

The principles of lying



**ASSIGN
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Immanuel Kant, German philosopher, said that lying was always morally wrong. To tell a lie contradicts the part of oneself that gives them moral worth. To receive a lie takes away a person's free choice to decide other than what they would have had they known the truth. The two reasons lying is morally wrong, according to Kant, is lying contradicts the part of me that gives me moral worth and lying robs others of their freedom to choose rationally.

Virtue ethicists believe that lying is wrong. Virtues are desirable qualities of a person that makes them act in certain ways. Virtue ethics focus on what a person should be. Lying is wrong because it opposes honesty. If a lie is told in the pursuit of another virtue is it right or wrong? As long as the lie is a step toward being the best person we can be it is acceptable. If it is a step away it is morally wrong.

Utilitarian ethics is the balancing of the benefits and harms of lying. The belief is it is morally acceptable to lie if the consequences maximize benefits and minimize harm. In fact it would be immoral not to lie if lying is necessary to maximize the benefits or minimize the harm. The reasoning is logical but the application is flawed. To estimate the consequences of the lie a person must be able to evaluate the degree of the benefit as it is viewed within the standard of the person or group of people being lied to. The same is also true in evaluating the harm of a lie. By the liar standards, the harm may be small such as telling someone they had a fifty percent chance of recovery when in fact they were dying in less than six months. The thought being to let the person enjoy life and not worry of their impending doom. The result being a will wasn't made, people were not given time to say their goodbyes, and life

was not enjoyed because they thought there would be more time to do it. Surveys could be taken on how people in general would respond to a certain lie, but unless it resulted in 100% certainty you would not know which way the recipient of the lie would fall.

There are three classifications of lies: beneficial lies, spiteful lies, and neutral lies. A beneficial lie can be told to be kind in the attempt to avoid hurting someone's feelings. "How do I look?" I've seen you look better. Is that what you're really going to wear? You look terrible. The truth can hurt. The little white lie, "You look great." Does it matter to you, the liar, no you are on your way. The person being lied to is happy. So no harm, or is there. Every lie there is harm whether intentional or not. If you in fact knew the person being lied to looked bad and still let him/her go out and they were ridiculed for their appearance it will come back to you that you lied. Will your judgment be used again? Children are lied to about death. Your cat ran away. Grandpa went to heaven to be with God. Someday the truth will have to be told but by that time they will already know that you lie.

Spiteful lies mean that you gain something while hurting someone else. A spiteful lie can be a rumor started to hurt someone, usually a rival in politics or a rival for the affections of someone you love. An example of a spiteful lie is, I saw your husband having lunch with his old girlfriend. The gain in this is the joy in causing the pain.

The neutral lie is the most common lie of all. It is a lie that neither avoids causing hurt nor causes hurt. If you're not good Santa will put coal in your stocking. Put your tooth under your pillow and the tooth fairy will leave you

money. Similarly, people use a neutral lie to avoid a question, or lead away from private information. Most parents use this type of lie in particular to try and stray children away from investigating the truth. Mom, where do babies come from? Well, a baby comes from the stork, and drops them off at the house. Magicians and illusionist fall into this category. An avoidance of truth is also a form of lying. When a person says they never lie what they are really saying is that they do not actively engage in spiteful lies. When someone doesn't know the answer and says what they think. This falls under this classification of lying. You don't mean to lie, because you don't gain or you don't hurt anyone. It is still considered lying because you aren't telling the truth, but are unaware of it.

People for years have been putting falsifications on their résumés to make it look appealing, and to create a sense that they are perfect for the job. Ethically it is fine to do so as long as you keep it to only one or two lies on it and you keep to a low level. By low level meaning you can't falsify years at college or years in a job you have never obtained. In one example of a woman, Janet Cooke, lied to get onto the Washington Post team. She did plenty of lying to get to the Washington Post, falsifying where she graduated college, the degree she got, the languages she could speak, and writing awards she received. Not long after her hiring into the Washington Post she quickly was looking for an 8-year-old heroin addict. When she came up dry and couldn't locate the young man. " It dawned on me that I could simply make it all up. I just sat down and wrote it." (Kidwell, 178) After being found out she was a fraud, she quickly resigned from her dream job at the Washington Post.

Lying is it good or bad? It all depends on the person being lied to. Telling a little white lie to a child is seen as good to maintain their innocence. You could just tell a menacing and just plain evil lie to get back at someone or to make someone feel bad. Lying, ethically, is actually accepted in most places, but it can also be frowned upon strongly. It all depends on who it is being lied to and to what extent you are lying to.