

Psychological Coordinates of Communication in the Analysis of Dissimulated Behaviour

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*We all lie, but not all lies are the same.
People lie and tell the truth in order to meet an
objective: “We lie if honesty does not work.”*

Tim Levine

Abstract: *The dissimulated behaviour of an individual, respectively its more articulated version – lie – as a part of social interaction is of considerable interest to social psychology, among other fields. The perspective for analysis is a generous one since it is based on the social interaction between individuals. As long as there are purposes, interests, wishes, plans, thoughts directed towards something specific, etc., it becomes plausible that satisfying them leads to the person’s believing in the imperative nature of resorting to such an instrument, as an aid for attaining the purpose of a certain approach. The series of examples can start from domestic contexts, where a child tells “white” lies to obtain what he wishes, to the dissimulated behaviour of the teenager, respectively of the adult, who tries to persuade, gain, influence, acquire, conquer, obtain a certain result, continuing with the influence of technologies on the way in which an individual shapes his existence in the virtual world in relation to the others, up to the impact of the flow of information from the media on the system of individual and collective beliefs and values. The situations marked by human social interaction where an individual looking for solutions to and in various situations will access the saving levers – dissimulated behaviour or even lies – cover, therefore, a large scope. Examining the circumstances in which human behaviour bears the mark of dissimulation, with the main factor being communication, this article aims to answer questions such as: from what age do humans start to lie (?), is lie, in its incipient stage, a wilful and conscious act (?), are social lies acceptable (?), (and if yes) until what point can this consent go (?), is human interaction based solely on truth feasible?*

Keywords: *dissimulated behaviour, lie, communication, social interaction*

Introduction: Theoretical Benchmarks

One of the defining dimensions of behaviour, which has accompanied mankind from the dawn of its existence and which proved not only its ability to last but also the power to reinvent itself both in relation to social development stages and according to the individual stage of evolution, is dissimulated behaviour, and respectively lie. Actually, “... the word “lie” is normally a violent expression of moral disapproval, which in polite conversation tends to be avoided, through the – relatively euphemistic – substitution of the synonyms “false” and “untrue”.” [1]

We can notice the plurality of semantic derivatives: hiding/ distorting truth, lying, dissimulating, deceiving, dishonesty, lack of truth, hypocrisy, falsification, cunningness, fiction, invention, treacherousness, duplicity, etc. – a terminological diversity that refers to one single reality. This reality has made specialists to place it ontologically at the same time as the appearance of human speech.

Not surprisingly, having such deep foundations as well as due to its perennality across generations, the behavioural dimension under discussion has stimulated the interest of psychologists, sociologists, neuroscience specialists, etc., in an attempt to better understand its triggers: in which stage of life our ability to tell the difference between truth and lie is developed, what determines an individual’s preference – in a social context – to hide the truth, even in situations that are neutral

from the perspective of obtaining any advantage; what happens at a neurological level, so that the person feels more comfortable / safer hiding behind a lie, etc.? This phenomenon is not unidirectional, which requires extra attention: we can notice an individual's predilection to believe certain contents that he knows for sure are not real.

The consistent number of defining phrases attributed in time by specialists reveals the degree of complexity that characterizes an individual's penchant towards dissimulated behaviour.

Simply put, hiding the truth by using verbal or nonverbal means of conveying information, as an act directed towards obtaining benefits – in one form or another – meets the descriptive elements of the term “deceit”.

Interchangeably using the terms of lie and deceit, Paul Ekman (2001) provides the following defining framework for the meaning of these two notions: “a person intends to deceive another, deliberately, with no prior notice of their purpose and without the target person to have explicitly asked the former to act this way” [2].

The same author, in the volume *Why kids lie*, believes that hiding the truth is in no way more rightful, more moral or preferable than falsification, and that the only difference is given by the lying techniques preferred by the author, as the circumstance may be. Ekman notes that the human individual – child or adult to an equal extent – finds it more convenient to hide the truth than make false statements, because it is simpler this way. By choosing the option to hide the truth, the author (“liar”, as Ekman calls them) can plan things as follows: in case they are caught, they will state that they were anyway about to confess, and moreover that they should not have lied, had they been challenged directly. [3]

For Aldert Vrij, lying is “the deliberate attempt, successful or failed, with no foretelling, to create in the other a belief that the communicator considers to be true” [4].

Dr. Christian L. Hart suggests that lying should be defined as “a deliberate manipulation of language, successful or not, with the purpose of creating in the other the belief that the communicator considers to be untrue” [5].

A significant contribution to the study of dissimulated behaviour, respectively of lying, with an accent on its various forms / intensity levels and on the social contexts in which it is used, belongs to Sissela Bok. In her opinion, in the cases when man intentionally deceives his peers, he actually engages to send messages meant to mislead the latter, making them believe what the former does not himself believe. The author mentions that this occurs through gestures, disguise, action / inaction, or even through silence, rhetorically asking (how can we know) how many of such messages – which she defines as deceiving – are casual. Bok concludes with the idea that any message intentionally built with the purpose of deceiving is a lie. Nevertheless, since such messages are transmitted differently, mainly orally or verbally, in the mentioned author's opinion, means that “deceit is a larger category, and lie is part of it” [6].

Though impressive in number as well as in the diversity of contents, a large portion of the defining statements attributed to the discussed concept do not succeed in grasping its dimensions in an exhaustive manner. Although the explanations given by the definitions of several renowned authors focus on one side or another, “It is important to aspire towards a common understanding of lying” [7].

Beyond theory, the basic meaning of the term is accessible to common understanding, the human individual having generally an unfavourable attitude towards it. Identifying a correspondence between the prosocial *versus* antisocial nature of dissimulates behaviour/lying is, in what follows, the focus of our article.

1. Psycho-Socio-Cognitive Aspects of Lie in Childhood

According to the norm, any parent wishes for their own child, besides a biological inheritance that is appropriate under all angles, good education, which would contribute to shaping a dignified character, by cultivating various human values, among which moral behaviour takes one of the most important places. Towards this purpose, parents invest time, energy, knowledge, and a consistent dose of patience to form the future adult under auspices that would benefit their appropriate existence in society.

One of the questions to which researchers concerned with the way in which lie accompanies an individual through his evolution refers to the stage of development when it first occurs.

Dr. Kang Lee (2017) identifies the period around the age of two as the stage of development when a child starts lying, with the purpose of obtaining some benefit. As they grow up, children become more and more able to make up the so-called *white lies*, which they use to observe the others' feelings or to make themselves appreciated. Ironically, although intensely blamed, since lying belongs to the obscure side of human society, it is an essential part of human existence. A world where nobody lies would be incredibly cruel, claims Dr. K. Lee. Also, through the researches performed in his Toronto laboratory, Dr. Lee reached the conclusion that, around the age of 7, if the necessary steps are followed (such as asking the right questions), a child can acknowledge his lies, and this happens because the human individual is at an age when he cannot (yet) pretend. The children's skill to lie tends to be determined by their ability to communicate, to understand the emotions of other people, as well as to make the difference between what they feel, what they know, respectively what the others know, argues the Canadian specialist. This skill is essential for human interaction. Therefore, beyond the apparently unnatural nature of such reasoning, the ability to tell lies represents, in Dr. Lee's opinion, a precious undeniable clue that the child's development is normal and as desired. In essence, there is a significant correlation between cognitive development, respectively its executive functioning, and lie. [8]

In the same idea of a connection between the cognitive process and the ability to twist the truth within daily interactions, Bruno Verschuere – indicating a series of studies that prove this theory: Caso, Gnisci, Vrij, & Mann, 2005; Vrij, Semin, & Bull, 1996 – stresses the idea that people find it much more difficult to lie than to tell the truth. “Truth comes naturally, while lying takes effort and a flexible, agile mind.” In terms of importance, the Dutch specialist compares this acquisition that characterises mental process with others, no less important, respectively motion-related – walking, and related to articulation ability – speech. [9]

Although the cognitive function to dissimulate appears rather early, we cannot speak of the presence at an early age of a form of understanding from the perspective of the notion itself, as this ability needs a period of over ten years to build, as indicated by the results of several studies (K. Bussey 1992, 1999; K. Lee, 2000; M. Siegal, C.C. Peterson). [10]

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Understanding the child's relationship with lies implies taking into account the meaning that lying has for the child. The same author (Ekman, 1991) clarifies that until around the age of eight, children qualify as lying any false statement, irrespective of whether or not the author was aware of the authenticity of the respective statement. But like the adult, the eight-year-old does not label as liar a person who involuntarily / unaware provides untrue information. [12]

An interesting observation (C. C. Peterson, J. L. Peterson, D. Seeto, 1983) refers to the children's ability to evaluate the impact of lying, per age category: thus, unlike older children, the small ones believe much more that it is wrong for someone to lie. As an example, in the study of the mentioned authors, for the five-year-olds category, the belief that lying is wrong is shared by 92% of the children; for eleven year-old, the trend drops significantly, only 28% of the children persisting in the belief that lying is not appropriate. Moreover, 75% of the first age category (five-year-olds) stated that they have never lied, while among the eleven-year-olds, no one made such statement of virtue. [13]

Profoundly integrated in mental processes, dissimulated behaviour accompanies thus an individual since early childhood, knows transformations from one life stage to another, under various aspects. There are also significant variations in what concerns the reasons and circumstances that call for it at one moment or another, crystallized through the life experiences of each person.

2. Social Interaction – a Context that Enhances Dissimulated Behaviour

The statement that lying is one of the main symbols in the functioning of social human relations is correct, logical, considering the variety of reasons that determine this type of behaviour. Often times, lying can be correlated with social adaptation.

Paul Ekman (2001) identifies a series of reasons that determine one to resort to lying:

1. The most frequently invoked reason is *avoiding punishment*.
2. The wish to obtain a *reward*, which normally, in the absence of a lie, the person cannot have.
3. The intention to *protect* someone else from some punishment.
4. *Self-protection* from threats, including physical ones.
5. *Admiration* from peers is another reason to lie.
6. *Freeing oneself* from an uncomfortable social context.
7. *Avoiding* an embarrassing situation.
8. *Preserving privacy*, without notifying the others of the intention to keep certain private information.
9. The last in the series of reason why an individual lies is *exerting power* over others, with the author controlling information on the other subjects. [14]

Some arguments in this list can relate to the idea of need, for example the situations when individuals lie in order to: protect themselves against threats, protect a peer, escape an unpleasant social context, or reject people intruding in their private life. These reasons can, at least in appearance, be justified.

Besides the mentioned situation categories, when lying can be socially acceptable, in general, an individual's penchant for lies exceeds to a considerable extent their willingness to acknowledge it. Moreover, this triggers a mechanism in virtue of which, in relation to one's own self, lying does not seem so serious to the individual. However, when found in the situation to evaluate the same pattern of attitudes in someone else, things acquire a different connotation, much more severe, in which rigour and principles become imperative.

In some social contexts, lying can be less subject to blame in comparison with the situation that the respective action hides. For instance, a student who does not do their homework and, once called out by the teacher, claims that they accidentally forgot their notebook at home, on the desk, or: family friends to invite another family to come together to spend the weekend, and when the latter are about to leave their home, they are called and asked to go back because of unforeseen circumstances (some convincing reason is usually invoked), or when an employee justifies their 2-3 hour absence from the office, under a certain pretext, when in reality they realized they forgot their pet in an enclosed space in their tenement / outside, etc. – such examples can be considered situations when resorting to dissimulated behaviour is translated into the person who is directly involved avoiding an unwanted situation. If the family making the invitation is no longer available to organize the event and the real reason cannot be confessed, it is possible to accept the motivational version that avoids

this plan, the student can be exempt from getting a small grade, and the employee can save their pet from a potentially risky situation, or which implies certain problems.

The paradigm for analyzing this type of situations requires taking into account both direction: pro justification, respectively unjustified / unacceptable: thus, some may consider and, of course, argue along the beneficial nature of lying, in the idea of overcoming circumstances with a negative personal impact, having, at the same time, insignificant consequences, while on the other hand we can note the philosophical perspective supported by important representatives, which firmly accuse the idea of accepting lies in social interactions under any form whatsoever.

According to DePaulo and his collaborators (1996), the average frequency of people's lying is once or twice a day. [15]

Later studies (Feldman, Forest and Happ (2002)) show that the lie ratio actually grows up to an average of three lies per minute in interactions with unknown people. [16]

Actually, the incidence rate of lies outside social relations was the object of several studies, with similar results, which determined Kim B. Serota, Timothy R. Levine, and Franklin J. Boster to re-evaluate them. The conclusion was that, although we can speak of individual differences in terms of frequency of using dissimulated behaviour, a common denominator remains: lying is, without a doubt, a component of social human interaction.

One of the most reprehensible plans (from a moral as well as a legal perspective) is that in which people choose to lie in order to climb the hierarchy ladder. From this point of view, Sissela Bok notices that lying, in comparison with other means that an individual can use to gain power, is an easily accessible tool. [17]

One's choice to access a high social position (or considered to be high by the subject) by using lies as the main tool is an attitude that pushes lying in the most obscure area of human behaviour. Nowhere, in the acceptance of any present or past school of thought, can we find arguments for accepting such an approach.

A subject of lengthy and accentuated debates among specialists in various fields, the issue of accepting lying as a social criterion – in its various hypostases and levels – incites to a further search for answers. The normality of continuing this approach comes, on the one hand, from the fact that lying is an integral part of human nature (as we have previously shown) and on the other hand – which is not inseparable – it always follows a purpose, similarly to communication.

The polarity between those who include lying in the category of immoral behaviours, incriminating it, and the viewpoints that promote the idea that human society cannot possibly work in the absence of lying proves, once more, the complexity of this phenomenon.

3. *Alter Ego* in the Digital Era – an Optimal Framework for the Manifestation of Dissimulation

The way in which someone presents oneself to the others is significantly influenced by his/her behaviour. This includes the individual communication skills, as direct human interaction is mediated by specific means of expression, which are verbal and especially nonverbal: posture, facial expression (the nonverbal indicator with the highest level of significance), interpersonal distance, para-lingual elements, gestures, etc. In essence, a set of elements that have the potential to transmit the information contents that someone wishes to make known to the others. All these constitutive elements of the communication process have certain peculiarities whose role is to enlighten as much as possible the interlocutor on the received contents, contributing to shaping up the message so that it reaches the interlocutor in a non-distorted shape, or at least as close as possible to the intentions of the sender.

If face-to-face interaction provides the interlocutors, besides oral verbal communication, the support of the nonverbal component, so important for correctly decoding the messages and giving them meaning

(the unity of the message requiring the condition of the presence of *both components* – verbal and nonverbal), in the virtual world, the terms used for all these change substantially and things are reversed.

The access of communication technologies to each and every corner of social life, a constant companion that creates an inevitable dependence, could be translated through a phrase of the type “the second nature of mankind”. This terminological construct appears to be even more justified as, in terms of impact on human life, the current stage is one without precedent in the entire evolution of human society. Modern man living in an uninterrupted connection with the online world is the image with which we have become familiar; practically, from the moment we wake up and until all day and night activities end, the relationship between an individual and Internet is as active as it can be. Thus, the phrase mentioned above seems to resonate perfectly with the reality we live in.

Through the nature of its features, the virtual environment not only allows, but favours the usage of dissimulation at high levels, often difficult to identify. In this spirit, in the virtual world, the possibility to manipulate one’s identity ranks the highest, unlike in real life where this does not come easy for anyone who wishes to do so.

In Turkle’s opinion (1995), the possibility to hide in anonymity, granted by the Internet, provides the users with rather favourable conditions to experiment various identities, with a specific versatility. [18]

The online world is a very permissive environment for the types of deceit that are based on manipulating identity, since they are difficult to detect even by specialists in this respect, as observe Grazioli and Jarvenpaa (2000). [19]

The process of extended and fast spread of social platforms manages to attract an impressive number of people from all corners of the world, all showing a constant interest in sharing personal experiences and finding out information from the most diverse social areas, including regarding acquaintances. This type of daily activity means everyone’s permanent involvement – under one form or another – in building a complex social network, even without a material, concrete existence. In this world, only those who do not wish so cannot become someone else; and this *alter ego* has unlimited possibilities to change into anything that the subject can imagine, an extension of one’s own personality taken to levels that cannot find their correspondent in the real world. In fact, through this transfer into a different dimension, the virtual one, personality acquires surreal features, and individuals are depersonalized every time they take refuge in every respective avatar.

Some results in the field of social psychology draw attention to the fact that, within the various daily online interactions, up to one third of these include one form of dissimulation or another. [20]

The possibility to hide under personal coordinates that differ in name, gender, age, physical features (which can be modified), up to the professional status or occupational background, group of interests, concerns, hobbies, etc. generate an irresistible attraction. The respective user is deeply captivated by this *alter ego*, which, in the virtual world, meets all their preferences for their new *persona*, who plays their planned role so successfully that it can offer its owners feelings that, in real life, would require a lot of time and effort. One component of the virtual world where this type of metamorphosis has a successful impact on the others is represented by the various categories of flirts, ranging from simple distractions to various deals in the process of a relationship, to those with a concrete ending. Here, we are particularly interested in the ways in which dissimulation comes into play, of course according to the interests that animate the individual at one moment or another.

In the multitude of exaggerations to which the user resorts to polish their profile, until – in their opinion – it becomes ideal, worthy of being presented to the world, the user enters, more or less aware of his/her approach, in a sort of competition with the others taking the same actions. A rhetorical

statement such as “If others do it, why wouldn’t I!” is, most likely, on the mind of those to prefer to be seen as someone else.

In the online world, information meant to give a different impression, in other words, deliberate lying, is the norm: 20 years are “deleted” from the age, 30 kilograms are deleted from the weight (Epstein 2007, Mapes 2004), new elements are added, which benefit the individual. [21]

The users’ tendency to deviate from the truthfulness of personal information can be explained, according to some specialists (Ellison, Heino and Gibbs, 2006), by the fact that people lack the accuracy of self-perception, which can be completed by the individual’s preference to follow a certain pattern in creating their personal profile (Ellison et al., 2006; Whitty, 2008), the online environment being permissive in this respect. [22]

Joseph B. Walther (1996) designed the model of computer-mediated hyperpersonal communication, which presents the way in which the users of dating sites benefit (in the virtual world) from the necessary support to meet their need to dissimulate, presenting themselves under different personal coordinates. Walther reached the conclusion that, in specific circumstances, *the receiver* of computer-mediated communication (CMC) tends to amplify their perception of the partner, and the author believes that the theoretical and empirical approach that best fits this process could belong to the theory of dis-individualisation of social identity. In concrete terms, the partners enter a sort of competition of “over-attribution”, having stereotypical beliefs of themselves, involuntarily ignoring clues (spelling, punctuation and writing mistakes) that, on a closer look, weaken the construction. This form of over-confidence in one’s own potential works prevalently in CMC, respectively when the users are not exposed one to the other, when they do not interact directly. They are “dis-individualised.”

In CMC, *the sender* is careful in optimising their self-presentation, which must generally be as favourable as possible from a social perspective. Together with one of his collaborators (Burgoon, 1992), Walther uses the phrase “selective self-presentation” to refer to the effort made by the user to build a certain image.

The asynchronous channels for relational coordination and information management, in short, *asynchronicity* refers to the time interval when communication does not require the simultaneous attention of the partners, who can get involved in computerised communication on a voluntary basis, when time and disposition allows. As a result of the relaxation of the time limits between the moment when the profile is created and the interaction in the virtual space with potential people, the user has the time needed to improve his/her self-presentation.

A communication model must absolutely include one of the essential features of the process – *feedback*. Based on elements related to privacy, fawning, sweet nothings, etc., things tend to evolve towards what Walther calls *behavioural confirmation*. Each of the partner needs from the other appropriate validation, a very important point in the evolution of the two subjects, with a special effect in amplifying the eventual ending.

Thus, man’s natural ability to dissimulate, which appears at an early age, reaches an enhanced level – never before imagined – through the power of technology that impregnates the existence of modern man. [23]

4. The System of Individual and Collective Values and Beliefs under the Impact of Media-Promoted News

A specific feature of modern times is the information flow insured by mass-media. Man’s constant need to find out, to know, to understand events that happened in his vicinity or anywhere in the world, his interest in specific issues, finds an echo in journalistic activities. The way in which this industry resonates with man’s need to know the way in which society works as a whole, how this profession has to be performed, respectively the way in which daily life is influenced by journalism – spread

under its various forms – represent consecrated approaches as well as more recent ones of the authors concerned with such aspects.

The theoretical classification of the notion of lie, in association with the term “journalistic” differs, in Luljak’s opinion (2000), from that given in daily life, such as, for example, a child who lies to his parents about a grade or a wife who does not perform some household activity invoking some office obligation when – in fact – she preferred to watch her favourite show, etc. The phrase *journalistic lie* is based on a work strategy justified by an occupational reason – which is legitimate from the point of view of the professionals in the field – a type of activity, which, due to its routine nature, does not require analysis. Such routine procedures concern eliminating the information that may create discomfort for the subjects, with the same category including the spread of interviews with fake contents, meant to favour the authorities responsible with applying the law. After analysing the question if lie is unacceptable under any circumstance, Luljak concludes that there can be no definite answer. [24]

As previously shown in the present material, human potential to knowingly, thus willingly ignore ethical and normal norms, hence the truth, reaches incommensurable levels. The perspective from which this dimension that is thoroughly imprinted in the human structure draws attention nowadays is a concern, on the one hand, because of the accelerated spread of fake, falsified news through the mass information structure, and on the other because of the consequences to their perception by the people. Being such a powerful instrument, through which the non-existing can be transformed into the most believable reality, the media is more and more accessed, together with the political structures, by other institutions as well. In Dor’s words (2017): “What is wished for, is a good subject: an object for imagination”, without taking into account the truthfulness of this subject that acts as a stimulus. [25]

Some specialists anticipated, as early as the end of last century, the significant influence that these structures were about to generate on social life. Norman Fairclough (1995) drew attention on the force with which mass media penetrate into the system of knowledge, convictions, values, relationships, and social identities. [26]

In his volume *News and the Culture of Lying: How Journalism Really Works*, Paul H. Weaver (1994) puts an equal sign between the culture of lying and speech, respectively the behaviour of those who, being in the most important official positions, search by all means to recruit the force of journalism, enslaving it to their personal and group purposes. Weaver stresses the idea of a complicity between the two institutions, the media and the government, with the mention that, for example, crises are often not of such nature, but are the result of the complicity between the two institutional entities. Their involvement in complex deceiving games prevents the media to tell the truth and, on this foundation, the government proves its inability to effectively govern. [27]

One of the most efficient instruments in using lies and manipulating people’s emotions is, according to Meibauer (2018), persuasion. [28]

A determining condition for a job in journalism, persuasion generates emotions, and from here to enhancing the public’s interest in a specific social topic there is not even a step. Involving people’s emotions awakens, arouses, provokes, challenges – and an authentic journalist knows *a priori* that resorting to job-specific weapons (intonation, nonverbal behaviour, with an accent on facial expression, together with a well-argued journalistic speech, adapted to reaching the intended purpose) can be persuasive, getting the public’s attention. In this way, by manipulating beliefs, convictions, attitudes, a point is reached where fake news is easily assimilated and disseminated *ad infinitum*.

The conclusion reached by Vosoughi and his collaborators (2018), in a study that aimed to find information on the people’s relationship with fake news versus real news on Twitter is interesting. Thus, they noticed that fake news is 70% more likely to be redistributed to other readers than real news, which does not enjoy such popularity. [29]

The reason for this would be that fake news “naturally” include information designed to generate emotions, to surprise, getting attentions in ways that truth can only seldom manage.

Faithful to manipulating approaches, spreaders of false information aim to sensitise the public they address. To this purpose, they will resort to verbal constructions meant to distract attention to some extent (the bigger the better) from what was known until then by the receivers of the message, making them reconfigure their availability to adopt a new type of vision on a certain issue. Using the necessary levers, respectively the ingenuity of the followers, insufficient / non-existent knowledge, “openness” to knowing new information, the urgency of a situation in search for answers / solutions, etc., the news promoter steps with the necessary assurance on this territory, resorting to well-designed phrases such as: “Twist of the plot!”, “I know what most of you think, but as you shall see, truth is entirely different”; “Stay on... (channel name), the information we will present will change the course of things, as you will see”, etc. Through these artifices, interest, curiosity, is implicitly completed by people’s ability to assimilate “new” information. On an emotional background between the sender and the receiver, especially when the contents are of interest to the latter, by involving the emotional side, information is no longer filtered in order to be discerned, but taken as such.

A worldwide spread topic, which – together with the wave of dramatic consequences – frequently challenges the creativity of fake news fans, in an inexhaustible flow – is Coronavirus COVID - 19. Since the subject is related to the people’s health, the most sensitive human field, on the background of a major crisis situation (medical and economic), the assault is even more violent. In the context of high numbers of people getting sick or deceasing because of this virus, information such as: i) Coronavirus can be fought with a hair dryer; ii) Garlic is the best remedy for COVID - 19”; iii) Testing your breath for ten seconds is the safe solution in the fight against the virus; iv) Consuming alcohol is beneficial in protecting against the virus”; v) The most effective cure for coronavirus COVID - 19 is vitamin C in high quantities, etc. have flooded social media networks. The viewpoints of an apparently infinite number of “specialists”, “researchers”, “scientists”, completed by other socio-professional categories with contextual competences, meant to generate panic, anxiety, all work together with the sole purpose of deepening the feeling of anxiety that dominates our human society roughly challenged in such moments.

We can say that man, by using a fundamental acquisition – language – together with an ability to dissimulate, can change the course of events and real-life situations as he wishes. And how could this be accomplished better than through communication: “any honest communication system also allows deceit, which, from the point of view of natural selection, seems to be a more advantageous strategy than human communication.” [30]

Conclusions

Without claiming to exhaust the subject, the various angles of approach to dissimulated behaviour can shape up a unitary image of the behavioural framework of an individual in a psycho-social context.

In opposition with the philosophical approaches that made their way into collective consciousness as the main resource for promoting the principles of integrity, morality, ethics, and truth, anchoring in the dynamics of daily life forces us to reconsider the criteria for analysis. In this sense, this article shapes up several directions, of which we can mention the following main ones:

1. The link between the cognitive process and an individual’s ability to distort truth, which can be compared, in terms of importance, with other acquisitions that structure the development process.
2. As a component of human interaction, lying can be linked to the need for social adaptation.
3. The difficulty to formulate an exact answer to the question regarding the acceptance of lies irrespectively of the nature of the context.
4. The significant impact of fake news, in comparison with that of real information: the former category suggests contents meant to generate emotion, the latter triggers a much lesser interest.

In conclusion, similarly to microorganism, which, even as parasites, has well-defined roles in the optimal functioning of the body, human nature is structurally completed – towards the same effective functioning – by the ability to dissimulate, deceit, and lie.

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