

A SOCIO-PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH TO THE CONCEPTS OF DECEPTION AND FRAUD

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ABSTRACT

Deception and fraud are generic concepts. The terms are usually associated with illegal actions or practices that are dishonest and deceptive. This paper attempts to examine the nature of deception from a socio-philosophical perspective, drawing from sociological and psychological explanations for behaviours and actions of this nature. I note that the abuse of trust vis-à-vis the presence and exploitation of legitimate 'risks' are important prerequisites for deception. The resultant confidence trust creates is principally what encourages deception. The concepts of deception and fraud vary geographically and culturally. At any given time, 'society' determines the behaviours and actions that are culturally acceptable and applies varying degrees of sanctions from moral condemnation to criminal proceedings and sanctions depending on the severity of the violation. Like with other types of human behaviour the nature and types of deception, and society's reaction to it changes over time. Although certain deceptive behaviours that are deemed 'harmless' exist in every society, they should be properly managed. Hence, all agents of socialization (for example, family, schools, and organizations), and especially agents of law enforcement (who implement the 'peoples' verdict and disapproval for certain actions and behaviours) should cooperatively work towards a society almost devoid of deception and fraud. Deception and fraud challenges the level of trust and undermines the moral foundation of society, distorts our socialization processes, increases the cost of monitoring and regulating all forms of human interaction and endeavours, and could lead to various types of theft and corruption. In addition, reputations of individuals, groups, organizations and the country as a whole could be affected negatively.

INTRODUCTION

There is a relationship between lies, trust and confidence. Successful deception can be said to be one of the extremes of a lie. Having a lie or truth accepted by whichever party concerned, depends on the level of trust at the stage or stages of interaction. The interplay of all these is what generally perfects the 'confidence trick', which in turn enables deception or fraud to be successful. To enhance our understanding of this phenomenon (a), it would be important to approach the discussion by examining the interrelationship between the concepts lies, trust and deception.

Lying

A lie is defined as any intentionally deceptive message, which is stated, and for the most part, such statements are often made verbally or in writing. This information or response may be communicated through gestures, various forms of disguise, action or inaction or even through silence (Bok, 1978). This definition shows that the concept of the 'lie' is closely associated with that of deception.

What is regarded as deceptive can be defined in many ways. Mitchell (1986) defined deception as a false communication that tends to benefit the communicator. Mitchell (1986) noted that this definition also implies that animals and plants could lie to protect themselves and to prey on others as well as to mate. For Vrij (2000), Mitchell's (1986) definition is controversial in the sense that it assumes that unconsciously and mistakenly misleading someone should also be classified as deception. Vrij (2000) mentioned that it is commonly agreed that deception is an act of deliberately not telling the truth.

Thus, Vrij (2000: 6) defined deception as "a successful or unsuccessful deliberate attempt, without forewarning, to create in another a belief which the communicator considers to be untrue". From this definition, all forms of fraud involve deceptive practices, as victims including the dishonest ones do not expect to be swindled. In the same vein, all frauds involve lies in some form. Hence, deception is the larger category, and lying forms part of it (Bok, 1978).

An interesting dimension identified by Bok (1978) is that since knowledge is known to give power, lies could alter the distribution of power as the lies add to the power of the liar, and reduce that of the deceived. The lies can create various alternatives for the liar and at the same time distort the victim's sense of judgement. This remark typifies the kind of situation created by the con man or fraudster who has to deceive the victim to part with cash, goods or services.

In the course of human relations, certain types of lies or deception are tolerated. The intention and nature of a lie determines whether it is morally right or wrong, criminal or fraudulent. Researchers have investigated this phenomenon from different perspectives such as philosophy, psychology, medicine and economics. In all approaches there is a limit to what is considered harmful in any form. This limit varies according to circumstances and the issue at stake.

From a sociological perspective, our socialization process may have some blame. Martin (2006) noted that children pick up this habit at an early age. For example being told by their parents to tell grandmother how much they liked her gift and parents often lie to their children by commission or omission. Eventually, children get to learn and understand the 'need to lie' in certain situations.

In an analogy and philosophical approach to lying in public and private life from a moral perspective (not criminal), Bok (1978) noted that the Philosopher Saint Augustine (354-430) identified certain types of lies, which include religious doctrine (that which is uttered in the teaching of religion); lies that profits no one and injures someone; and lies that profits one party and injures another. Others are lies told out of mere decision to lie deceive, or told out of a desire to please others, and lie that injures no one but profits someone, for instance in saving the person's life or money.

Further, people are known to give several reasons for lying. Some claim that there was no lie or it was a joke or an exaggeration. Others disclaim responsibility based on their incompetence on the subject or other 'influential' physical or mental conditions (Bok, 1978).

On truthfulness, deceit and trust, Bok (1978) noted that all our choices depend on our estimates of the situation. These estimates are in turn often reliant on information from others. In common cases of deception, the victim especially the naïve and dishonest ones rely on the information from the 'fraudster'. Lies distort this information and therefore our situation, as it is perceived. For Bok (1978), this also affects our choices. To the extent that knowledge gives power, to that extent do lies affect the distribution of power; they add to that of the liar, and diminish that of the deceived, altering his choices at different levels. Thus,

Bok (1978) stated that lies misinform so as to obscure an objective especially in a situation where the liar wants to obtain something. It can also make the objective appear unattainable or undesirable. Lies can also eliminate available alternatives or course of action. They could also distort the real picture of risks, costs, and benefits involved.

From the perspective of the deceived, some types of deception can be coercive. If this succeeds it gives power to the liar. From the perspective of the liar or would-be liar, the ideal that one should not be deceived is shared. As a result, their choice to lie is one they would like to reserve for themselves (or selected acquaintance) while insisting that others be honest. This is what Bok (1978) describes as the 'free rider status'. The liar views his victim with caution after his encounter knowing that the relationship will change if and when the deception is discovered.

Bok (1978) concluded that people have the power and choice to influence the amount of deception in their lives especially as it concerns their speech and action. Individuals differ in their ability to handle deception in themselves and in others. In addition, the stress on individualism, competition, and achieving material success in our society has generated pressures to seek short cuts such as via deceit or fraud if necessary. Thus social incentives to deceive are great compared to the controls. For Bok (1978), governments have an important role to play by being honest and straightforward in their words and action. The professions including educational institutions are equally responsible in setting standards.

Unfortunately, it is not uncommon to find governments engaged in deceptive practices. An example of tolerated deception in virtually all societies is that which exists in the field of politics – political deception. Politicians and political parties are quick to remind the electorate of broken promises by the other group or individual. Where such allegations are true, they can be regarded as deception. In some developing countries, it is not unusual for politicians to deposit electrical or building materials on a site prior to a major election, only to cart them away after votes are cast. Others are known to engage in cosmetic project development or construction purely for publicity and to convince the electorate that 'work is being done'. In developed societies where ambitious plans are made, it is very convenient to renege on such promises based on 'unforeseen circumstances'. All these could be regarded as soliciting for votes under false pretences.

Following from this issue about politics and deception, Martin (2006) discussed this under the concept of Institutional lying – lies commonly made on behalf of large groups. Martin (2006) noted Edelman's (1971) remarks that government-related politics is a fertile area for institutional lying. Martin notes that politicians lie and deny it regularly. For Martin (2006), institutional lying is persistent in times of war and various forms of censorship and disinformation are acknowledged. Martin (2006) added that some occupations are built on lying – for example law, and that it is not unusual to refer to lawyers as serial liars because in carrying out their jobs, they argue on behalf of clients who they know are guilty.

In self-deception, the person is both the liar and the dupe. The self-deceiver's goal is to protect his or her view of self at all costs. Biased reasoning is usually adopted as people often conclude with what they wanted to believe. People also tend to search for evidence that confirms their belief (Baumeister, 1993). Baumeister (1993) noted that it may be necessary to deceive oneself in order to have a realistic chance of one's endeavours. An important process relevant to this is the self-fulfilling prophecy - believing that something is true helps make it materialise. For Baumeister (1993), self-deception is here to stay as it helps people feel good, recover from trauma, and sustain confidence for tackling difficult problems and succeeding among other activities.

On the negative side, self-confidence or overconfidence could cloud one's judgement and lead people to take on projects or make commitments at which they have little chance of success. Baumeister (1993) stated that in America self-deception is big business. Advertisers encourage people to believe that purchasing various products will make them acquire attributes such as being attractive, sexy and glamorous, reduce or gain weight and make them rich. Fraudsters for instance have adequately hijacked the 'confidence' industry (i.e. in products, goods, services, business or investments etc.), sometimes demanding upfront payments for fake, substandard products or withholding money for requested products.

It has been argued that deliberately deceiving or lying to others is an essential part of everyday social interaction. For Vrij (2000) some examples include that of a man who says that he is pleased with his birthday presents, although in fact he does not really appreciate them or the host who receives compliments about his cooking, although the food was not really that good. He noted that research has indicated that lying is a daily life event. Further, an interesting revelation is that lying is an important phenomenon in social relationships and people tend to like the company of people who lie frequently.

In addition to the above remarks, in discussing Individual Lying, Brain (2006) mentioned the examples of literal lies such as the greeting "How are you?" and the typical response of "Fine", which for Martin (2006) are matters of convention. Martin (2006) also mentioned lies in the course of business routines such as "It was a pleasure to assist you", and lies of politeness which are standard, such as "I really enjoyed that party". In addition, Martin (2006: 3) stated that "In relationships, some deceptions are ongoing, because to speak the truth would be too damaging".

Vrij (2000) revealed that in general, people are good at lying, but are not very good at detecting lies. Reasons for the poor detection of lies include that they have poor knowledge about how to catch a liar. Second, the observer is usually not motivated to catch the liar. A third reason is that some people are so good at telling lies, which makes their detection more difficult. With regard to motivation to detect lies, Vrij (2000) stated that people deliberately do not want to know the truth. It is not in their best interest (for example wanting to know how they really look, or about an affair that could eventually ruin a marriage). Not knowing what action to take if the truth is discovered could sustain the lack of motivation. For example parents and their teenage children who are involved in all sorts of vice – parents may be ill-equipped to deal with certain revelations. However, Vrij (2000) noted that in certain situations the truth is demanded such as in the purchase of a second-hand car, recruiting staff and custom declarations at border points.

Of relevance to the understanding of the fraudster or liar is Vrij's (2000) categorisation of personality traits according to how people deal with deception. Four types are mentioned - manipulators, actors, sociable people and adaptors.

With regard to manipulators, the stereotypical view of liars is that they are selfish, crafty and manipulative. Those in this category frequently tell self-oriented lies. They tend to persist in lying when challenged to tell the truth. They do not feel uncomfortable when they lie, and do not find lying cognitively too complicated. They also view others cynically, show little concern for conventional morality, and openly admit that they lie, cheat and manipulate others in order to get what they want (Vrij, 2000). Also, manipulators are usually schemers but are not stupid. They are selective of those they exploit to safe guard against retaliation, and avoid cheating if they are sure they will be caught. They tend to dominate in conversations and appear relaxed, talented and confident. In general, people see them as

'good' or interesting company and are preferred as partners. The swindler typically falls into this category.

As for actors, certain people are skilled in regulating their verbal and non-verbal behaviour than others. Vrij (2000) identified four constructs of control in explaining this. These are Emotional Control, which refers to the ability to manage ones emotional communication and non-verbal displays. Second is Social Control, which includes role-playing, managing verbal behaviour and self-presentation skills. Third is Acting, which refers to the individual's role-playing skills while, the fourth is Social Expressivity, which includes skills in verbal expression, and diction. All these skills are helpful in the art of deception and lying.

Sociable people tend to exploit social interactions that occur in everyday life. For Vrij (2000) it is possible to suggest that people who enjoy more social interactions are particularly good at lying. Extroverts and sociable people are attracted to social life, they are not shy and always appear and act confident. However, people could also be reserved in a social context. The difference in social involvement has an impact on deception skills. Sociable people lie more often than socially withdrawn people, they feel more comfortable while lying, and persist longer when they are lying (Vrij, 2000). Hence, sociable people are considered socially skilled though they lie often. On the other hand, socially withdrawn people are considered awkward, probably because they are honest.

Further, Adaptors are those that assess every situation and act accordingly. They are highly motivated to make a positive impression on others. One way of making this impression is by telling lies. In general, for adaptors, in the course of their actions they appear relaxed and comfortable (Vrij, 2000).

In addition, Vrij's (2000) research does not suggest that all people raise their voices or show fewer movements when lying than when they are telling the truth. It is important to note that honest people may also display similar traits. It only suggests that the majority of liars do this. For instance, the non-verbal characteristics consistent with stereotypical beliefs (gaze aversion, smiling, shifting positions and blinking of the eyes) have shown that they are not reliable indicators of lying or deception. On the practical side, the police and custom officials, for example, have recorded some successes based on these 'traditional' beliefs.

Thus, Vrij (2000) concluded that it is not possible to provide an answer on how people behave when they lie. The main problem being that there is no typical non-verbal behaviour associated with deception. Behaviours differ across deceptive situations and the personality trait of the individual concerned is significant. Finally, people's ability to detect lies depends on the circumstances. In situations where the consequence of lie is minor, a physical examination of the 'offender' will reveal little or nothing.

The following constitute Vrij's (2000) characterisation of the liar and significant factors that can influence the liar and probably have an impact on the recipients and the detection of the lies. This analogy is particularly useful when confronted face-to-face with a fraudster or deceptive individual.

- (i) Familiarity with the liar - In this situation it is safe or reasonable to suggest that it should be easier to detect lies in people we know than in strangers especially if we are familiar with the truthful behaviour of the person in question. But there is no support for this assumption. It has been observed that over time, especially in intimate associations, partners develop a tendency to judge the other as truthful. According to Vrij (2000), this is the so-called 'relational truth-bias heuristic' as described by Levine, McCornack and Park (1999).

(ii) Second is the familiarity with the topic or scam in the case of fraud. For instance, with regard to lie detectors, it is easier to detect lies when the investigator is familiar with the topic. It is also noted that liars are aware of this situation. The intention of the lie also determines its nature. For example, lies told to spouses are in the form of concealment in case the truth is eventually revealed. The liar can then blame his memory.

(iii) Familiarity with the style of communication is known to facilitate detection of deceit. For example, people have a more open communication style when they are speaking to attractive people than when they are speaking to unattractive people. Findings reveal that attractive observers were better at detecting truths and lies, which were told to attractive people. A similar pattern emerges when different or similar cultures are involved. In other words, the ethnic origin of the liar is relevant. With reference to various patterns of fraud, it is not uncommon to find fraudsters targeting those from their ethnic background, especially if they are resident outside their home countries. The intention is to generally prey on the notion of ethnic or cultural solidarity for the benefit of themselves (e.g. seller-buyer or investor).

(iv) Another factor is the liar's age. It is easier to detect lies in younger children than in older children. The same applies to the elderly. Lie detectors have more difficulty in detecting lies told by 79-year-olds than in youths. It is possible for the older liars to be conscious of cues that could get them exposed. However, research reveal that fraudsters are more often middle-aged or older men, and in some cases women. This can be attributed to the experiences of the liar over the years having come across various circumstances. In this regard, the elderly fraudster is ready to exploit the societal norm that treats the elderly with more respect and trust based on their age 'physical restrictions' and 'wisdom' - this is seen as a kind gesture to their contributions (whether or not they have done so) to the community.

(v) Finally, the personality of the liar may affect the detection of lies. With regard to non-verbal behaviour, certain individuals possess an honest demeanour, whereas others' natural behaviour leaves the impression that they are lying. According to Vrij (2000), this has been described as 'honest demeanour bias' and 'dishonest demeanour bias'. The expressive, public self-conscious and sociable individuals tend to make credible impressions. This is not the same for the introverts and socially anxious people.

The three ways of detecting lies identified by Vrij (2000) include by observation, analysis, and physiological responses. Observing the liars' non-verbal behaviour, such as their body movements, whether or not they smile or show gaze aversions, the pitch of their voice, speech rate, whether or not they stutter are useful guides. When telling a complicated lie, the liar tends to speak more slowly, with possible pauses in their speech. They may also stutter. Emotions may also lead to emotional facial expressions. In most cases the observer needs to be skilled to detect correctly, as individuals differ in many ways.

The second way is by analysing what is being said. This is referred to as verbal cues. Thus speech content is a significant factor. Untruthful remarks are usually negative and indirect, structured, sound implausible, and lack descriptions of personal experiences. On the other hand, for truth-tellers, especially if they are emotional, narration tends to be unstructured unlike the chronological nature of the liars' account. Liars are also known to include fewer details in their statements than one telling the truth. However, in some

instances, negative emotions may result in negative statements, and being upset may result in unstructured statements by the liar.

The third method is by the examination of physiological responses, for example, blood pressure, heart rate, and sweating on palms. Increases in these areas are associated with the fear of being caught, guilty feeling when lying and general excitement. Though a polygraph is able to measure these physiological changes, one should note that there are limitations of this method especially with regard to value judgement and other variables.

Finally, in understanding the nature of deception, it is important to highlight a significant issue that enhances or checks against deception – the concept of Trust.

The concept of Trust

Trust is the expectation that arises within a community of regular, honest, and cooperative behaviour, based on commonly shared norms, on the part of other members of the community (Fukuyama, 1995). The major theme in Fukuyama's (1995) *Trust* is that through the examination of economic life, the general well-being of a country, and its ability to engage in healthy competition, is conditioned by a single, insidious cultural attribute, which is the level of trust inherent in that society.

Trust can be exploited if it exists already or can be created for the purposes of deceit (Osisiogu, 2004). Central to the philosophical approach to the subject of deception and trust can be found in the works of classical theorists especially the work of the 18th century writer Cesare Beccaria of the classical school of crime studies on the binding together of society under the 'social contract', and the need for law to prevent the pursuit of naked self-interest (Young, 1994).

The first substantive definition of 'trust' in the Oxford English Dictionary refers to "confidence in or reliance on some quality or attribute of a person or thing, or the truth of a statement" (Good, 1988:33). A later variant, which stresses the economic usage of the term, defines it as "confidence in the ability and intention of a buyer to pay at a future time for goods supplied without present payment". For Good (1988), under each of these definitions, trust is generally based on an individual theory as to how another person will perform on some future occasion, as a function of that target person's current and previous claims, either explicit or implicit, as to how they will behave. These arise from an individual's co-operative behaviour, which is a major source of information in our construction of our views of other persons.

The definition adopted by many writers on the subject of trust is that trust is involved if faith (and not just hope) is placed in a person or institution where something serious is at stake (Nelken, 1994). Establishing trust in human relations is the key issue that enables deception. The concept of trust has been the subject of debate in philosophy, psychology, sociology, law, economics and other disciplines. In all these areas of interest, 'trust' has its definitional attributes and can be measured in terms of degree and how it is utilised for whatever purpose. This depends on many factors including the nature and circumstances of the individuals or groups concerned.

Nelken (1994) pointed out that an investigation into the structure of trust and distrust is appropriate for explaining fraud. Likewise deception, since the act(s) as implied by definition, is the result of misplaced trust. Further, various disciplines tend to interpret trust in certain ways. Various writers have contributed to the discussion on the dynamics of trust. For example, Cressey (1953) approached the subject from the perspective of those entrusted with responsibility, and the reasons why they 'violate' their 'privileged' positions. The

resultant effect of their breach of trust could result in crime/fraud – embezzlement. Nock's (1993) noted that most people trust those who, they believe, accept and abide by the same moral rules they have accepted. Thus, people who are known to conform to those standards are held as important and are trusted.

Further, trust and the ability to take others at their word are basic ingredients in social order, and this binds people together. Therefore, the extent to which trust among people exists determines, in part, the degree of solidarity to be found in any society. In addition, trust depends on the faith we have in another person's truthfulness. It is reputation that earns trust and it is lack of reputation that produces doubt and scepticism. A common example is the willingness to trust a doctor. This has led to certain advance fee fraud fraudsters to use titles such as 'Dr' 'Professor' 'Chief' 'Engineer' 'Consultant' in some of their solicitation, verbally or in writing.

Following from the above, an important criterion in trusting has to do with what Nock (1993) regards as one's reputation. For Nock (1993), reputation is a basic component of the trust that lies at the heart of social order. A reputation is defined as a shared or collective perception about a person. It is the product of innumerable contacts among and between people. Through dealings with others, an image is developed of the degree to which standards that are generally accepted are adhered. Thus, when someone has no reputation, that person is a stranger. Luhmann (1979) noted that all modern societies are similarly reliant on a system of trust. According to Nelken (1994), Luhmann (1979) asserted that - "trust remains vital in interpersonal relations, but participation in functional systems like the economy or politics is no longer a matter of personal relations. It requires confidence but not trust" (Luhmann, 1979: 102).

Dasgupta (1988) states that certain issues are very important for understanding deception. Some of these are as follows:

First, if there are no suitable degrees of punishment for breaking agreements or contracts, individuals are likely not to have the appropriate incentives to meet the agreed conditions. Generally, the penalty for breaking verbal agreement is usually less than the penalty for breaking legal agreements as stated in contracts.

Second, the threat of punishment for improper behaviour must be credible, else the threat can be regarded as non-existent. Thus, the enforcement agencies must be trustworthy, efficient and unbiased in their actions.

Third, trust among persons and agencies are interconnected. This inter-connection is what makes trust such a fragile commodity. This is one of the reasons why certain professional bodies have strict codes of conduct.

Fourth, the proper approach for trust in others is that one is aware or knows the available options and their consequences, taking into consideration the person's ability to do what is promised. A promise must be credible. This is one of the reasons why it is commonly advised to distinguish 'trusting someone' from 'trusting someone blindly'.

Fifth, before trusting anyone, it is important to examine the world or situation from his or her perspective especially as it concerns the fulfilment of his part of the agreement. Further, one's 'trustworthiness' depends on the individuals overall disposition, his motivation, and the extent to which he awards importance to his own honesty. It is important to note that if incentives are 'right', even a trustworthy person can be relied upon to be untrustworthy. Thus, the saying that 'every man has his price'.

Sixth, the fact that there are no obvious units in which trust can be measured, this is insignificant, because in any given context you can measure its value, and its

'worthwhileness'. In this respect, trust is not different to commodities such as knowledge or information.

Seventh, the usage of 'trust' refers to "the sense of correct expectations about the actions of other people that have a bearing on one's own choice of action when that action must be chosen before one can monitor the actions of those others" (Dasgupta, 1988: 49).

For Shklar (1984: 151), "trust is intrinsically fragile responses to our ignorance, a way of coping with the limits of our foresight, and in reality, it is impossible to compute all possible contingencies in enforceable contracts. Thus, trust is also related to the fact that agents have a degree of freedom to disappoint our expectations". Hence, Gambetta (1988) asserted that for trust to be relevant there must be the possibility of exit, betrayal, and defection. Trust can be, and has been, more generally defined as a device for coping with the freedom of others. It is then implied that trusting a person means believing that when offered the chance, he or she is not likely to behave in a way that is damaging to us. Trust will typically be relevant when at least one party is free to disappoint the other, free enough to avoid a risky relationship, and constrained enough to consider that relationship an attractive option. In short, trust is implied in most human endeavours with varying degrees and expectations.

Rules and contracts have not eliminated the need for trust in all spheres of human endeavour. For example, professionals like doctors, lawyers, or university professors, having received the required training for accreditation and practice, are expected to use their judgement and initiative in practice. The nature of their judgement is too complex to have all the details spelt out in black and white. Thus, Fukuyama (1995) noted that professionals are in the position to go about their business relatively unsupervised and as such, are generally more trusted than non-professionals. In this regard, it is possible for the professional to betray the trust placed in him or her and carry out various acts of deception.

Historically the family has been the traditional source of reputation. The family is the source of a person's ascriptive status - one's initial location in society. For Nock (1993) the two methods used to establish or maintain reputations among strangers or in urban settings are 'credentials' and 'ordeals'. A 'credential' is something that gives a person access to credit or confidence. Credentials may certify many things such as competence, completion of a course of study, membership in formal or voluntary associations, or credit worthiness. Credentials are a part of an individual's public reputation. In other fields of endeavour, one's occupational status or other visible signs of achievement could establish one's reputation. Heller (1985) argued that success is increasingly the basis of reputation - perhaps the dominant basis in modern society.

On the other hand, an 'ordeal' is a ritual that determines whether an individual is telling the truth. It always begins with a presumption of guilt or unresolved doubt (Nock, 1985). Thus, ordeals are a form of surveillance and they establish or maintain reputations. As with credentials, the use of ordeals is a function of the extensiveness of strangers - those who lack reputations. For Nock (1985), it is when a person's word is in doubt that ordeals are employed. Through an ordeal people are able to validate their reputation, to garner proof of the validity of their claims, or to establish their claim to innocence, membership, or competence. Common methods of ordeals include drug tests, lie-detector tests, and obligatory confessions in communes or churches. Nock (1985) noted that the main difference between ordeals of the Middle Ages and those of today is in who or what is called on to render the truthful decision. God was the source of truth for judges in medieval times whereas science or the appearance of it is now called to do the same thing.

A deceptive individual is capable of ensuring that he or she passes the ordeals in a given society (Osisiogu, 2004). This is achieved through deliberate activities involving training, character and credit building. Unfortunately, much of our lives lie beyond the legitimate scrutiny of others – given that as the more heterogeneous society is, the more the level of privacy grows. Nock (1993) notes that the individual credentials alone are increasingly inadequate for establishing reputation. For Taylor (1985) virtually any type of credential is potentially subject to fraud, and it is in the quest to augment the reliance on credentials that ordeals are necessary.

Finally, one of the major avenues used for the dissemination of lies or deception is the mass media. The role of advertisements including those that are misleading is common knowledge. Martin (2006) notes Weaver's (1994) remark that journalists deliberately create sensational news, often constructed to suit a particular agenda or purpose. Also in television in particular, selected images could distort the viewer's perception about a story or incident.

Conclusion

Deception is traditionally viewed negatively, though it could have positive effects in practice, if done to prevent injury or harm to others, for example the use of placebos by medical doctors. However, deception that is injurious and fraudulent are not in the best interest of society. Lewis and Saarni (1993) noted that truth and deception are at two opposite sides, like good and evil, which have been viewed as not being able to mix with each other. Yet, they state that few people can honestly claim they never lie, and they note that deception is practiced habitually in day-to-day life (Lewis and Saarni, 1993).

Deception appears to be part of human nature, which can be utilised positively or negatively. People lie for various reasons and in different social situations and contexts. The important issue to note here is that deliberate deception including self illusion is done purposefully – the benefit may not be apparent immediately. Whatever the case may be the deceiver is usually aware of this dishonourable approach to social/economic interaction, while the deceived would most likely be offended if they become aware of the dishonesty. From a philosophical perspective - Is it fair to say that deception is part of human nature?

We have seen that the availability of trust in varying degrees serves as the essential tool for the act of deception (Osisiogu, 2004). Without trust it is impossible to engage in our daily social life and the belief that is held about another person at the time of communication is a significant part of what the particular context amounts to (Good, 1988). In sum, trust is the core around which all communities and societies are built. The conditions of familiarity have been dramatically changed over the ages by the invention of writing, by literacy, and in particular by the printing press and the Internet. Given that trust is more or less inevitable in human transactions, fraudsters or those involved in all forms of deception abuse this situation and relevant agents of social control and law enforcement would have to act appropriately as required.

In fact, in Nigeria, the abuse of trust is implicitly the basis of the establishment of the Independent Corrupt Practices and Related Offences Commission (ICPC), established in 2000 and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), established in 2002, both of which are engaged in sanitising official and business environments in Nigeria. ICPC's main focus is to fight corruption, receive complaints, investigate and prosecute offenders, educate and enlighten the public about and against bribery, corruption and related offences. EFCC is mainly concerned with the investigation and prosecution of financial crimes and also has the responsibility of enforcing the provisions of other laws and regulations relating to economic

and financial crimes including: The Money Laundering Act 1995; The Advance Fee Fraud and Other Fraud Related Offences Act 1995; The Failed Banks (Recovery of Debts) and Financial Malpractices in Banks Act 1994; The Banks and other Financial Institutions Act 1991; and The Miscellaneous Offences Act, in addition to being the key government agency responsible for fighting terrorism.

Finally, Martin (2006) is right when he stated that generally, lies have a bad reputation. Further, that telling the truth is normally considered to be the good and right thing to do. According to Martin (2006: 1) "One conventional view of lying is that it is bad in itself and should be avoided at all costs. This is the absolutist view of the 18th century German Philosopher, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Another conventional view is that the consequences of lying are often bad, so lying should be avoided except in extreme circumstances". Martin also cites Bok's (1978) argument that lying should be kept to a minimum because its consequences are so often undesirable.

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