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Message from the Executive Director	3
Truth Versus Lie Henry Zvi Lothane, M.D.	4



Message from the Executive Director

Welcome to 2022 everyone,

The past couple of years have been tough on everybody. I hope that all of you and yours are safe and healthy. May 2022 bring us all a year of love, laughter and joy.

As you read this issue of the Bulletin, please consider providing an article yourself this year. We are open to both scientific papers with references and to commentary papers. Feel free to contact me at 301-540-3197 or cfcotter@yahoo.com if you are interested or have any questions.

Christine Cotter
Executive Director

Truth Versus Lie

Henry Zvi Lothane, M.D.*

Truth and lie are among the most important words in the individual and social life of humankind. Animals do not think or speak with words, they communicate with gestures and vocalization. With hands homo faber creates tools and technology. With words homo sapiens shapes science and philosophy, medicine and psychology, religion and ethics and politics, literature and journalism, truth and lie. According to the Latin adage: magna est veritas et praevalerebit, truth is mighty and will prevail. As Aristotle put it: amicus Plato sed magis amica veritas, Plato is my friend but truth is a greater friend than he is.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines truth as (1) agreement with fact, (2) accuracy and correctness of statement or thought, (3) a disposition to speak or act with candor, honesty, sincerity, i.e., without deceit. The third definition shows truth as the opposite of the lie. The OED defines the lie as an act of making a false statement with the intent to deceive, an immoral act. It can also be an illegal i.e., criminal act, as perjury, swearing to a false statement.

In order better to understand the argument so far one needs to differentiate lying from erring: an error is a person's mistaken opinion, through ignorance or inadvertence for which a correction may be accepted. The liar deliberately and persistently denies, destroys, negates, and rejects truth moved by an intent to benefit from the destruction of truth. Furthermore, as psychiatrists we differentiate an error from a delusion, a person's tenacious false belief or opinion in disorder. We speak and write about delusions of control, derogation, grandeur, hostility, infidelity, influence, persecution, and more. However, since psychiatry and law overlap, delusions acquire an added forensic significance. As psychiatrists, we may forget that delusions are also expressions of feelings and emotions of patients and people in interpersonal situations such as suppressed or repressed rage and resentment, hostile and mocking attitudes (Lothane, 2015).

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Truth is conformity with facts of perception, of knowing the world through the five senses, which we share with animals. The German verb to perceive, *wahrnehmen*, says it clearly: to take the perceived thing or person as true, as it is, as real. Perception serves the survival of animals and humans. Goethe said: the senses don't lie, people do. Perception is also the method of everyday and scientific observation. The shortest distance between two points is a straight line. The opposite of straight is crooked. Prevarication, i.e., lying, is etymologically walking crookedly. Perception is the foundation of a correct judgment of causality of things and persons in the world. On the other hand, "Oh, what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive!" (Sir Walter Scott). And we express this not only in words but enact it with our faces, bodies, and limbs, in paroxysms of trembling and shaking, in everyday dramas of life and during extraordinary crises. Drama is the subject of dramatology (Lothane, 2009). The gist of dramatology comes to this: drama is action and dialogue in the here-and-now, the dramatic event becomes a historical event and remains unchangeable. Drama is all dialogue, with some *dramatis personae* telling a story, is participated in or witnessed; a story is all description, with some persons' dialogues in it is either listened to or read. Subsequently, one recalls the event and tells it to oneself or to another, and the narrative is as changeable as the narrator, a Rashomon effect, dramatized in Kurosawa's film *Rashomon*. Narratology and dramatology complement each other (Lothane, 2009).

My main idea is this: nobody knows the truth better than a liar.

Let us consider some individual and social situations involving lying in interpersonal relationships and situations. Whereas candor is cherished, blunt confrontation may become disruptive or dangerous. Therefore, tact and *savoir-faire* require relativizing truth in the service of keeping interactions neighborly and polite. "There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics," a saying attributed by Mark Twain to Benjamin Disraeli.

There are white lies told by doctors to ill or dying patients, using euphemisms and circumlocution about cancer to prevent suicide; but that remains questionable. However, would we

prohibit lying to a Jewish doctor in the Auschwitz infirmary to save the patient from the gas chamber? Lying and deception can be suspected in advertising and sales. Deception in advertising may be overt and covert. A special category is using placebos in medicine and research. On the other hand, we do accept that defense lawyers in court appearances may act as hired guns, i.e., liars. About diplomats Talleyrand said: "Speech is given to man to disguise his thoughts." Before him Erasmus of Rotterdam averred: "A good portion of speaking well consists in knowing how to lie." A lady who says maybe means yes, and if she says yes she's no lady. A diplomat who says maybe means no, and if he says no he's no diplomat. Serious blows to truth have become common since the since the internet and social media revolutions.

Lying in politics was first made famous in the Nixon Watergate scandal mentioned by Sissela Bok (1979) and recurred in the Trump impeachment trials, and let the reader decide for himself. To avoid getting involved in politics I will examine politics using as an example 1894 Affaire of captain Alfred Dreyfus falsely accused of treason, convicted, and jailed for five years. The Affaire polarized France until 1906. Among his supporters were Emile Zola and Anatole France and he is variously referred to in Anatole Frances's 1899 novel *The Amethyst Ring*, where the hero M. Bergeret, engages in the following dialogue:

"Do you not think," said M. Leterrier, "that truth contains a power that renders her invincible, and, sooner or later, ensures her final triumph?" "It is precisely what I, personally, do not think," returned M. Bergeret. "On the contrary, I opine that in the majority of cases truth is likely to fall a victim to the disdain or insults of mankind and to perish in obscurity. I could give you many instances of this. Remember, my dear sir, that truth has so many points of inferiority to falsehood as practically to be doomed to extinction. To begin with, truth stands alone; she stands alone, for falsehood is manifold, and so truth has numbers arrayed against her. That is not her only shortcoming. She is inert, is not capable of modification, is not adapted to those machinations which would enable her to win her way into the hearts and minds of men.

Falsehood, on the other hand, possesses the most wonderful resources. She is pliant and tractable, and, what is more (we must not shrink from admitting as much), she is natural and moral. She is natural, as being the product of the working of the senses, the source and fountain-head of all illusion; she is moral, because she fits in with the habits and customs of the human race, who, living in common as they do, founded their ideas of good and evil, their human and divine laws, upon the oldest, most sacred, most irrational, most noble, most barbarous, and most erroneous interpretations of natural phenomena. Falsehood is the principle of all that is beautiful and of good report amongst men. Do we not see winged figures and mythical pictures adorning their gardens, their palaces, and their temples? They lend a willing ear only to the lies of the poets. What makes you wish to destroy falsehood and to seek truth? Such an enterprise can only be inspired by decadent curiosity and culpable intellectual temerity. It is an attempt against the moral nature of man and the laws of society. It is a sin against the sentiments as well as the virtues of the nations. The growth of so great a calamity might well be fatal; were it possible to precipitate matters in that direction, everything would go to rack and ruin. But we know quite well that, as a matter of fact, the progress of truth is very slight and very slow, and encroaches but little upon falsehood.

It is, unfortunately, beyond all question, that the scientific verities which penetrate the average mind sink as though in a swamp, and drown. They cause no upheaval and are powerless to destroy error and prejudice. Truths of the laboratory which hold sovereign sway over you and me, Monsieur, have no authority over the minds of the general public. Scientific truths are not acceptable to the public. Nations live on mythology...; from legends they draw all the ideas necessary to their existence. They do not need many, and a few simple fables suffice to gild millions of lives. In short, truth has no hold on mankind, and it would be a pity if she had, for her ways are contrary to their nature, as well as to their interests.”

At this moment a great clamor arose from the market-place. Some citizens, actuated by zeal for the Army, and in conformity with their recently formed custom, were on their way to break the windows of [Jew] Meyer the bootmaker. Mort à Zola! Mort à Leterrier! Mort à Bergeret! Mort aux juifs!” they shouted; and as the rector gave way to some symptoms of distress and indignation, M. Bergeret pointed out to him that he must try and comprehend the enthusiasm of mobs such as this one.”

These ideas about the psychology and behavior of masses and mobs were inspired by the great French sociologist Gustave Le Bon in his 1895 famous 1895 work *The Crowd A Study of the Popular Mind*:

First, the individual forming part of a crowd acquires, solely from numerical considerations, a sentiment of invincible power which allows him to yield to instincts, which, had he been alone, he would perforce kept under restraint ... a crowd being anonymous [so that] the sentiment of responsibility disappears entirely.

The second cause [is] contagion ... classed among phenomena of a hypnotic order ... A third cause is ... suggestibility. ... Isolated, a person may be a cultivated individual; in a crowd he is a barbarian -- that is a creature acting by instinct. He possesses the spontaneity, the violence, the ferocity, and also the enthusiasm and heroism of primitive beings (cited in Lothane, 2006).

Le Bon's ideas were embraced in 1920 by William McDougall in his book *The Group Mind* and in 1921 by Freud in his 1921 *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*:

In the group the individual ... throws off the repressions of his unconscious impulses ... all that is evil in the human mind, [leading to] a disappearance of conscience. ... [the group] has a sense of omnipotence, the notion of impossibility disappears for the individual in a group (cited in Lothane 2006).

Freud elaborated that as a result of replacing one's individual conscience with that of a powerful leader and his ideals the individual gives up his ego ideal and substitutes for it the group ideal as embodied in the leader. ... The selection of the leader is very much facilitated by this circumstance... the need for a strong chief will often meet him half-way and invest him with a predominance to which he would otherwise perhaps have had no claim...to give up its former ideals and to espouse the ideals of the leader (cited in Lothane, 2006).

Ego ideal and group ideal are Freud's precursors of the super-ego, i.e., conscience. The missing link in Freud's analysis of the leader mass dynamics is the connection to lying. For this we turn to a master manipulator of truth Adolf Hitler in his *Mein Kampf*.

In the size of the lie there is always contained a certain factor of credibility, since the great masses of a people may be more corrupt in the bottom of their hearts than they will be consciously and intentionally bad, therefore with the primitive simplicity of their minds they will more easily fall victims to a great lie than to a small one, since they themselves perhaps also lie sometimes in little things, but would certainly still be too much ashamed of too great lies. Thus such an untruth will not at all enter their heads, and therefore they will be unable to believe in the possibility of the enormous impudence of the most infamous distortion in others; indeed, they may doubt and hesitate even when being enlightened, and they accept any cause at least as nevertheless being true; therefore, just for this reason some part of the most impudent lie will remain and stick; a fact which all great lying artists and societies of this world know only too well and therefore also villainously employ. Those who know best this truth about the possibilities of the application of untruth and defamation, however, were at all times the Jews; for their entire existence is built on one single great lie, namely, that here one had to deal with a religious brotherhood, while in fact one has to do with a race what a race! As such they have been nailed down forever, in an eternally correct sentence of fundamental truth, by one of the greatest minds of mankind; he called them 'the great masters of lying.' He who does not realize

this or does not want to believe this will never be able to help truth to victory in this world (see the article “Big lie” in the Wikipedia.)

As master of political propaganda Hitler went his precursors one better:

The psyche of the great masses is not receptive to half measures or weakness. Like a woman, whose psychic feeling is influenced less by abstract reasoning than by an indefinable, sentimental longing for complementary strength, who will submit to the strong man rather than dominate the weakling, thus the masses love the ruler rather than the suppliant, and inwardly they are far more satisfied by a doctrine which tolerates no rival than by a grant of liberal freedom; they often feel at a loss what to do with it, and even easily feel themselves deserted.

The great mass of a people consists neither of professors nor of diplomats. The small abstract knowledge it possesses directs its sentiments rather to the world of feeling. In this is rooted either its negative or positive attitude. It is more difficult to undermine faith than knowledge, love succumbs to change less than to respect, hatred is more durable than aversion, and at all times the driving force of the most important changes in this world has been found less in a scientific knowledge animating the masses, but rather in a fanaticism dominating them and in a hysteria which drove them forward. He who would win the great masses must know the key which opens the door to their hearts. Its name is not objectivity, that is, weakness, but will power and strength.

Reich cited another statement by Hitler from *Mein Kampf*, that “The people in their overwhelming majority are so feminine by nature and attitude that sober reasoning determines their thoughts and actions far less than emotion and feeling.” (cited in Lothane, 2019).

We conclude with Freud:

To urge the patient to suppress, renounce or sublimate her instincts the moment she has admitted her erotic transference would be, not the analytic way of dealing with them...Just as little would I advocate a middle course...My objection to this expedient is that psycho-analytic treatment is founded on truthfulness. Anyone saturated who has been saturated with the analytic technique will no longer be able to make use of the lies and pretenses which a doctor normally finds unavoidable; and if, with the best intentions, he does attempt to do so, he is very likely to betray himself. Since we demand strict truthfulness from our patients, we jeopardize our whole authority if we let ourselves be caught out by them in a departure from the truth. (p. 164).

QED. – which was to be demonstrated.

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Purpose of the American Society of Psychoanalytic Physicians

The American Society of Psychoanalytic Physicians was founded in 1985 as an organization of psychoanalysts and psychoanalytically-oriented psychiatrists and physicians. It was established to provide an open forum to further the study of psychoanalytic methods of diagnosis, treatment and prevention of emotional disorders. Simultaneously, we seek to synthesize recent advances in exploring the biological bases of behavior with sound psychoanalytic practice and therapy. We wish to promote a greater understanding of the interplay between biological, psychological and social factors involved in psychiatric illness. Unlike other organizations, we are not affiliated with any training institute and do not have categories of faculty or student, supervisor or supervisee, or analyst to inhibit professional collegiality and friendships. Our members exchange professional views in small informal study groups and share clinical insights during discussion at scientific meetings for our members. We expect that membership in our society will be personally and professionally rewarding. We invite your membership and your contributions to our Bulletin.

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