, the lies are the result of a “single mental state of automatism, similar to that of somnambulism” which goes until autosuggestion. Lies also result from the need to know and influence the environment, to be in the centre of attention (Lombroso C, 1992, pp. 119-123). This content-message is supported by a speech structured on ideas in the very vicinity of what the target would like to know in relation to triggering or solving certain problematic situations. Sometimes, the target of a lie may be the producer himself. Through lie and untruth, he can more easily face the reality and the time he relates to. “Man likes to lie and be lied to and when nobody and nothing lies to him anymore, he is disaggregated” (Tudor Arghezi). In this case, the lie becomes protective and therapeutic. The self-lying overlaps the almost natural tendency to reject all that contradicts the inner balance. Isn't the medicine of the lie also a form of persuasion, just like public psychotherapy, suggestion, hypnosis, etc.?

Placing the object of speech in the vicinity of social representation in the target's scope of expectation represents the specificity of formulation and formula of the truthless speech. That its accessing occurs on a narrow range, at the boundary between the positively self-achievable fiction and problematic reality, it provides it with the power of dissemination.

The fictionality of lie is not in the fiction which it is generically supported on, nor especially in manipulation that is implicitly achieved, although such discursive sequences appear in truthless formulations. It is in the distortions preceding the message: amplification of proportions, dramatisation, redefinition of prejudices, distortion of meanings, over-development of details, emotional recycling, compliance with mentalities. All these techniques are permanently adapted to the human-target segments. The very co-participation of these targets provides credibility and efficiency to the lie. At the end, lies are “made” of those who believe in them. This is why in the act of lying the auditor's conscious or unconscious predisposition to lie is exploited. The liar's speech seems impeccable (congruent, logical, consistent, plausible, etc.). Lie does not arise on an empty land. It is expected and adulated, enjoying the co-participation.

“The liar is a well-situated man” shows C. Cucuș (Cucuș, 2002, p. 21). The lie is a cultural acquisition of an individual integrated into the community and has certain interests. The lying subject may be an individual lying for himself or on behalf of an entire group or, when it is a matter of public relations, on behalf of an institution. He always reasons not only in favour of a fictive reality, but also in favour of fiction itself. The liar keeps the sizes of his interested fiction as real for the others, even under the pressure of his speech qualifying as truthless. As V. Tonoiu shows (Tonoiu V., 1995, p. 243), he “destroys the reciprocity even when he seems to establish it. He uses language against his normal vocation for communication and introduces in the relation to another an unevenness denying the ethical alterity, induces the objectifying devaluation and solitude. By setting on the guillotine of lie, the lying subject detaches his speech with all available weapons, of which the most percussive one, almost lethal, is provided to him the social structure itself for free: it is a matter of the institutional-reflex lack of orientation towards inspection. In society, the intention situations are always misleading, whichever the appearances would be.

The truthless speech is woven as any communication, so that the rules of the content and relation being expressed can be recognised on its surface. By its permanent oscillation between semiotics and de-semiotics, between the ambiguity of the content, clarification of the relation and vice versa, the producer of the lie creates a polysemic space on multiple levels, a swampy land, an area of quicksand, where the recipient shall exit from only by wasting a lot of time. But what is it that keeps the recipient stay put, what makes him linger, to consume the meanings as the liar provides to him, thus participating directly and immediately to forming the lie? The

answer is: first of all, the lack of information or, more exactly, the need for information. That who has been lied discovers the information as epistemological impasse and as paradox: he gets it without requesting it, he gets it without seeking it and uses it without verifying it.

The great test for him is to give a liar right. Actually, as J.-N. Kapferer shows, verifying the information is not something self-evident, because the “*social knowledge is based on trust and not on evidence*”. The lie is based on the lack of inspection. The Pascal-Kapferer Law is, above all, a law of lie. The liar succeeds, because that who has been lied to does not verify the information: he lives it. Noting that the “invention” provides him with comfort, safety and success, the individual perseveres in this regard, reiterating or perfecting the formula of hiding (Balaban, 2005; Balaban, 2009; Cace, Cace, Cojocaru & Sfetcu, 2013).

The lie has a ubiquitous presence. It is a figure of rationality performed in order to face difficulties and in the perspective of its resolution for the benefit of the agent propagating it. The lie is always motivated, over-determined by wishes, interests. It has an instrumental colouring; it is a path of easily achieving the goal. One lies for the most various reasons: of the desire to attack someone, to exonerate, to valorise, to hide shyness, of the need to protect, to bring pleasure, to solve the pressures and norms of the community. Lie appears on all levels of the society. Montaigne said that the lie and stubbornness develop in children along with their body.

The lie relates both to different chronological ages, and to an individual's state of normality or abnormality. Children's lie would have “as prime cause the adults' facility to deceive them when they are still very small, in order to calm them down”. They lie to get what has been prohibited to them, in order to avoid a rebuke or to give the impression they do not deserve it, they lie out of jealousy or cowardice, of pride, to satisfy their vanity (attributing merits and importance to themselves).

The lie loses its innocence, as C. Lombroso lets us understand, along with the child's transformation into an adult. The latter, as a “big child”, develops and diversifies the truthless speech, the causes remaining the same (Lombroso, 1992, p. 119). The lie increases along with the social body. Passing through various forms – rumour, disinformation, propaganda – the lie makes its presence felt in any type of speech: political, media, daily, etc. The best current world, of the two possible, fights against persuasion, especially against false communication, but reluctantly, which could convince us, does not persuade (cheat, fool, lie, manipulate, etc.), that it is not itself a fight, a persuasive weapon. By changing the reference system: is it however necessary to block speech – weapon of attack and defence, even to produce happiness? Where would the romanticism and “Romanian dream” go then? The “truthless” language officiates, even establishing the great literature (Buller & Burgoon, 1994; Buller & Burgoon, 1996; Burgoon & Qin, 2006; Burgoon & Buller, 2008). For the language creating function, the untruth is a means of increasing the expressivity. The imprecision of words, the random structure of poetic grammar are means to hide. For example, poetry lives through what is not said in

To lie means to expire. But any literary text incites to readers' cooperation to “fill the gaps”. The lie is facilitated by language. The language we possess does not always lead us to truth or is it able to bear and circulate it. The word sequences the reality, it cuts it, rebuilds it according to laws other than its intrinsic ones. “All descriptions are partial. We do not really speak the truth; we fragment to rebuild desired alternatives, we select and avoid. We do not affirm “what exists”, but what it could be” (Steiner R., 1983, p. 269).

The lie is mostly the work of language. Although it seems that the lie mainly represents a stratagem of thinking, things are actually the opposite: the stratagem of thinking is directed by a pre-eminent intrinsic language stratagem. According to G. Steiner, the human language

has an inherently “misleading” structure (Steiner R., 1983, p. 268). This easily enables thinking to manifest deceitfully. Language forces into lying. Vladimir Jankelevitch is on an opposite position, whom in “*Le Mensonge*”, reasons that lies reflect “the language impotence before the supreme richness of thinking” (Apud Steiner, 1983, p. 273). The truth is that a thinking that would incline towards lie finds in language an ally with a land propension towards ambiguity and lie.

Truthless communication is done exactly on the field of present. On it’s field, here and now. The lie may aim the manipulative, distorting information. Through the lie, “information” of various types are promoted, which are attracted into various devices which exalt certain orientations or directions in the advantage of an idea or social group (parties, formations, ...). It occurs as a systematic activity to propagate messages, from positions of interests practically determined groups, with the obligation to form certain opinions, attitudes, views, which would serve the interests of the groups. For example, as intervention, propaganda is a political lie.

According to G. Le Bon, the lie is based on a grammar of rhetorical persuasion on a field with four parameters: the prestige of the source, the “erudite” affirmation without evidence, the mental influence (Apud Buzărnescu, 1996, p. 65).

In terms of cogitation, the lie is a complex psychic act, it shows signs that the distance between the real and the unreal is adjustable by semantic mechanisms. It is a particularly complex behavioural act, which involves all components of personality: thinking, language, affectivity, will, attention, etc.

As Constantin Cuceș shows (Cuceș, 2002, p. 1), the counterfactual speech implies above all structuring a purpose given as an imaginary model. The act of lying subtends three ideas: a) a certain projective, ideational capacity, which goes beyond the present; b) knowing the truth and refraining to say it; c) effectively fracturing the advantage and knowing more than another subject, being one step ahead of him.

Axiologically, the lie is a sign that man is a being dissatisfied by what he is or what he has. Moreover, the lie is also required by the civilisation factor. The society establishes a series of norms that must be complied with. Certain individuals may elude them through a tacitly accepted lie. In this case, the lie is seen as “quasi-legalised evasion” (Cojocaru, 2009; Gorun, 2010; Cojocaru & Cojocaru, 2012; Cojocaru & Popa, 2013).

Psychologically, the lie is a protective, adaptive and successive strategy of inserting the individual into the complicated social network. Cognitively, it does not oppose so vehemently to the truth as pure falseness does. Conversely, it is a form of refused, truncated truth, “of unbelievable” thorough state. Thus, the (hidden) purpose of the lying agent primes, and not the compliance with the truth or the falseness. The fictive frame not only replaces the reality, but it also transforms it. The reality does not matter anymore, what we believe is beyond it (Cojocaru, 2008; Cojocaru, 2009; Cojocaru, 2010; Grosu, 2009 ; Traistaru & Avram, 2014).

The most frequent lies are driven by the verbal language, often betrayed by mimicry or gestures. The hands or face are more sincere, more transparent. We lie gesticulating, laughing, staring, infuriating, enjoying... lying ourselves. One can lie through mimicry, gestures, behaviour. The cruellest lies are often told in silence. A man could have stayed for hours without opening his mouth and yet to have been a disloyal friend or a pathetic slanderer.

By various strategies, the truthless show seeks to determine the effective consumer of the speech to become the effective consumer of subsidiary ideas (Unguru, 2010). The truthless speech concertedly acts both on the linguistic component and on its iconic component, of gestural image. The assembly of staging is entirely fictive even when all appearances tend towards real, because the figure of the lie capitalises the ambiguity to the maximum, the

irrepressible mixture between appearance and essence. Discursive production transposes the logically decidable and difficult content into a connotative language, thus making more difficult the task of that who seeks the truth of what has been stated, bears the disability which the society creates as automatism through the inertia of grounding it on good faith and not strictly on evidence. It is certain that an individual who would verify all we say and all that emerges from our phrases might seem improper, according to L. Wittgenstein "*the sentence affirms any phrase arising from it*" (Wittgenstein L, 1991, p. 54). G. Durandin, specialist in the study of the lie, has shown that "often, what we declare rather reflects our thinking automatisms than what we have truly seen" (Apud Kapferer, 1993, p. 54).

The second constitutive condition of the lie, after substitutability, is intentionality. The confused intention cancels the possibility of lie. There are explicit intentions and implicit intentions. The real lie is part of the circuit of the latter. Recognising the intention makes the issue of lie undecidable, and, on the other hand, it constrains the consumer to make conjectures on intentionality and sincerity (Sandu, 2009 ; Cojocaru, Cojocaru & Ionescu, 2010; Poșca & Sandu, 2010; Sandu, 2013).

Values are the model, object of lie. They are deeply confused and intentional and substitutable. The values of good, truth, beauty, freedom, honour are neither true nor false. One may say that values are confused. They cannot be the object of deniability. The confused core of value feeds the lie. Any lie keeps a value captive. Thus, the lie has a special respect for values. Also, opinions generally related to options and axiologic decisions do not decide absolutely the truth or the false.

Opinions are highly subjective, just like values. Opinion provides a large part of its content of significations to deniability. Opinion seems to be the ideal place of the lie. Meanwhile, the perfect object of opinion is value. Any honest opinion is a view. One may lie by exposing certain opinions the intentionality of which is not directed by the idea of authenticity and truthfulness. Other lies are created by displaying a false intentionality. When opinions are crossed by beliefs and convictions, the lie is in difficulty, because its intentionality is vitiated. The beliefs and convictions cannot be fully surrendered to the illegitimate approach to substitute the reality with a deceptive phrase (Tran & Vasilescu, 2003; Oprea, 2009; Oprea, Braunack-Mayer, Rogers & Stocks, 2010).

In any case, the belief loads a truth which the opinion cannot access. Conviction has a firmness which places it outside the preferences of the truthless speech. Firm convictions are a guard against lie.

It is a man's natural disease to believe he possesses the truth directly; and hence it results he is always willing to deny all that seems incomprehensible to him; although he only and naturally knows just the lie, and only takes as true those things the contrary of which appears to him as false (Frumuș, 2011; Căce, Arpinte, Căce & Cojocaru, 2012; Caras & Sandu, 2013).

We lie in order to resist. We lie to others, we lie ourselves. We lie consciously and sometimes unconsciously. We lie interestedly or unreasonably, guilty or innocently, openly or secretly. We lie by falsifying or we lie... confirming (Cucos C., 2002, p. 13). In the case of a lie (communicational operation of persuasive type), the overall intentionality is reaching a purpose, current intentionality is the frame (a chase, a class, a party), and reactive intentionality is the effective response in the context of discussions. The language, fiction or lie are classified by J. Austin as being acts of parasitic language. According to J. Searle, the lie and fiction are two language activities generally adopting the assertion or affirmation form, without actually being authentic assertions or affirmations. Actually, the rules dominating the success or failure of the assertion act are not complied with within fiction or lie: in both cases, the condition of sincerity (according to which the speaker believes in the veracity of his words) is breached.

The speaker of a lie or of fiction text does not believe the veracity of his words (Frunză, 2013; Counsell & Popova, 2000; Frunză, 2014). Thus, the intentions behind the lie and fiction are different intentions and, despite an apparent similarity, the lie and the fiction must not be mistaken, contrary to certain ideas. In case of fiction, the speaker pretends they do an act of assertion and therefore has the intention to pretend they do an act of assertion but has not the intention to deceive the interlocutor.

In other words, the speaker of a fiction shall pretend they are doing an act of assertion, but shall not try to make their interlocutor believe the latter is facing an authentic act of assertion, while the speaker of a lie shall pretend they are doing an act of assertion and shall try to make their interlocutor believe the latter is facing an authentic act of assertion. Searle adds another dimension to his theory on fiction: he properly notes that not all phrases of a fiction text are false. But, by insisting on the coexistence of fiction and authentic assertion phrases within the same texts, he rejects this possibility. More precisely, one cannot understand how fiction cannot deceive its interlocutor and it seems that Searle's theory fails to provide an answer on this significant matter.

Let us take into account what type of act the lie is: it goes without saying that it is a locutionary act, but is it an illocutionary act or a perlocutionary act? If it is an illocutionary act, the speaker's intentions must be expressed conventionally within the statement. Actually, an obvious condition for the success of a deception act is for this act not to seem like. Thus, the lie is not an illocutionary act. Is it a perlocutionary act? Effectively, it seems that the lie falls well within the scheme which Austin assigns to perlocutionary acts.

Moreover, it is a matter of convention here: the perlocutionary act is directly achieved by producing a phrase and not directly as an illocutionary act. As any perlocutionary act, the lie is done by means of an illocutionary act and, in a specific case, by means of an illocutionary act of assertion. Or, if the condition of sincerity is fulfilled, then performed act cannot be a lie, because by definition, the speaker does not believe the veracity of his words within a lie. Thus, the lie can only be "fulfilled" if performed act is an authentic act of assertion, but if it is an authentic act of assertion, it is not a lie.

### 3. CONCLUSION

Any truthless speech has a powerful motivation. The object of lying is always something to be taken into account: opinions, beliefs, considerations, attitudes, facts, acts, etc. Their specificity is their inability to be replaced: substitutability. Non-substitutable things block the lie, are unapproachable as objects of the truthless speech.

The non-substitutable thing does not accept the ambiguity and confusion; the truthless language and truthless cogitation can only be applied on unclear targets. The lie arises "from" and develops "a" confused language and a confused thinking.

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