

Is it Morally Worse to Lie or to Mislead? An Exploratory Study

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Abstract:

This paper begins with linguistic definitions of lying and misleading and analyzes the difference between lying and misleading by comparing them in different contexts. The purpose of introducing the concept of implication at the outset is to help the reader differentiate between lying and misleading. Next, a comparison discussion inside a single conversational setting is presented to ascertain which behavior is ethically worse. This is done by introducing the identical case from real life. This research concludes that, generally speaking, lying is a more morally repugnant act than misleading. In certain instances, lying with the best of intentions is contrasted with misleading in general, and it is discovered that both are ethically acceptable since they are not deliberate and morally justifiable. Whereas misleading with a purpose is compared to ordinary lying, both of which are morally very bad behaviors are objectionable, which could inspire future readers.

Keywords: Lying, Misleading, Realistic Conversations.

1. Introduction

Lying and misleading are both common behaviors in everyday life, and they both usually give a false sense of judgment. Even though they may both have comparable impacts, the definitions of the two are very different. The question then arises as to whether it is worse to mislead or to lie on a moral level. Considering that in everyday life people usually have a hard time distinguishing whether this behavior is lying or misleading. Therefore, this paper will first define and differentiate between these two seemingly similar behaviors. Then this paper will give two scenarios that will happen in daily life to explain how lying and misleading behaviors come about. This is used to further show that lying is actually worse than misleading from a moral point of view.

2. Definition of Lying and Misleading

2.1 Definition of Implication

Next is the thesis of the paper, first and foremost how to distinguish the difference between lying and misleading. An implication is a hidden meaning embedded in a sentence. For example, Peter asks Tom, "Are you free to go out to dinner tomorrow?" Tom replies, "I have to go on a business trip tomorrow." Tom's answer can be analyzed in this way, it has two meanings, the first meaning is the literal meaning, that is, Tom will go on a business trip tomorrow. The first meaning is literal, that is, tom is traveling tomorrow, while the deeper meaning, that is, the

implication, is that tom is not available to go out to dinner with peter tomorrow. This concept is important because it is important information for distinguishing between lying and misleading.

2.2 Definition of Lying and Misleading

Now it is possible to define lying and misleading, the definition of lying is literally stating a false information. Before the linguistic definition of lying became commonplace, most philosophers agreed that whenever you asserted something you believed to be false, then you were lying [1]. The latter examples are interpreted according to the definition of lying in linguistics. It is as if tom asks his son Som, "Did you finish your homework today." Som replies, "All of it." As a matter of fact, Som has completed none of his homework. literally giving Tom, the impression that Som has completed his assignment. This conduct is deceptive. Contrarily, misleading is defined as conveying a false impression through inference, regardless of the words' exact meaning. "Did you finish your homework?" Tom queries his son Som in the same situation. In response, Som says, "I can make sure I get a perfect score on this homework." The statement's suggested meaning is that Som has completed his homework, yet its precise meaning is his first assertion. Tom takes this suggested connotation to mean that Som has completed his homework. Yet Som homework would not be finished, in which case it would be misleading. This example above is defined through the criteria of the philosophy of language.

According to Stokke, determining the topic of a conversation can tell whether a speaker is lying or misleading [1]. The discussion about the topic of conversation will be placed later in the special case.

3. Lying and Misleading Each in Realistic Conversations

3.1 Real-life Examples of Lying

After all these necessary definitions are understood, it is necessary to construct a scenario as close to real life as possible to study these two behaviors in more detail. Still starting with lying, it is possible to know from its definition that he is directly giving false meanings to give people false information. According to Meibauer, lying is described as an insincere speech act that affects the listener's beliefs [2]. This means that his actual behavior is in conflict with its direct meaning. A liar wants to give false beliefs to others by using such false words in order to achieve his purpose. The inverse of his purpose shows that lying must be an act prepared in advance, and the liar knows that he needs to use the lie to achieve his purpose. Therefore, it must be a morally repugnant behavior (let's set aside the category of well-intentioned falsehoods for the time being), and it typically has negative consequences. Now allow me to create a scenario where lying would occur. It takes place at a corporate office and involves an annual performance report. Tim is the presenter of the presentation; the results of this crucial presentation will determine how much of this year's year-end bonus he receives. As well as Zack, who is the chairman of the company and is responsible for making decisions about the company's future, the results of this annual report will determine which direction he should lean in his overall decision-making for the next year. Let's ignore the presentation of this annual report, the result of which is that Tim's presentation went very well. At the end of the presentation, the crowd leaves and Zack leaves Tim behind for a private conversation. The following conversation took place. Zack said to Tim, "you did very well in this presentation, do you think it's a good idea for the company to expand next year". Tim quickly replied, "it's a very wise decision, the company should seize this opportunity to expand massively to achieve greater results". But in fact, Tim doesn't think so, the local economic situation is not optimistic, he knows that the company's expansion will not be fruitful, but he thinks that pleasing the chairman of the board of directors will be very helpful to his own career, so he chooses to lie to the chairman of the board of directors, catering to the advocates of Zack. Zack is very happy to hear that, and after a few days, he gave Tim a promotion. The most important thing to take away

from this scenario is why Tim lied in the first place. He did it in order to gain the boss's favor, advance his career, and earn more money. Thus, his true motivation for lying is self-interest, not the good of the organization or his boss. As a result of this conversation, Zack establishes the company's future objectives, and the business sustains a significant loss. This is what happens when someone lies. In these situations, the liar typically compromises the interests of others in order to protect and further advance his own. And with the exception of well-intentioned lies, that is essentially what occurs with most lies. This is a morally reprehensible behavior, and the purposefulness of the act of lying is an important factor in distinguishing it from misrepresentation. For a person who lies, he must have a clear purpose for lying, and it is impossible to lie without a purpose, even if it is a well-intentioned lie, there is also a purpose. From a liar's perspective, lying is a deceptive behavior, and deception leads to false beliefs [3].

3.2 Example of Misleading

In the same scenario, the dialog is slightly changed, Zack still asks the same question, and Tim's answer is like this, given the current economic situation, the price of land in the next two years will shrink by 50% and the state's tax on the company will also fall. The implication is that now is a good time to expand, so I support your choice. But here, Tim really believes that the company can expand, so it's not a deliberate act of misinformation. He and Zack both concur that expanding the business is the appropriate decision, but the reality is that if the expansion fails, the business will suffer a significant loss. Additionally, Tim is acting dishonestly in this slightly modified dialogue. Tim didn't mean to cause the company to lose so much money, even though that was the outcome. He is not ethically accountable because he was unaware of how fragile the economy would be in the upcoming year. The primary distinction between inadvertent misstatement and widespread lying is this. Of course, deliberate deception is also possible. By inadvertently conveying the incorrect impression, Tim might have informed Zack that he supported the company's choice to grow. The premise of this is that Tim himself knows that Zack's decision to expand will cause the company to lose money, but is deliberately trying to curry favor with Zack in order to make his own business work, in which case the line between lying and misleading seems to be very blurred, because the nature of such intentional misinformation is morally the same as that of lying, and they are both frowned upon. The most crucial aspect of misinformation is that the speaker will not explicitly scalarize the truth of the implication or ignorance of the implication but will ensure the truth of the content of the discourse assertion [4].

It is clear from the above examples that lying is a far worse behavior morally than misleading. This is because the malice that flows from the act of lying is very direct. Even though philosophical orthodoxy holds that lying is a morally worse behavior than misdirection, it does not follow that lying is necessarily wrong. So, the special case of well-intentioned lying will be discussed next.

4. Discussion of Special Situations

The overriding purpose of this chapter is to discuss a special case of lies, which I will call well-intentioned lies. It can at the same time be called a pro-social lie, with which people lie in order to benefit others, and which will be frequently encountered in everyday life [5]. In short it means that the person is using lying for a good purpose and it also produces positive results in usual situations. For this particular case, I have also constructed a dialogical scenario to explain it. The conversation takes place at school, where John is the worst math student in his class, but he loves math so much that he wants to apply for a math major in his future college. John approaches Ken, his current math teacher, to ask him if he can be admitted to college as a math major. The following conversation took place:

John: Hi Professor Ken, I would like to apply for a math major at this university, do you think I have a chance of success?

Ken: As long as you keep up with what you are doing now and keep working hard, I think you will have a good chance of being accepted into it, don't worry too much.

In fact, Ken knew that it would be almost impossible for John to be accepted into the math department at this university with his current abilities, but he didn't want to tell the truth for fear that it would be a very serious blow to John and put an unnecessary burden on him. In Ken's opinion, telling the truth would only make the situation worse, so he chose to lie. In this manner, John won't be as sad and will feel more motivated and confident in himself to do this seemingly insurmountable task. This is a classic case of a pro-social lie; it's easy to see that the liar, Ken, had good intentions and that he genuinely cared about John, which is why he told the lie; additionally, the lie helped John by giving him more self-assurance and motivation to learn his favorite math. Usually, this kind of deception takes place in a connection between a parent and child, teacher and student, or another adult [6-10]. So, this type of lying doesn't seem like a bad or even a very beneficial behavior, but it still requires vigilance. After all, it's always uncomfortable when a person knows they're being lied to, and it can create some unnecessary problems.

5. Conclusion

At this point the biggest difference between lying and mis-

leading can be clearly identified, and different examples are used to further illustrate how lying in general is morally bad because of its direct and subjective maliciousness. Misleading in an unconscious state, on the other hand, is not as morally repugnant, and usually the person only realizes after the fact that he may have said the wrong thing and misled someone, and that there was no malice in his initial statement. Regardless of the result, a pro-social falsehood is always morally acceptable in its goal and is not wrong. When someone finds out that the person who lied to them did not mean any harm to them, they will not purposefully hold the person who lied to them responsible, even though they may be angry about being lied to. In conclusion, the adverbial interpretation holds that a person lies when he presents something that others believe to be wrong with a fully confident commitment, and that a person misleads when he presents something implicitly or in another suggestive way without a fully confident commitment. This answers the question of which act is morally more serious: lying or misleading.

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