

To Lie, Or Not To Lie. That is the question. A Play in Three Acts.

ACT ONE. "Your Nose Is Getting Longer."

White Lies.

This is the simple lying we may do because the lie seems trivial.

"I did not drink for the milk carton."

Or, the lie is justified as a better result than upsetting someone.

"No honey, that dress looks fine, even if it is two sizes too small."

What are the consequences of such lying?

One, we avoid conflict with the other.

Two, we avoid potential embarrassment for the other.

Three, we open the potential for a lack of our credibility, if caught in the lie.

Four, we are showing disrespect to the person told the lie.

Five, we may not tolerate receiving such lying in return; So why do it?

ACT TWO. "You Are A Habitual Liar ! Or, Not ? "

Our Habits.

Much of our upbringing and our moral base comes from
parents, education, religion, life experience, and so on.

It can also come from our exposure to certain societal norms.

If a norm is to lie, then lying is acceptable. If not, the opposite.

Our Habitual Selves. As we grow we develop repetitive tendencies, such that

we do not know we are doing those tendencies. No forethought.

This is the case with lying. We may do it regularly without thinking.

The same is true with honesty. Some are habitually honest.

Then again, each may consciously decide to do the opposite.

The ultimate test is, what the person does consistently, without thinking.

What are the consequences of such habits?

We cannot easily break the cycle, the “learning” as LaFollete calls it.
We become known by our habits. Some to be trusted, some not.
We arrive at the slippery slope: moving from white lies to big lies.

ACT THREE. “Avoiding Death By Peanut.” Professional Lying.

What if: you worked for a firm that was knowingly causing harm to others ?

When asked if you thought your firm’s product was safe,
what would you answer ?

Dilemma your position requires you to abide by the rule of the firm;

your job depends on you giving the company line;
the court, government, police, whatever, requires the truth;

you know what you have to say is not the truth,
entirely.

Do you step aside from your position, risk your position, your fortune;

do you tell the truth or lie ? Is such lying, really lying ?

Do you eat from a can filled with your peanut snacks, or claim the Fifth?

Are you a deontologist or a consequentialist / utilitarian ?

Epilogue: “A Classical Kantian Dilemma.”

Gene is walking down a street.

Francis runs up and says, “ Terry is trying to kill me, and runs off.”

Terry runs up and asks, “did you see which way Francis went ?”

Question 1: Do you tell the truth ? Are you a deontologist ?

Question 2: Do you lie to save Francis ? Are you a consequential utilitarian ?

Best Regards to All

Chaplain on Signal Mountain

