

Differences of lying and not telling the truth



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Lying and not-telling the truth are different in their own right, and have moral and ethical implications associated with each one. This is not merely a matter of semantics; it is a matter of substance. By the use of analogy, there are major difference between justified and unjustified homicide. Murder is unjustified homicide and will always be considered wrong by a moral society. Not every instance of killing a person, however, is considered murder. In scenario's of capital punishment and self-defense occasions can justified homicide. Similarly, in the case of a lie there is an unjustified discrepancy between what you believe and what you say, and so lying is may always be considered immoral. In some circumstances, not telling the truth in order to preserve a higher moral law may well be considered the right thing to do and thus is not actually a lie.

While Kant asserted that lying, or deception of any kind, should be forbidden under any interpretation and in any circumstance. He stated this because if it is universally acceptable to lie, then no one would believe anyone and all truths would always be assumed to be lies or deceptions. He also stated that the right to deceive an individual couldn't also be used because it would discard the rights of the person being deceived as an end in itself. Therefore, Kant denied the right to lie or deceive any person for any reason, regardless of context or anticipated consequences. While Kant proclaimed this notion of never lying, there are pitfalls in his " universalizing." Throughout these examples the pitfalls of Kant's universal laws will be exposed.

There are several circumstances that not telling the truth wouldn't be considered a lie. For instance in the case of national security, the United States government might omit or falsify information that is given to the

public to ultimately protect their own interests or assets. For example, General H. Norman Schwarzkopf during the lead up to the first Gulf War he was known to give many press conferences leading up to the invasion. During these press conferences not all the information that he presented regarding his invasion strategy could be considered a full truth. During this time Schwarzkopf would have falsified information about the invasion date to the media, in effort to deceive them. While knowing that this information was a non-truth, this information mislead the enemy and gave the United States military a strategic advantage. In effect by not-telling the truth, Schwarzkopf gave the military the element of surprise, which could have resulted in saving thousands of American lives. Should Schwarzkopf be considered a liar in this case? In this case, while Schwarzkopf had been telling false-truths it was done for moral reasons and shouldn't be considered a lie. Since the ends justify the means it is morally acceptable by not telling the truth and it shouldn't be construed as a lie.

While in the previous scenario not telling the truth isn't considered lying, there are other situations cannot be interpreted in the same fashion. If an omission of the truth is used to mislead or deceive someone for your own greater ends, or for an immoral goal, then the non-truth cannot be construed in the same way. For instance during the most recent financial collapse many banks and financial firms mislead the country and their clients about the value of different products they were trying to sell. Since their intentions were to mislead, or deceive their clients on the sole purpose to turn a profit, thus it cannot be considered a morally justified act. If the intentions of these firms like Goldman Sachs wasn't done to mislead, but done in the interests of

their clients, unknowing the unfortunate consequence's. Then this company shouldn't be considered a liar, but unfortunately they knowing lied and mislead their clients. Since the act was done for malice, and for their own greed, then their act of deception must be considered a blatant lie.

While in most cases, such as the one's already presented the distinction between " lying" and " not-telling the truth" are made quite clear. On the other hand, these distinctions cannot always be viewed in black and white, but in varying shades of gray. If the intentions of the " lie" is not done for your own self-interest's, or for your own ends, but done in a manner to save a person from embarrassment and humiliation, thus it cannot be considered a lie. For example if a loved one asks " am I over weight?" While knowing all along the answer is " yes" is it in their best interest and yours to be absolutely blunt with them? If their condition isn't life threatening or will cause ailment to the individual in the future, then the act of lying to protect their feelings isn't morally wrong and should be considered a lie. If your wife asks you " does this dress look good?" while knowing all along that you don't like the dress, telling her what she wants to hear doesn't harm or effect anyone. If in the situation you have nothing to gain and your purpose is to protect the other person from pain or grief then not telling the truth, may be the right thing to do and therefore morally acceptable.

While distinctions between " lying" or " not-telling the truth" can be made. Is the omission of details considered lying? For instants let's say you are being interrogated for a crime, during the interrogation you answer all the questions truthfully and only answer the question that was precisely given. Even though you might have committed this crime, should the omission of

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details shouldn't be considered lying? It's the fault of the interrogator not asking the proper questions during the interview which lead them from not discovering the whole truth. Thus since no false-truths were given to any of the questions the one being interrogated shouldn't be perceived as a liar.

Throughout this essay many examples were given to help clarify the distinction between "lying" and "not-telling the truth." In all cases, to label someone a "liar" certain factors must be met to determine whether an individual telling a "lie" or just simply "not-telling the truth." The most major underlying distinctions between them is the intentions of the person telling the lie. If the lie is done so in a manner that doesn't harm or cause pain to the person, and has moral and ethical intentions, then the person shouldn't be considered a liar. Contrariwise, if the individuals intentions are to deceive or cause harm to another individual, then the intentions are clear on what they wish to achieve, thus should be labeled a liar.