

*The Definition of Lying**

THOMAS L. CARSON
Loyola University Chicago

1. Introduction

Few moral questions have greater bearing on the conduct of our everyday lives than questions about the morality of lying. These questions are also important for ethical theory. An important test of any theory of right and wrong is whether it gives an adequate account of the morality of lying. Conceptual questions about the nature of lying are prior to questions about the moral status of lying. Any theory about the moral status of lying presupposes an account of what lying is.

This paper proposes and defends a definition of lying. My definition is preferable to the other definitions I examine, and the shortcomings of these other definitions motivate my definition. Three features of my definition are noteworthy. First, I argue that standard dictionary definitions overlook a necessary condition of lying, namely, that the liar cannot believe that the statement she makes is true. Second, contrary to most standard definitions, I argue that lying does not require that the liar intends to deceive others. Third, I hold that in order to tell a lie, one must make a statement that one warrants to be true.

2. Lies and Falsehoods

In order to tell a lie, one must make a false statement. Showing that a statement is true is always sufficient to counter the accusation that one has told a lie. People often attempt to mislead others without saying anything that is false. Often, people who are ordinarily very careless about how they say things choose their words with great care in order to mislead others without saying anything that is literally false. For example, suppose that I

know that a used car I am selling frequently overheats. You are a prospective buyer and ask me whether the car overheats. If I say “no,” I am presumably lying. If I answer by making the true statement “I drove this car across the Mojave desert on a very hot day and had no problems,” I am not lying. Even though this statement is true, it might still be very misleading—perhaps I drove the car across the desert four years ago and have had lots of trouble with it overheating since then. Often, people engage in this kind of verbal trickery because they take themselves to be avoiding lying. It is difficult to account for this widespread phenomenon unless we concede that ordinary language does not count such statements as lies. The recent controversy about whether or not President Clinton lied to the Starr Grand Jury when he denied having a “sexual relationship” with Monica Lewinsky illustrates this point. Clinton claims that his statement that he did not have sexual relations with Monica Lewinsky was not a lie because it was true, given the definition of “sexual relationship” specified in the questions he was asked by the grand jury. Clinton went through verbal contortions attempting to avoid acknowledging his relationship with Lewinsky without saying anything false. Clinton claims that he didn’t say anything false and, thus, didn’t lie or perjure himself. Those who hold that Clinton’s statement was a lie are claiming (among other things) that what he said was false.¹

A more difficult case for my view that a lie must be a false statement is the following:

I go fishing on a boat with a friend, John. He and I both catch a fish at the same time. Although we don’t realize it, our lines are crossed. I have caught a very big fish and John has caught a little one, but we mistakenly believe that I caught the small fish and John caught the big one. We throw the two fish back into the water. I go home thinking that I caught a small fish. When I return, my father, an avid fisherman, asks me how I did. I say that I caught a very large fish and threw it back into the water, thereby intending to deceive him about size of the fish that I caught.²

My linguistic intuitions tell me that a lie must be a false statement, and that, therefore, what I say in this case is not a lie. I intend to lie in this case but I don’t. Others report conflicting intuitions about this case and the question of whether a lie must be a false statement. (Fried, Isenberg, Williams, and Chisholm and Feehan all defend definitions of lying according to which a lie needn’t be a false statement.) To the extent that it rests on disputed intuitions, my claim that a lie must be a false statement is open to question. I won’t pursue this issue further here. In endnote 29 I explain how my preferred definition of lying can be modified to accommodate the view that a lie needn’t be a false statement.

3. Standard Dictionary Definitions of Lying

All lies are false statements, but not all false statements are lies. I do not lie if faulty memory causes me to state something false when I am trying my best to be accurate and truthful. Sometimes people say things that are false in order to make a joke. If I say something that is clearly false as a joke that is not intended to be taken seriously, I am not lying.

What is the difference between lying and the broader notion of a false statement? Standard dictionary definitions of lying say that a lie is a false statement made with the intent to deceive others. The first definition of the word “lie” in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is the following: “a false statement made with the intent to deceive.”³ *Webster’s International Dictionary of the English Language* (1929), gives the following definition: “to utter a falsehood with the intent to deceive.” These two definitions overlook an essential feature of lying. If a statement is a lie, then the person who makes it cannot believe that it is true. Showing that one believed what one said is always sufficient to rebut the claim that one told a lie.⁴ The fact that I intend to deceive you by means of stating *x* does not necessarily imply that I believe that *x* is false. I might try to deceive you by saying something that I believe is true. For example, suppose that I tell you that Joe is away from his home because I hope to deceive you into thinking that you can easily break into his house and steal his paintings. In fact, I know that he has a sophisticated burglar alarm with a video camera that is likely to catch you in the act. I believe that Joe is away from home, but contrary to what I believe, he is at home. My statement is false and it is intended to deceive you, but it is not a lie, because I *believe* that it is true.

The definition of lying needs a condition to rule out the possibility that one believes that what one says is true. However, it is unclear exactly how this condition should be formulated. We might say that in order to lie one must make a false statement that one believes is false (or believes is probably false). Alternatively, we might say that in order to tell a lie one must make a false statement that one doesn’t believe to be true. These two different ways of formulating the condition yield different results in the following sort of case: I make a false statement when I don’t have the slightest idea whether or not it is true. Such statements are characteristic of bullshit. According to the strong condition (above), this statement cannot possibly be a lie (no matter what other conditions it satisfies), because I don’t believe that the statement is false or probably false. The weaker condition allows for the possibility that statements of this sort are lies. (In such cases, the person who makes the statement does not believe that it is true.) I don’t know of any decisive reason for preferring the stronger condition to the weaker condition or vice versa. Rather than attempt to show that the correct definition of lying must incorporate the stronger condition (or the weaker condition), I think that we should simply say that there are broader and narrower concepts of lying.

4. A Reformulation of the Dictionary Definitions

The foregoing objection to the dictionary definitions of lying and the uncertainty about how to formulate the condition that the liar must believe that what he says is false (or not believe that it is true), suggest the following definition of lying:

L1. A person S tells a lie iff: 1. S makes a false statement x, 2. S believes that x is false or probably false (or, alternatively, S doesn't believe that x is true), and 3. S intends to deceive another person by means of stating x (by stating x, S intends to cause another person to have false beliefs).⁵

The first condition of my definition needs explanation and clarification. What does it mean to say that a person, S, makes a false statement? This means roughly that: i) S produces (utters, writes, signs, etc.) a linguistic token, t, that expresses a proposition, X, ii) X is false, and iii) S does this with the intention of communicating X to someone or some group of people. The last clause is clearly necessary. I might idly or absentmindedly produce linguistic tokens that express propositions with no intention of communicating those propositions to anyone. For example, while being bored by a committee meeting, I might write a sentence expressing a proposition on a piece of paper. Or, in an empty room, I might read aloud statements from a book I am looking at. Doing this does not constitute stating anything unless I somehow intend to communicate to others. [More on this below in section 14.]

5. Lying and the Right to Know the Truth

Those who are attracted to the absolutist view that lying is always wrong sometimes try to deal with objections by appealing to very narrow definitions of lying according to which the examples posed as cases of permissible lying are not genuine cases of lying.⁶ The most well-known version of this kind of definition is the view that a necessary condition of one's lying is that the person to whom one's statement is directed has a right to know the truth, so that speaking falsely to someone who has no right to know the truth cannot be a lie. According to this definition, my making a deliberate false statement to a thief who asks me where I hid my money would not be a lie because the thief does not have a right to know the truth about the matter in question.⁷ This kind of constraint can be incorporated into the definition of lying as follows:

L2. A person S tells a lie iff: 1. S makes a false statement x, 2. S believes that x is false or probably false (or, alternatively, S doesn't believe that x is true), 3. S intends to deceive another person by means of stating x (S intends his statement to cause another person to have false beliefs),

and 4. the person(s) to whom he makes the statement has (have) the right to know the truth about the matter in question.

(L2 is the result of adding condition 4 to L1.) Adding something like condition 4 to the definition of lying greatly narrows the concept of lying and removes some of the most serious objections to the absolutist view that lying is always wrong. (Given such definitions, some of the strongest examples commonly adduced against the claim that lying is always wrong are not genuine instances of lying.) Consider the following variation on Kant's infamous example from "On a Supposed Right to Lie from Philanthropic Concerns." Suppose that an acquaintance of yours comes to your door and asks you the whereabouts of a personal enemy. He evidently wants to murder the other person. You deliberately say that she (the man's enemy) is at a certain location when you know that she is not. You do this in the hope of misleading the man and saving her life. I would call this a case of permissible lying. According to L2, this is not a case of lying. I have no substantive moral disagreement with defenders of L2 about this case. We both agree that it is morally permissible to speak falsely to the man and mislead him. Our only disagreement is about whether we should count this example as a case of lying.

The sort of definition under consideration is sharply at variance with ordinary language. Ordinary language counts the example in question as a case of lying. There is a strong presumption against any definition of lying so much at odds with ordinary language. Using the term "lying" in accordance with this definition is likely to engender confusion. Defenders of L2 face a very strong burden of proof. Pragmatic considerations also seem to weigh against this definition of lying. L2 makes it impossible for us to determine whether or not certain acts are lies until we have first resolved difficult and controversial moral questions (about whether or not someone has a right to know the truth).⁸ It is a matter of considerable controversy exactly when other people do and do not have a right to know the truth about particular matters. If we accept L2 (or any similar definition), then we can't call a statement a lie unless we have reason to think that the audience has a right to know the truth. There are good pragmatic reasons for us to use the concept of lying to help point out and distinguish between salient features of actions and thereby assist us in making moral judgments. In order to serve this purpose, the concept of lying must be defined independently of *controversial* moral assumptions.

Some people endorse definitions such as L2 in order to defend the absolutist view that lying is always wrong (I don't know of any other reasons to accept L2). However, L2 does not rule out ostensibly clear cases of morally permissible lying. Consider the following example. A man has just had open heart surgery and is temporarily in a precarious state of health. His surgeon says that he must be shielded from any emotional

distress for the next few days. Unbeknownst to the patient, his only child, Bob, has been killed in an automobile accident. When the patient awakens after the surgery, he is surprised that Bob isn't there and he asks "Where is Bob?" You fear that in his condition, the shock of learning about Bob's death might cause the man to die. So you lie and say that his son has been delayed, all the while, firmly intending to tell him the truth and apologize for lying when he is out of danger. Given appropriate qualifications, it is morally permissible to lie to the patient. L2 doesn't exclude this as a case of lying—surely the father has a right to know the truth about his son's death. This seems to be a case of morally permissible lying which violates someone's right to know the truth. Not every case of making a false statement to save the life of an innocent person is a case of making a false statement to someone who has no right to know the truth.

6. That the Intent to Deceive is not Necessary for Lying

L1 seems to me to be fairly close to the mark. However, some clear cases of lying in which one is compelled or enticed to make false statements (and some cases of lying in which one can benefit by making false statements) do not involve any intention to deceive others. These cases are counterexamples to L1 and to most standard definitions of lying (such as the dictionary definitions noted earlier) according to which the intent to deceive others is necessary for lying. Suppose that I witness a crime and clearly see that a particular individual committed the crime. Later, the same person is accused of the crime and, as a witness in court, I am asked whether or not I saw the defendant commit the crime. I make the false statement that I did not see the defendant commit the crime, for fear of being harmed or killed by him. It does not necessarily follow that I intend that my false statements deceive anyone. (I might hope that no one believes my testimony and that he is convicted in spite of it.) Deceiving the jury is not a means to preserving my life. Giving false testimony is necessary to save my life, but deceiving others is not; the deception is merely an unintended "side effect." I do not intend to deceive the jury in this case, but it seems clear that my false testimony would constitute a lie.

Here, it might be objected that, even though I don't intend to deceive the members of the jury about the defendant's guilt, I still intend to deceive them into falsely believing *something else*, namely, that I *believe* that what I am saying is true. However, if we modify the example, we can generate a clear case of lying in which the liar doesn't intend to deceive the members of the court about anything. Suppose that I know that the crime and my presence at the scene of the crime were recorded on a video camera so that there is almost no chance that the jury will believe that I believe what I am saying. Further, suppose that (i) I am confident that I will not be charged with perjury, even if everyone believes that I am lying and (ii) I am

indifferent to other people's opinion about my character. Given all of this, I do not intend to deceive anyone into thinking that I believe what I am saying.

In the example in which I am the witness, I lie by making a false statement, even though I have no intention of deceiving anyone about anything. This case demonstrates that, at least sometimes, there is a performative act involved in making a statement. Sometimes we want to "go on record" and claim the truth of a particular statement. When we go on record to claim something, we warrant the truth of what we say. It is possible for me to go on record to claim the truth of something that I know is false without intending to deceive anyone. In my witness example, I go on record to claim that I did not see the defendant commit the crime, in order to avoid being killed or harmed. (In a case of bribery, I might lie by testifying and by saying something false "on the record" without having any intention to deceive others.)

We can also imagine cases in which someone "goes on record" and warrants the truth of something he knows to be false in order to avoid institutional punishment of one sort or another. Suppose that a college Dean is cowed whenever he fears that someone *might* threaten a law suit and has a firm, but unofficial, policy of never upholding a professor's charge that a student cheated on an exam unless the student confesses in writing to having cheated. The Dean is very cynical about this and believes that students are guilty *whenever* they are charged. A student is caught in the act of cheating on an exam by copying from a crib sheet. The professor fails the student for the course and the student appeals the professor's decision to the Dean who has the ultimate authority to assign the grade. The student is privy to information about the Dean's *de facto* policy and, when called before the Dean, he (the student) affirms that he didn't cheat on the exam. He claims that he was not copying from the crib sheet. He claims that he inadvertently forgot to put his "review sheet" away when the exam began and that he never looked at it during the exam. The student says this on the record in an official proceeding and thereby warrants the truth of statements he knows to be false. He intends to avoid punishment by doing this. He may have no intention of deceiving the Dean that he didn't cheat. (If he is really hard-boiled, he may take pleasure in thinking that the Dean knows that he is guilty.) An objector might continue and say that surely the student intends to deceive *someone*—his parents or future employers. However, this isn't necessarily the case. The student may not care whether or not others know that he cheated (he might freely and cynically tell others about his cheating), but simply want to have his grade changed. (If it helps, suppose that the will of a deceased relative calls for the student to inherit a great deal of money if he graduates from the college in question with a certain grade-point average.) These two cases of lying without intending to deceive others are crucial for my argument in this paper. Later in the paper (sections 10 and 11), I will return to these two cases and explain why my definition counts them both as cases of lying.

Let me digress briefly to explain the notion of an intentional act. Roughly, the intended consequences of an act are those that one either: i) aims at for their own sake, or ii) foresees and regards as part of a causal chain leading to consequences that one desires or aims at for their own sake.⁹ Consider the following example. The leader of nation X plans an air attack on armaments factories in nation Y. The ultimate aim of the attack is to end the death and suffering caused by the war. The leader of X regards the destruction of these factories as a necessary means to ending the war and the attendant suffering. The leader foresees that the attack will kill civilians living in areas adjacent to the factories.¹⁰ The death of these people is not a means that (causally) contributes to the goal of ending the war. Rather, it is an unavoidable “side effect” of the bombing. This consequence is not “intended,” but merely foreseen. “Terror bombing,” on the other hand, involves the intention to kill innocent civilians. Suppose that the leader of a nation at war orders the bombing of an enemy city. S/he aims to end the war by demoralizing the civilian population of the enemy country.¹¹ Demoralizing the civilian population is to be accomplished by killing large numbers of civilians. Here, the killing of the civilians is not just a side effect but an essential part of the causal chain leading to the ultimate goal of the bombing. Leaders who order the bombing of cities for these reasons *intend* to kill civilians. (This holds even if the leaders in question don’t desire the killing of the civilians as an end in itself and even if they deeply regret the killing of the civilians.)

7. Chisholm and Feehan’s Definition

In their well-known paper, “The Intent to Deceive,” Chisholm and Feehan define lying as follows:

[Person] *L* lies to [person] *D* = df There is a proposition *p* such that (i) either *L* believes that *p* is not true or *L* believes that *p* is false and (ii) *L* asserts *p* to *D*.¹²

This definition makes use of the concept of asserting a proposition. Chisholm and Feehan define this notion as follows:

L asserts *p* to *D* = df *L* states *p* to *D* and does so under conditions which, he believes, justify *D* in believing that he, *L*, not only accepts *p*, but also intends to contribute causally to *D*’s believing that he, *L*, accepts *p*.¹³

They comment on this definition as follows:

A statement that is made merely in play, or in irony, is thus not an assertion, for the speaker is not justified in taking it seriously. When one speaks ironically, one plays oneself down, but one gives a “signal of irony”—perhaps by means of

tone and choice of words—and this signal indicates that one is not to be taken seriously and hence one is not making an assertion.¹⁴

The example in which I am the witness is also a counterexample to Chisholm and Feehan’s definition. The witness clearly lies in this example, but their definition doesn’t count this statement as a lie. Since the defendant’s crime was videotaped, the witness knows that the jury won’t be justified in believing that he believes (accepts) what he says. This objection can be strengthened if we further stipulate that the witness is known to be an extremely dishonest person. Given all of this, the witness knows that the jury will not be justified in believing that he believes (accepts) what he says. Chisholm and Feehan’s definition has the very odd and unacceptable result that a person who is notoriously dishonest couldn’t tell lies to those he knows distrust him. Their definition implies that it is self-contradictory to say that I lie when I know that others know that I am lying (and thus are not justified in believing that I believe (accept) what I say).¹⁵

8. My Definition of Lying (A Preliminary Version)

Certain features of my definition are hinted at by W. D. Ross. Ross holds that all lies are *prima facie* wrong because they are instances of promise-breaking; it is *prima facie* wrong to lie, because to lie is to break an implicit promise to tell the truth that one makes whenever one uses language to make statements.¹⁶ Ross himself does not define lying. However, his view implies that all lies involve breaking a promise to speak (or communicate) truthfully. I agree with Ross that lying involves breaking a promise (or something very similar to a promise) to communicate truthfully.¹⁷ The expression “it’s true that” is redundant in the context of ordinary statements. Consider the following:

- i) The sky is blue.
- ii) It’s true that the sky is blue.

i) and ii) mean exactly the same. In ordinary contexts, the expression “it’s true that” adds nothing to the meaning of a statement. This is so because, in ordinary contexts, when one makes a statement one is understood to be warranting its truth.

Taken together with our earlier criticisms of L1 and L2, the view that making a statement (ordinarily) involves warranting that what one says is true suggests the following definition of “lying”:

- L3. A person S tells a lie iff: 1. S makes a false statement x, 2. S believes that x is false or probably false (or, alternatively, S doesn’t believe that x is true), and 3. S states x in a context in which S thereby warrants the truth of x.

This definition avoids the earlier counterexamples. It counts the witness's testimony in court as a lie. When the witness testifies in court, he warrants the truth of what he says by explicitly promising to tell the truth under oath. L3 allows us to say that it is possible for me to lie to you when I know that you know that I am lying so that I have no hope of deceiving you either about the truth of what I say or about what I believe. (For more on the implications of my definition for the cases from section 6, see sections 10 and 11.)

9. Digression: "The Transparency Thesis"

The view that the expression "it is true that" adds nothing to the meaning of a statement is what philosophers of language call the "transparency thesis." The classic statements of the transparency thesis are found in Frege¹⁸ and Frank Ramsey. Ramsey writes:

"It is true that Caesar was murdered" means no more than that Caesar was murdered, and "It is false that Caesar was murdered" means no more than that Caesar was not murdered.¹⁹

Strawson offers a noteworthy criticism of the transparency thesis in his essay "Truth."²⁰ Strawson argues that "x" and "it's true that x" cannot always be used interchangeably. For example, suppose that I say that Ingrid is having an extramarital affair and you deny it. My responding with "But it's *true* that she is having an affair," can constitute a stronger, more emphatic response than simply repeating "she is having an affair." In many borderline cases, it is unclear whether or not making a statement involves warranting its truth. In such cases, saying that x is true warrants the truth of x, but merely saying that x (without saying that x is true) does not. For example, suppose that I know of a humorous and improbable fact about Judy. I wish to state this fact and warrant its truth in the context of a humorous "bull-session." Simply stating the fact in this situation probably does not constitute warranting its truth. In order to accomplish this it may be necessary for me to say something like "It's *true* that ____; I'm not kidding." Strawson's criticisms of the very strong version of the transparency thesis according to which "x" and "it's true that x" can *always* be used interchangeably are consistent with my view that, *in ordinary contexts*, the expression "it's true that" adds nothing to the meaning of a statement. The fact that saying "it's true that x" sometimes constitutes a *stronger warranty of the truth of x* than just saying "x" is consistent with my view that, ordinarily, a person who states something warrants its truth (indeed, this fact presupposes the truth of my view).

10. The Concept of Warranting

A warranty of truth is a kind of guarantee that what one says is true. It is also a kind of promise that what one says is true. Following Austin and

Searle, contemporary philosophers generally take promising to be a performative act. To make a promise is to place oneself under an obligation to do something. This explains the difference between promising to do x and stating an intention to do x .²¹ There seems to be no satisfactory alternative explanation. However, special problems arise if we attempt to extend this account of promising as an analysis of warranting the truth of a statement. If one promises to do x , one is placing oneself under an obligation to perform a specific act (one is placing oneself under an obligation to do x). However, often when one warrants the truth of a statement, one is not placing oneself under an obligation to perform any *particular action* or kind of action. To warrant the truth of a statement x is not necessarily to place oneself under an obligation to make it true that x . For one is usually not in a position to affect the truth of the statements one makes. If I warrant the truth of my statement that the moon is 250,000 miles from the earth, I am not placing myself under an obligation to make it the case that the moon is 250,000 miles from the earth. Nor does warranting the truth of x place one under an obligation to perform acts of compensation in case x turns out not to be true and others are harmed as a result of relying on one's statements. There is no general understanding about what (if anything) we owe others when they suffer harm as a result of accepting false claims that we make.

In our linguistic community, and almost all others of which I am aware, there is a *presumption* that the warranty of truth is in force in any situation.²² *Convention* dictates that one warrants the truth of one's statements in the absence of special contexts, special signals, or cues to the contrary. In the context of a work of fiction or when saying something in jest, one is not guaranteeing the truth of what one says. So, for example, one is not implicitly guaranteeing that what one says is true if one says something manifestly false as a joke to a friend in an ironic tone of voice. In many cases, it is unclear whether those who speak or communicate can be said to be warranting the truth of what they say. For example, suppose that I deliberately make a false statement to a person whom I know to be very gullible, but give a very subtle indication that I might be joking (I might, for example, raise an eyebrow very slightly). In such a case, it is unclear whether I am warranting the truth of what I say and, therefore, unclear whether or not this should be considered a lie. Such cases should be considered borderline cases for the concept of lying. It is a virtue of my analysis that they count as such.²³ Many instances of bluffing are borderline cases of warranting/lying.²⁴

11. Conditions for Warranting the Truth of a Statement

If one warrants the truth of a statement, then one promises or guarantees, either explicitly or implicitly, that what one says is true. The idea of explicitly promising to tell the truth is straightforward and needs no explanation here. A witness who swears an oath explicitly promises that what she

says is true. One can also explicitly promise that what one says is true by means of such locutions as “I swear on my honor . . .,” or “I am going to tell it to you straight. . . .” In ordinary circumstances, statements are warranted to be true; the default is that a statement is warranted to be true. Because of this default warranty of truth, statements ordinarily invite trust and reliance.

A certain class of lies merits special attention and comment. Sometimes people lie when they know that others know that they are lying. I can lie to you in claiming that X, even if I know that you know that X is false and I also know that you know that I know that X is false. In such cases, I lie to you, even if I don’t intend to deceive you either about the truth of X or about what I believe. In these kinds of cases, I invite reliance on what I say by warranting its truth. It is possible for me to issue you an invitation, even if I know that you know that I know that you won’t accept the invitation (and even if I know that you know that I hope you won’t accept the invitation). I can invite my estranged Uncle to attend my wedding while knowing and hoping that he will not come. This invitation is not voided by our mutual understanding of the fact that I know and hope that he will not accept the invitation. Similarly, lies can and do invite reliance on what is stated, even if the liar hopes and knows that her audience won’t believe or rely on her statements.

The cases presented in section 6 illustrate several distinct sorts of reasons one can have for lying in such cases. It might be the case that one will benefit simply from making the false statement in question, e.g., by receiving a bribe or avoiding a harm that was threatened. So, one might lie by making a false statement in order to receive the benefit or avoid the harm. In addition, one might lie in order to “go on record” as saying something. The student in my earlier example from section 6 lies in order to go on record claiming to be innocent. He does this because he knows that this will make it less likely that he will be punished for cheating.

Convention dictates that there are circumstances that remove the default warranty of the truth for our statements. The great majority of the cases in which the warranty of truth does not hold involve storytelling or attempts to be humorous, indeed it is difficult to think of statements that are not warranted as true that do not involve either storytelling or humor. In the case of statements when there is clearly no intent to tell a story or be humorous the default warranty of truth is very strong. The student’s statement to the Dean is such a case; the default warranty of truth is very strong in this case. If the student’s response to the Dean’s questions include obvious winks and nods and unguarded nervous laughter, then the warranty of truth may be removed (or at least it is cast into doubt).²⁵ However, if the student “plays it straight” and looks grave and serious, then his statements are warranted to be true and count as lies according to my definition. It is not paradoxical or contradictory for me to promise you that a statement is

true, when I know that you know that I know it isn't true. I can promise you something, even if you and I both know that I won't keep the promise; I can also make a promise to you in bad faith even if I know that you know that I am making the promise in bad faith. In such a case, my promise invites your reliance, but you would not be justified in relying on what I say. Thus, my warranting the truth of something I say to you justifies you in complaining to me if it isn't true, even though it doesn't always justify you in relying on it.

Whether or not a person warrants the truth of what s/he says on a given occasion depends on the context and the relevant local conventions embedded in that context. Far too many possible contextual factors are relevant for it to be possible to state necessary and sufficient conditions for warranting the truth of a statement. However, the following observations help explicate the notion of warranting the truth of a statement.

- (i) Whether or not a speaker (communicator) warrants the truth of what she says is independent of her intentions. One can warrant the truth of a statement without intending to, and one can even warrant the truth of a statement contrary to one's intentions. The following example illustrates this. Suppose that I am asked to speak at two different banquets. At the first banquet I am asked to give a serious talk about the current political situation and the job performance of the new President of the United States. At the second banquet I am expected to give a humorous or satirical talk about current politics and political figures. I become confused about which talk is supposed to be serious and which is supposed to be humorous. I deliver my humorous satirical talk to the group that has asked me to give a serious talk. I tell them a story about the President having "broken wind" during a meeting with foreign dignitaries. I warrant the truth of this story to my audience, even though I don't intend to. I give my serious talk to an audience expecting a humorous talk. During my talk, I relate certain curious news about the President's health. The audience takes it to be a lame joke. Even though I take myself to be warranting the truth of what I say, I am not. Extending the last example further, suppose that I concoct a false, but humorous, story to discredit a political figure before an election. I intend to tell this story and warrant its truth to an audience interested in current events, but, unbeknownst to me, I am speaking to an audience expecting to hear political satire and humor. My statements about the politician are false, I know that they are false, and I intend to warrant their truth. However, my definition implies that I haven't lied, because, contrary to my intentions, I did not warrant the truth of my statement. In this case, I intended to lie, but failed to due to my failure to warrant the truth of what I said.

- (ii) Whether or not the truth of a statement is warranted to an audience is independent of whether the members of the audience believe that the speaker (writer) warrants its truth to them. One can be mistaken in believing that a statement is or is not warranted to one. Sometimes people are obtuse and fail to perceive that the things they are told are said in jest. In such cases, they may be mistaken in believing that the speaker (writer) warrants the truth of what s/he says (writes). Similarly, a member of an audience can be mistaken in believing that a speaker (writer) is *not* warranting the truth of what s/he says (writes). Suppose that a historical society and an association of comedians are both holding meetings in a particular hotel. I enter a conference room of the hotel expecting to hear a comedian perform. However, unbeknownst to me, the speaker in the room is a member of the historical society. As I walk in, the speaker is relating a humorous event in the life a well-known historical figure. Even though I don't believe that the speaker is warranting the truth of what he says, he is.

In many contexts it is unclear whether the speaker/writer warrants the truth of what s/he says. Many examples can be given to illustrate this point. Suppose that an English-speaking acquaintance from a non-Western country tells me a very bizarre story on April Fool's Day. I don't know whether he knows anything about American practices and understandings about April Fool's Day. In the absence of other contextual clues, it is unclear whether he warrants the truth of what he says. Suppose that a professor is well known for her animated, humorous, and Socratic style of teaching. She often says false things to her classes to see if they are attentive. When she does this, she berates her students if they fail to catch her. She begins her lecture with an improbable sounding historical anecdote. In this context, it is unclear whether the professor warrants the truth of what she says. In the course of Socratic classroom debates in which professors play the devil's advocate, it is often unclear whether they warrant the truth of what they say—philosophy classrooms are rife with this kind of ambiguity.

This kind of ambiguity is increased if the speaker (writer) and the audience are members of different societies that have different conventions and expectations about truth-telling and warranting the truth of statements. There are often contexts in which one party expects that what is said is warranted to be true and the other party does not.²⁶

12. Yet Another Revision

The foregoing example of a person who warrants the truth of a statement when he intends not to raises problems for my definition of lying. According to my definition, the speaker in the earlier example who mistakenly believes

that his audience is expecting a humorous talk tells a lie (albeit unintentionally) when he tells the story about the President's flatulence. His statement is false, he knows that it is false, and he warrants its truth to his audience. It seems counterintuitive to call this a lie, even if we stress that it is an unintentional lie. Our definition of lying seems to need another condition, namely, that it is not the case that the speaker takes himself to be not warranting the truth of what he says. The speaker in the present example does not satisfy this condition, because he takes himself to be not warranting the truth of what he says. With this additional condition, the definition reads as follows:

L4. A person *S* tells a lie iff: 1. *S* makes a false statement *x*, 2. *S* believes that *x* is false or probably false (or, alternatively, *S* doesn't believe that *x* is true), 3. *S* states *x* in a context in which *S* thereby warrants the truth of *x*, and 4. *S* does not take herself to be not warranting the truth of what she says.²⁷

13. A Complication and My Final Definition

Problems are created by cases in which statements are made to groups of individuals who have differing levels of knowledge and sophistication, so that the truth of a given statement on a given occasion is warranted to some, but not all, of the people to whom the statement is made. Consider, for example, a greatly exaggerated account of a past event told to a mixed group containing both sophisticated adults and young children: "The dog who was chasing me was huge; he was at least ten feet tall." (Note, I am supposing that the context of this is not just "a story" but an account of something that was alleged to have actually happened.) In such a case, one warrants the truth of what one says to the children but not to the adults. The very content of the narrative makes it clear to the adults that its truth is not being warranted to them. However, there is nothing one does and nothing about the context or content of what one says that removes the default warranty of truth to the children. We need to relativize our concept of lying and allow for the possibility that, in making a given statement or utterance on a particular occasion, one might be lying to some members of one's audience, but not to others.²⁸ I propose the following:

L5. A person *S* tells a lie to another person *S1* iff: 1. *S* makes a false statement *x* to *S1*, 2. *S* believes that *x* is false or probably false (or, alternatively, *S* doesn't believe that *x* is true), 3. *S* states *x* in a context in which *S* thereby warrants the truth of *x* to *S1*, and 4. *S* does not take herself to be not warranting the truth of what she says to *S1*.²⁹

14. Some Comments on this Definition

Condition 1 says that a statement must be false in order to be a lie. Whether we count a statement as true or false sometimes depends on the standards of

precision and accuracy we employ. For example, suppose that someone asks me what time it is. My watch is very accurate and displays the following time "10:01:15" (one minute fifteen seconds after 10). I tell the person "it's ten o'clock." Is my statement true? It depends on the context. If someone asks this question in a context in which it is understood by all that the answer needs to be extremely accurate and precise (e.g., an engineer at a radio station who needs to know when to begin broadcasting a program or an astronaut who needs to know when to begin a maneuver) then my statement is false. On the other hand, if I am asked this question by my wife while taking a leisurely walk on our vacation when neither of us needs to know exactly what time it is, my answer should count as a true statement. My concept of warranting proves useful for dealing with this issue. In some contexts one warrants what one says as true to a high degree of accuracy and precision. In other contexts, statements are not warranted to be true to a high degree of accuracy.

Some hold that a necessary condition for telling a lie is that communication actually occurs, i.e., that what is said is actually conveyed or communicated to another person.³⁰ (This could also be construed as a necessary condition for making a statement.) According to this view, I can attempt to lie, but fail, if I don't communicate successfully. Suppose that I speak to someone and intentionally say something that is false in circumstances which I know constitute warranting the truth of what I say. On the view in question, my utterance can't be a lie unless I succeed in communicating with the other person. If the person to whom I am speaking is deaf or doesn't speak the language I am using, then I haven't succeeded in making a statement to her and I cannot be said to have lied to her (although I attempted to). Or, to take another example, suppose that I am talking to you in a different room of a house so that we can't see each other. The conversation stops for half an hour. After this interval, I intentionally say something I know to be false intending to warrant the truth of what I say. But, unbeknownst to me, you have left the house (you are many miles away) and do not hear what I say. I am inclined to think that in this case I didn't lie to you, although I intended to. Others report very different intuitions about this case. I don't have any decisive arguments that settle this question. In any case, we can leave the definition of lying as it is. To endorse my definition we don't need to settle the question of whether making a (false) statement requires that one succeeds in communicating with another. This question concerns the proper interpretation of the first condition of the definition. The question is whether successfully communicating with another person is necessary for making a statement.³¹

15. An Objection: the Concept of Assertion

A number of the alternative definitions of lying discussed in this paper make use of the notion making an assertion. One might argue that lying should be

defined in terms of the notion of making an assertion rather than my concept of warranting the truth of a statement.³² Taking this suggestion, one might claim that the following is preferable to (and simpler than) my definition of lying:

L6. A person S tells a lie to another person S1 iff: 1. S asserts a false proposition x to S1, 2. S believes that x is false or probably false (or, alternatively, S doesn't believe that x is true), and 3. S does not take herself to be not asserting x to S1.

Whether or not L6 is a plausible definition depends on what sort of explanation of "asserting a proposition" is provided. Without a detailed account of what is meant by "asserting a proposition," L6 is vague and ambiguous. As some understand the concept of an assertion, asserting a proposition is roughly the same as warranting its truth. Given this, L6 is equivalent or nearly equivalent to my L5 and the details of my account of warranting the truth of a statement are still needed to give content to the concept of an assertion used in L6. L6 has a superficial appearance of greater simplicity created by the fact that it includes 3 clauses instead of 4.

If L6 is combined with a concept of an assertion substantially different from my notion of warranting an assertion, it does not yield an acceptable definition of lying. I will attempt to show that this is the case for the other alternative accounts of asserting a proposition presented earlier in this paper. Fried, Williams, and Chisholm and Feehan each define lying in terms of the concept of an assertion. I have offered criticisms of their definitions of lying. Still, we might ask whether any of their analyses of the concept of assertion yields a plausible definition of lying when combined with L6.

Fried. Fried writes: "As a first approximation: to assert X is to utter X in a context such that the utterance is intended to cause belief."³³ If we combine L6 with Fried's account of an assertion, we are committed to the view that in order for my stating X to be a lie I must intend that others believe X. However, this is not the case, for reasons that we saw earlier in sections 6, 10, and 11. I can lie even if I do not intend to cause you to believe what I say. L6 is not a plausible definition of lying when combined with Fried's concept of an assertion.

Williams. Williams defines what it is to assert a proposition in the following passage:

S utters sentence "S," where "S" means that P, in doing which either he expresses his belief that P, or he intends the person addressed to take it that he believes that P.³⁴

When combined with L6, Williams's concept of an assertion implies that a necessary condition of one's telling a lie in saying X is that either one

expresses one's belief that X or one intends to cause the person(s) one addresses to believe that one believes that X. This is also false for reasons we saw in sections 6, 10, and 11.

Chisholm and Feehan. Chisholm and Feehan define asserting a proposition in the following passage:

*L asserts p to D = df L states p to D and does so under conditions which, he believes, justify D in believing that he, L, not only accepts p, but also intends to contribute causally to D's believing that he, L, accepts p.*³⁵

When combined with L6, this definition of assertion implies that, in order to lie to you in stating proposition X, I must state X to you in conditions which I believe justify you in believing that I accept X and intend to contribute to your believing that I accept X. However, as we have seen, a notoriously dishonest person can lie to you in stating X even if he knows that you are not justified in believing that he accepts X and he knows that you are not justified in believing that he aims or intends to cause you to believe that he believes that X.

16. Reasons to accept my definition

Lying is a concept used in everyday language, and moral questions about lying arise in people's everyday experience. There are no compelling reasons to revise or reject the ordinary language concept of lying—at least the burden of proof rests with those who would revise or reject it. Therefore, consistency with ordinary language and people's linguistic intuitions about what does and does not count as a lie is a desideratum of any definition of lying. My definition provides a better account of our shared linguistic intuitions about what does and does not count as a lie than any of the alternative definitions considered in this paper. My definition also explains why many cases are unclear or borderline cases for the concept of lying. (In many cases it is unclear whether or not one warrants the truth of what one says.) My definition is near the mark in terms of ordinary language, but no definition can be completely consistent with everyone's linguistic intuitions about what does and does not constitute lying. People have conflicting intuitions about certain cases and certain issues, e.g., whether a lie must be a false statement.

In every language and culture there are contextual understandings about whether a given utterance or use of language should be taken to be a statement that is warranted to be true.³⁶ These understandings often determine whether or not an utterance or linguistic act constitutes a lie. One and the same utterance can be a lie in some contexts but not others. For example, a false utterance that would ordinarily count as a lie may not be a lie if it is uttered on April Fool's Day.³⁷ A sentence that would be a lie if it

appeared in a police report or history book, would not be a lie if it appeared in a novel.³⁸ J. A. Barnes holds that the best explanation of why such cases do or do not constitute lying is the view that lying requires the intent to deceive others.³⁹ According to Barnes, an utterance that is not intended to be a statement that purports to be true is not a lie, because it is not made with the intention to deceive others. Barnes's explanation is implausible for reasons given earlier in sections 6, 10, and 11. My definition provides a better explanation of this than Barnes's or any alternative definition. My definition also provides a good explanation of why there is often disagreement about whether a given utterance made by a member of one society to a member of another society constitutes lying. The explanation is that, often when members of two different societies interact, they don't share the same implicit understandings about how statements are to be taken in given contexts. A context that a member of one society takes to involve warranting the truth of what one says is not taken to involve a warranty of truth by a member of the other society.⁴⁰

Strawson's criticisms of the "transparency thesis" show that there are weaker and stronger ways of warranting the truth of a statement. To count as a lie, a statement must be warranted to a certain minimum degree, but some lies are warranted to a much greater degree. One's expressions of confidence or lack of confidence in the certitude of one's statements also strengthen or weaken the degree to which one warrants them as true. The strength with which a lie is warranted to be true is arguably relevant to its moral assessment. Perhaps the wrongness or culpability of a lie is determined, in part, by the strength with which it is warranted to be true. My definition of lying has the virtue of making perspicuous what is arguably a morally relevant consideration.

My definition doesn't beg any controversial moral questions about lying, e.g., is lying *prima facie* wrong? Is lying always wrong? My definition helps illuminate moral questions by identifying morally salient features of actions.

A final virtue of my analysis is that it makes sense of the common view that lying involves a breach of trust. To lie, on my view, is to invite others to trust and rely on what one says by warranting its truth, but, at the same time, to betray that trust by making false statements that one does not believe.⁴¹

Notes

* I am indebted to Bruce Russell, Joe Mendola, Bill Tolhurst, Kenton Machina, Mike Gorr, Al Mele, J. D. Trout, Chris Meyers, and Jean Tan for very helpful comments on many earlier versions of this paper. I have benefitted greatly from their criticisms and suggestions and thank them for giving so generously of their time. An earlier version of this paper was presented to the Illinois Philosophical Association in 2001; Bill Tolhurst was my commentator on that occasion.

¹ Perjury laws presuppose that a lie must be a false statement. Perjury is defined as lying under oath in court. The law counts someone's testimony as perjurious only if what she says is false. Therefore, the law presupposes that a lie must be a false statement.

² I owe this example to Bruce Russell.

³ *Oxford English Dictionary*, second edition (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1989).

⁴ D. S. Manison also criticizes standard dictionary definitions on these grounds. D. S. Manison, "Lying and Lies," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 47 (1969), p. 134.

⁵ Linda Coleman and Paul Kay argue that these three conditions give us an account of central or paradigm cases of lying.

According to Coleman and Kay, anything that satisfies all three conditions is clearly a lie. However, when a statement satisfies only two of the three conditions, it is not clear whether or not it counts as a case of lying. Linda Coleman and Paul Kay, "Prototype Semantics: The English Verb 'lie'," *Language* 57 (1981), pp. 26–44.

Arnold Isenberg defines a lie as a statement that one believes to be false and is intended to deceive others, "Deontology and the Ethics of Lying," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 24 (1964): 465–480. Isenberg's definition is equivalent to L1 without the stipulation of condition 1 that statement *x* is false. Bernard Williams proposes a definition of lying very similar to Isenberg's. Williams's definition is as follows:

I take a lie to be an assertion, the content of which the speaker believes to be false, which is made with the intention to deceive the hearer with regard to its content. *Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 98.

Unlike Isenberg, Williams stipulates that the liar must intend to deceive the others about the content of the statement in question.

Consider the following revised version of L1:

L1'. A person *S* lies or tells a lie iff: 1. *S* makes a false statement *x*, 2. *S* believes that *x* is false or probably false (or *S* doesn't believe that *x* is true), and 3. by stating *x*, *S* intends to cause others to believe *x*.

L1 and L1' differ only in their formulation of condition 3. They differ in cases in which a person intends to deceive others by means of stating something false (*x*) but does not intend to cause them to believe *x*.

⁶ Cf. Bok, *Lying* (New York: Pantheon Book, 1978), pp. 14–15.

⁷ Grotius holds that in order to count as a "falsehood" (lie), a statement must conflict with the rights of the person(s) to whom it is addressed (the person's right to know the truth). *On the Law of War and Peace*, trans. F. W. Kelsey (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1925) bk. 3, Chapter 1. (This passage is reprinted in the Appendix to Bok's *Lying*, pp. 263–267.)

⁸ Cf. Bok, *Lying*, pp. 14–15. Bernard Williams also argues against attempts to construe the concept of lying very narrowly in order to make plausible the view that lying is always wrong no matter what the consequences, see *Truth and Truthfulness*, p. 105.

⁹ Cf. Alvin Goldman, *A Theory of Human Action* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970), Chapter 3 and Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), pp. 153–156. Traditional "just war theory" makes much of the distinction between what is intended and what is merely foreseen. This distinction also has a very important place in scholastic ethics and is central to the "doctrine of the double effect."

¹⁰ Franklin Roosevelt and American military leaders were acting in exactly this way when they ordered massive precision daylight bombing attacks on German armaments factories and other military targets during WW II.

¹¹ The British night-time attacks on German cities and the American firebombing and nuclear attacks on Japanese cities at the end of WW II aimed at killing innocent civilians as a means to demoralizing the enemy and thereby diminishing their will to continue fighting. In this sense, it is arguable that Churchill, Roosevelt, and Truman were all "terrorists."

¹² Thomas Feehan and Roderick Chisholm, "The Intent to Deceive," *The Journal of Philosophy* 74 March (1977), p. 152. Chisholm and Feehan note that their definition is "essentially the same as that proposed by Frege" (p. 152). They quote the following definition of lying from Frege:

In 'A lied in saying that he had seen B', the subordinate clause designates a thought which is said (1) to have been asserted by A (2) while A was convinced of its falsity. ("Über Sinn und Bedeutung," in P. Geach and M. Black, eds., *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1952), p. 66.)

Charles Fried defends a very similar definition (he acknowledges his debt to Chisholm and Feehan): "A person lies when he asserts a proposition which he believes to be false" (*Right and Wrong* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 55; also see p. 59). He claims that in order to assert a proposition one must intend that it be believed (*Right and Wrong*, pp. 56–7). His definition implies that the intent to deceive others is a necessary condition of lying and is, therefore, open to the sort of objection presented above.

¹³ "The Intent to Deceive," p. 152.

¹⁴ "The Intent to Deceive," p. 152.

¹⁵ Chisholm and Feehan's definition implies that one can lie without making a false statement. I argue against this in section 2. However, since my argument there appeals to disputed intuitions, I don't rest my criticisms of Chisholm and Feehan on this point.

¹⁶ Ross claims that all moral duties can be reduced to six basic types. The first class of duties on his list is duties derived from one's own past actions. He makes a further division within this class. First, there are duties to make reparations for one's own previous wrongful acts. The other kinds of duties that rest on one's own prior actions are:

those resting on a promise or what may fairly be called an implicit promise, such as the implicit undertaking not to tell lies which seems to be implied in the act of entering into conversation (at any rate by civilized men), or writing books that purport to be history and not fiction. W. D. Ross, *The Right and the Good*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1930), p. 21.

Nicolai Hartman also defends the view that lying violates an implicit promise to tell the truth. See, *Ethics*, trans. Stanton Coit (Atlantic Highlands, N. J.: Humanities, 1975), p. 286. See also Charles Fried's *Right and Wrong*:

Every lie is a broken promise, and the only reason that this seems strained is that in lying the promise is made and broken at the same moment. Every lie necessarily implies—as does every assertion—an assurance, a warranty of its truth, p. 67.

¹⁷ I agree with Ross that every lie breaks a promise, but I am not sure that I agree with him that every lie breaks an *implicit* promise.

¹⁸ "My Basic Logical Insights," in *Posthumous Writings*, P. Long and R. White, trans. (Blackwell, 1959), p. 151.

¹⁹ "Facts and Propositions," in Ramsey, *The Foundations of Mathematics* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1931), p. 142.

²⁰ *Analysis* 9 (1949), p. 83–97.

²¹ See John Searle, "How to Derive 'Ought' From 'Is'," in *Theories of Ethics*, Philippa Foot, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 103–104.

The default warranty of truth is an example of what Paul Grice calls a "conversational implicature." Like other conversational implicatures, it is governed by rules and expectations understood by language users. (See Paul Grice, *Studies in the Way of Words* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), Chapters 2 and 3).

²² J. A. Barnes describes a case that is arguably a counterexample to the claim that there is a default warranty of truth for statements in every linguistic community. Barnes gives the following description of a village in Lebanon:

In this community liars are typically young men or children. Lies are told for fun, to trick one's friends. Success in lying depends on skill, but the final triumph comes when the liar reveals his lie to the dupe and claims victory . . . There is thus an attitude of playful competition towards lying, somewhat similar to the attitude towards tricks played on the first of April in some countries. Lying is indulged in sometimes for its own sake, without an instrumental motive . . . It is not surprising that in an environment of this kind there are special devices to indicate that what is about to be said is true, and not a lie. These markers for code switching are phrases such as 'seriously', 'will you believe me', 'without joking', 'by your life', and 'by your father's life' (J. A. Barnes, *A Pack of Lies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 70–71).

The last part of this quotation provides an indirect confirmation of my view. The fact that, in ordinary contexts, we (and most other linguistic communities) *do not need* special markers to indicate that what is about to be said is true, confirms the idea that in those communities there is a default presumption that what is said is warranted to be true. Given my definition of lying, many of the cases that Barnes describes as cases of "playful lying" are not genuine instances of lying, since the false statements in question aren't warranted to be true. This, I would suggest, is a virtue of my definition. The villagers Barnes describes have different understandings about when statements are warranted to be true than people in most other societies. This is the salient difference between their society and most other societies.

²³ It might be argued that the notion of warranting makes implicit appeal to the notion of intention. It has been suggested to me that "to warrant the truth of a statement is to make an utterance under conditions where *normally* the speaker intends that others believe him." This suggests that I have removed the notion of the intention to deceive from the concept of lying only to smuggle it back in under the rubric of the concept of warranting. Normally we intend that others believe our statements. It is difficult to imagine how it could be the case that the use of language involves the default warranty of truth if this were not the case. There would be no *point* in warranting the truth of what we say unless we sometimes intended that others believe what we say. There would be no point in having a *default* presumption that any given statement is warranted to be true unless we usually intended that others believe what we say. (The (or a) purpose of having such a warranty is to make it more likely that people will believe what we say.) I accept all of this, but it leaves untouched my earlier objection to the standard dictionary definitions of lying. According to these definitions, *a particular statement on a particular occasion* cannot constitute a lie unless the person who makes it intends thereby to mislead others. I believe that I have shown this to be untenable.

²⁴ See my paper "Second Thoughts on Bluffing," *Business Ethics Quarterly* 3 (1993), p. 317–341.

²⁵ It might not be possible for the student to lie to the Dean with the intention of causing him to *disbelieve* what he says by accompanying his statement with a series of winks and nods. The winks and nods may remove the default warranty of truth. For my purposes in this paper, I don't need to claim that this is possible. I only need to claim that it is *possible* to lie without any intention of deceiving others (about the truth of what one is saying, or about one's own sincerity, or anything else).

²⁶ J. A. Barnes gives numerous examples of this; see *A Pack of Lies*, p. 114 and elsewhere.

²⁷ Alternatively, we could say that in order to lie one must believe that one is warranting the truth of what one says. I believe that my condition 4 is preferable to this alternative condition, because there are many cases of lying in which the liar has no conscious beliefs about whether or not s/he is warranting what s/he says.

²⁸ Chisholm and Feehan also relativize the concept of lying in this way. Their definition is a definition of what it is for one to lie *to a particular person*. Although they don't explicitly say this, their definition allows for the possibility that one and the same statement could be a case of lying to one person but not a case of lying to the other.

²⁹ Those who don't share my view that a lie must be a false statement might wish to modify L5 as follows:

L5. A person S tells a lie to another person S1 iff: 1. S makes a statement x to S1, 2. S believes that x is false or probably false (or, alternatively, S doesn't believe that x is true), 3. S states x in a context in which S thereby warrants the truth of x to S1, and 4. S does not take herself to be not warranting the truth of what she says to S1.

³⁰ For example, "Lying," Frederick Siegler, *American Philosophical Quarterly* 3 (1966), pp. 128–136 and Charles Fried, *Right and Wrong*, p. 57.

³¹ There are some related issues and puzzles that should be briefly noted here. What should we say about statements that are successfully conveyed to others, but only long after they are made? Suppose that an historical figure writes many false things in his diary in the hope of misleading future readers and historians. The diary isn't read until 100 year later. When he writes this can we say that he is lying? Can we say that he *is* lying, but that his lying (now) depends on what will happen in the future? Suppose that a politician writes a false account in his diary hoping to mislead future historians. The diary is later destroyed and no one else ever reads it. Should we say that he intended to lie but failed to because his statements were never successfully conveyed to anyone else?

³² Bill Tolhurst is the first of several who made this suggestion to me.

³³ *Right and Wrong*, p. 56.

³⁴ *Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy*, p. 74.

³⁵ "The Intent to Deceive," p. 152.

³⁶ J. A. Barnes, *A Pack of Lies*, defends this claim at length and gives numerous examples.

³⁷ See J. A. Barnes, *A Pack of Lies*, p. 113.

³⁸ Cf. Barnes, *A Pack of Lies*, p. 166.

³⁹ Barnes, *A Pack of Lies*, pp. 15 and 113–114.

⁴⁰ Barnes gives numerous examples of this; see p. 114 and elsewhere in *A Pack of Lies*.

⁴¹ Cf. Chisholm and Feehan:

The liar would have his victim believe that, at the moment at least, the liar is someone in whom he may place his faith. Thus we may say, with St. Augustine: "No liar preserves faith in that about which he lies. He wishes that he to whom he lies have faith in him, but he does not preserve faith by lying to him" (Roderick Chisholm and Thomas Feehan, "The Intent to Deceive", p. 152). (The quotation from Augustine appears in "Christian Instruction," in *Fathers of the Church*, Volume 2, *Writings of St. Augustine*, Volume 4, trans. John Gavigan (New York: CIMA Publishing, 1947), p. 57.)

Also see Fried, *Right and Wrong*: "A lie invites belief in an assertion which the speaker knows to be false," p. 57.