

False Excuses and Moral Growth

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Abstract: In recent years, many philosophers and psychologists have adopted a surprisingly positive view of dishonesty, arguing that lying to oneself and others is a necessary, healthy, and moral strategy of everyday life. This paper examines the morality of one form of dishonesty: the false excuse, understood as deception of self or others disavowing wrongdoing so as to avoid harm to the self. Although honestly acknowledging misdeeds can be difficult, false excuses also entail significant risks, such as damage to relationships, slippery slopes of lies, and emotional harms. Less obviously, they also inhibit moral growth by concealing character flaws and diminishing motivations to change.

“I have done that,” says my memory. “I cannot have done that,”
says my pride, and remains inexorable. Eventually, memory yields.

— Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*

A puzzling trend in recent moral philosophy and psychology has been the proliferation of defenses of dishonesty. In the late 1980s, psychologist Shelley Taylor published highly influential work on “positive illusions” which claimed that humans suffer from enduring, widespread, and beneficial forms of self-deception.¹ Philosopher David Nyberg’s 1993 book *The Varnished Truth* flippantly denied the value of honesty with oneself and others in almost every area of life.² Charles Ford’s 1996 *Lies! Lies!! Lies!!!* sympathetically examined the psychology of lying and self-deception.³ And in 2001, Jeremy Campbell’s *The Liar’s Tale* argued that “for better or worse, lying... is not an artificial, deviant, or dispensable feature of life.”⁴ The arguments for these views are not as strong as they might initially appear, in large measure because they overlook the subtle, complex, and long-term harms of choosing falsehood over truth.

We find such harms in one familiar type of lie: the false excuse. *A false excuse is a deception of self or others disavowing wrongdoing so as to avoid harm to the self.* Examples of false excuses include a student’s pretended offense at his teacher’s suspicion of plagiarism, a woman’s accusation of a co-worker for her loss of important documents, and a wife’s rationalization of an affair. Faced with knowledge or suspicion of failing our own moral standards, false excuses promise protection from the wounds often incurred by honest acknowledgement of such failures to ourselves and others. Yet, as we shall see, such protection is illusory. False excuses risk morally significant dangers, including that of undermining our capacity for moral growth.

Concealing Wrongdoing from Others

Focusing for a moment on the deception of others, we tell false excuses largely for fear that knowledge of our wrongdoings will damage the good opinion in which others hold us. We do not want our friends to think us inconsiderate, our family to think us ungrateful, our co-

workers to think us lazy, or the police to think us criminal. Such negative judgments can end friendships, strain family relations, diminish prospects for a promotion, and even land us in jail. So once bad acts are done, it would seem prudent to conceal them through false excuses so as to maintain the trust and confidence in which others hold us. Yet such false excuses are also risky in at least three distinct ways.

First and most obviously, others might discover the true nature of even our most carefully-crafted false excuses. A revelation of dishonesty, like that of any other wrongdoing, can damage trust in a relationship by raising uncomfortable questions about one person's regard and affection for the other. If I find out that you lied to me about A, should I continue to trust your word about B through Z? This damage to trust may also spread to third parties who learn of the deception and justly wonder whether the liar has been and will be completely honest with them. Notably, if a false excuse fails, if the lie and the misdeed it conceals are brought to light, the loss of trust may be magnified because the lie constitutes "a separate offense from what it is intended to mask."⁵ Lying compounds the wrong of original offense; it adds insult to injury.⁶ So false excuses may be seen as a sort of double-or-nothing bet in which the stakes (both in risk and reward) have been raised by the deception.

Second, like any dishonesty, a false excuse may generate a slippery slope of lies. A single deception may not adequately quell all questions and doubts for all people; additional lies may be needed to prop up the original excuse.⁷ As Leonard Peikoff argues, each new lie along this slippery slope increases the risk of "detection and exposure by anyone with access to the facts."⁸ Such slippery slopes of deception substantially tax our attention, memory, and emotions—resources that could be used for more productive and pleasant purposes.

And third, dishonesty makes the problems in our lives more difficult to resolve in the long run. Tara Smith hits this point in writing,

Dishonesty postpones addressing the underlying facts, however distasteful, that led a person to lie. It deters him from taking steps to try to change certain facts or alleviate a problem... Often, the longer one neglects the problems one denies, the more entrenched and more difficult to correct they become.⁹

In essence, successfully deceiving others will not make our problems disappear.

In light of these three risks of false excuses—damaging relationships and reputations, sliding down a slippery slope of lies, and allowing problems to fester—we ought not take the choice to deceive others about our misdeeds lightly. But as we shall see, these fairly obvious consequences of telling false excuses to others are not the only ones worth considering.

Concealing Wrongdoing from Ourselves

Self-deceptive excuses are not merely erroneous internal explanations of our actions, but rather those erroneous explanations *that we know or suspect to be false*. Generally speaking, we maintain belief in the false excuse despite the contradictory evidence by purposefully minimizing our awareness of some or all of the relevant facts. Thus a corporate executive who falsifies earnings reports might avoid "explicit consciousness" of her moral failure by refusing to "spell-out" the nature of her act in relation to her fiduciary duty.¹⁰ Or she might nurture the self-deceptive excuse by "sharpening...[her] mental focus" on the exonerating facts about orders from the CEO, while "blurring [her] focus" on the implicating facts about her easy complicity with those orders.¹¹ Whatever the method, the basic aim of a self-deceptive excuse is to render the wrongdoing "unreal" to oneself.¹²

On a superficial level, self-deceptive excuses promise an uneasy truce with our misdeeds by whitewashing our moral history. They dull the harsh sting of the pressing emotions associated with honest acknowledgement of our moral failures, such as "guilt and remorse for

harming others,” “shame for betraying our own ideals,” and “self-contempt for not meeting even our minimal commitments.”¹³ They promise to preserve our self-image as reasonable and moral people by allowing us to continue to think well of ourselves. In the case of our corporate executive, by blaming the doctored earnings reports on orders from above, she both assuages her guilt for contributing to the collapse of the company and preserves her self-concept as an honest and responsible executive. The self-deceptive excuse also conveniently spares her the humiliation of amends, the expense of restitution, and the trouble of reshaping her moral character.¹⁴

Based upon such considerations, a surprising number of philosophers have defended self-deception as a natural, moral, and even indispensable means of maintaining positive self-image. For example, Robert Solomon claims that, in light of our “flaws and failings,” clearly understanding our thoughts, desires, and motivations can be “devastating to our self-image and sense of self.”¹⁵ David Nyberg maintains that “given the distance between what we are and what we wish we were, some amount of other-deception and self-deception is an essential requisite for carrying on.”¹⁶ The common refrain here is that self-deception is often necessary and moral because our basic human need to think well of ourselves cannot be satisfied honestly. These claims, however, fail to account for basic facts about the process of self-deception, particularly (1) that self-deception is unlikely to wholly insulate a person from disturbing reminders of the truth and (2) that self-deception cannot be contained and controlled to only the desired issues. These two considerations indicate that the immediate emotional relief provided by self-deception will often come at the steep price of longer-term emotional and cognitive harms. How so?

First, the arguments for self-deception all implicitly presume that it is a highly effective process, one that renders a person blissfully ignorant of painful truths for the foreseeable future. David Nyberg, for example, describes self-deception as a “gradual process” in which a belief is fully replaced by its contrary.¹⁷ Yet the self-deceptive excuser cannot simply wipe his memory of the wrongdoing clean—and even if he could, he would still be faced with the basic problem that the facts denied by the lie are often intimately related to facts still accepted as true. As a result, nagging doubts, unexplained evidence, and confounding reminders of the wrongdoing may creep into awareness on occasion despite great effort to remain ignorant. The news that friends are divorcing due to the discovery of an affair may remind the self-deceiver of his own infidelity, forcing him to push the unpleasant truth out of mind yet again. Additionally, those harmed by the self-deceiver’s wrongdoings may not play along with his pretenses of moral innocence; a former friend’s animosity, a spouse’s depression, or a child’s withdrawal can contradict and confuse his self-deceptions.¹⁸ Notably, any continued awareness of the wrongdoing whitewashed by self-deception is likely to be accompanied by uncomfortable doubts and painful feelings. So instead of eliminating the harsh emotions associated with moral failure, self-deceptive excuses may only drive them underground to fester and emerge in the future as deep-rooted, diffuse anxieties and fears.¹⁹

Second, the basic nature of self-deception is such that it cannot be contained and controlled—rationally or otherwise—to only desired issues. Indeed, no process aiming at “voluntary blindness, numbness, dull-mindedness, and ignorance” (as Nyberg puts it) can be carefully monitored and regulated by consciousness, for to do so would bring the unpleasant facts too much and too often into the spotlight of full, explicit awareness.²⁰ Surprisingly, the defenders of self-deception often recognize this fundamental difficulty. In *Vital Lies, Simple Truths*, Daniel Goleman writes that self-deception can lead us to “fall prey to blind spots, remaining ignorant of zones of information we might be better off knowing, even if that

knowledge brings us some pain.”²¹ He recommends that we find “a skillful mean” between truth and falsehood, but does not even hint at how to do so.²² In fact, such advice is impossible, for applying it would require awareness of both the self-deception and what it conceals. Again, the difficulty of isolating and limiting self-deception originates in the tension between the facts denied by the self-deception and those still accepted as true. Any active conflict between the true and false beliefs pressures the self-deceiver to either admit the self-deception or deceive himself further to preserve it.²³ So a student who cheats on an exam might tell himself that he just didn’t have time to study, but in order to make that excuse plausible to himself, he will also have to explain away the ten movies he watched in the week before the exam, the reading he failed to do during the semester, and his tendency to sleep through class. Satisfactorily explaining away these facts may require still further self-deceptions. Self-deceptive excuses thus risk a slippery slope similar to that found in the deception of others—but because a person cannot consciously and meticulously construct his self-deceptions in the way he can craft his lies, he is necessarily largely ignorant of and powerless to prevent its destructive expansions.

Self-deception about our moral wrongs is not a neat and tidy process with no effects beyond the belief of a single, isolated falsehood protecting self-image, as its advocates so often envision. It is unlikely to eliminate awareness of wrongdoing; it cannot be limited to only certain unpleasant truths. So self-deceptive excuses may often pose a greater risk to a person’s happiness and mental health in the long run than do the misdeeds they attempt to conceal.

Beset by Positive Illusions?

The philosophical arguments in favor of self-deception are fairly thin, but the psychological arguments about “positive illusions” developed by Shelley Taylor in the mid 1980’s seem more meaty—at least at first glance. Positive illusions are supposed to be mild but enduring forms of self-deception that bias the judgments of psychologically healthy people towards themselves in various ways. Negative information is not actively denied or repressed, but instead interpreted through “best possible light” filters.²⁴ So for example, when asked about themselves, most people focus on their strengths and omit or downplay their weaknesses. This positive slant is particularly strong in comparisons with others, as people tend to regard themselves not just as good, but also better than others—so much so that 90% of drivers consider themselves above average! In addition to forming such generous self-evaluations, people also seem to overestimate the extent of their personal control over life events and adopt overly optimistic views of their future. Taylor claims that the “creative self-deception” of such positive illusions is not psychologically damaging, but instead so integral to mental health that its loss or absence is associated with mild depression. As a result of this research, many psychologists have explicitly abandoned accurate perception of self and world as a criterion of mental health.

On the whole, the psychological data indicates that normal people’s judgments about themselves, their degree of control over events, and their prospects for the future tend towards the positive—at times overreaching the evidence or conflicting with the facts. However, self-deception motivated by a desire for positive self-image isn’t the only plausible interpretation of the data; a cognitive hypothesis of unintentional bias also fits the facts.²⁵ Overly lofty estimates of our driving skills, for example, can stem from information asymmetries, such as our lack of attention to other drivers unless their driving is dangerous and our limited knowledge of how our driving affects others. In other words, we can be unwittingly biased by the fact that we are well aware of our own aggravation with other drivers, but generally ignorant of their aggravation with us. Moreover, for any positive trait like good driving, half of all people are truly above

average—and the errors of those who misjudge do not taint the accuracy of those who judge well. The fundamental problem with the theory of positive illusions should be glaringly evident to any philosopher who reads Taylor’s original article, “Illusion and Well-Being,” as it fails to demonstrate that the overly positive views found in the test groups as a whole are the result of self-deception in any particular individual. And in fact, more recent studies suggest that illusory self-esteem is related to narcissism rather than mental health and that realistic self-assessment is coupled with high self-esteem in some people.²⁶

From a more philosophical perspective, even proof of the widespread use of self-deceptive excuses to preserve positive self-image would indicate little about the necessity or morality of such deception. Just because a violent man *can* rationalize beating his pregnant girlfriend as well-deserved in his own mind doesn’t mean that he *must* or that he *ought* do so. Furthermore, perhaps we should worry less about damage to self-image per se, as diminished self-regard may be a justly deserved consequence of wrongdoing. Violent abusers of pregnant women, after all, do not deserve to think well of themselves. And those who occasionally steal office supplies, callously spread rumors about acquaintances, and sometimes forget to feed the dog perhaps deserve to think a little less well of themselves for these failings. Positive self-image, in short, is not an unconditional moral good, deserved by all people regardless of moral character. From a more sympathetic perspective, we recognize that honesty about our moral failings does not require us to obsess about them—and that the work of moral redemption can itself be a significant source of pride. And in the end, people can avoid the honesty versus self-image dilemma by refraining from the immoral acts that motivate self-deception in the first place or by adopting more rational moral standards for life on earth.

False Excuses Versus Moral Growth

Turning now to the impact of false excuses upon moral growth, when faced with some form of wrongdoing or moral failure, we cannot simply blithely hope to avoid repetition of the wrong. We must take specific action to change our thinking, habits, and character. As part of that process of moral improvement, we must both acknowledge our bad acts and motivate ourselves to change. False excuses damage moral character by their capacity to undermine these two necessary preconditions of moral improvement, i.e. by blinding us to our moral flaws and diminishing incentives for reform.

The argument that false excuses may blind us to our character defects is fairly straightforward, at least in the case of self-deceptive excuses. Moral growth cannot occur in the abstract; we must identify particular deficiencies to be ameliorated. In other words, we cannot simply will ourselves to become better people; we must resolve to be more attentive to our children, more patient with our co-workers, more assertive in refusing burdensome favors, and so on. Self-deceptive excuses preclude such knowledge of particular defects, for we will not see any pattern of moral failures if we refuse to acknowledge the individual failures themselves. For example, a woman who rationalizes her malicious comments to a friend as merely blunt and honest will see no reason to be any more thoughtful or sensitive in the future. Unwillingness to admit our mistakes prevents us from correcting or learning from them.²⁷

Additionally, each individual self-deceptive excuse may promote habits of deceiving ourselves about our bad acts and thereby diminish our general capacity to identify moral flaws. For example: Self-deceptive excuses may reinforce self-deception as a “familiar and useful strategy” for avoiding unpleasant facts about ourselves—thereby honing our skills of denying obvious facts, explaining away contradictory evidence, constructing cover stories, and

suppressing natural curiosity.²⁸ They can establish a precedent in which the immediate desire for psychological relief from painful emotions trumps the facts, not to mention the demands of good moral character. They may promote “callousness towards the truth” when our positive self-regard is at stake.²⁹ They may erode “tendencies to open-minded reflection and self-scrutiny.”³⁰ They can encourage recklessness towards the possibility of future bad acts, for such wrongdoings will soon be a mere dim memory with the help of more self-deception. They can atrophy the skills of moral courage, emotional fortitude, and creative problem-solving that help us acknowledge and cope with moral failure. In these and other ways, individual self-deceptive excuses may incline us toward habits of self-deception, thereby degrading our general capacity to discern our character defects.

Although false excuses told to others do not directly undermine our power to identify our moral flaws, they may do so indirectly by fostering self-deceptive excuses. We may lose sight of the truth in an overzealous attempt to make the lie plausible to others. Our subconscious may, over time, reshape our memories in order to “harmonize past events with ... cultivated self-image.”³¹ We may use another’s acceptance of a false excuse as evidence of its validity in the process of deceiving ourselves.³² So even if we initially construct other-deceptive excuses with full knowledge of our deviance from the facts, over time the distinction between the truth and the lie may be blurred in our own minds.

In addition to concealing character flaws, false excuses also inhibit moral growth by diminishing the incentives for moral change that naturally accompany wrongdoing. By insulating us from our own and others’ negative judgments, false excuses waste the motivational force that such judgments often carry in the form of internal painful feelings and external penalties.

One of the most powerful incentives for moral improvement is the constellation of painful feelings naturally evoked by moral failure, such as guilt, shame, embarrassment, and remorse. By engaging in a process of moral redemption, including making amends and transforming moral habits, we can free ourselves from the burden of such painful emotions and prevent ourselves from repeating the experience.³³ Thus a hurtful remark to a friend may motivate us to be more thoughtful and sensitive in the future largely because we are consciously pained by the harm we caused her. A willingness to temporarily tolerate the painful emotions of moral failure is often an integral part of the process of moral growth. Alternately, we can choose to mask, diminish, and diffuse such feelings of self-reproach through false excuses. Self-deception dulls our feeling of having fallen short of our own moral standards; deception of others blinds us to having violated other people’s reasonable expectations of us. A hot-tempered father who falsely convinces himself and his wife that he maintained control in an argument with his teenage son shields himself from the dual emotional stings of failing his own standards and those of his wife—stings that that might induce him to exert greater control over his temper in the future. Relying on false excuses squanders the emotional incentives for moral development.

False excuse-making also corrupts our incentives for moral improvement by protecting us from the external penalties that others (often justly) impose upon us in response to a wrongdoing. The discovery of misdeeds can shake relationships, damage reputations, close off opportunities, and generally wreak havoc in our lives. By adopting a policy of honesty about our wrongdoings, the possibility of such negative consequences motivates us to choose a course of action wisely from the beginning. Additionally, we are doubly motivated not to repeat our misdeeds, lest we be judged callous and indifferent to harms knowingly caused. A woman who reveals a friend’s secret once may be excused as ignorant, but revealing the secret again, this time in full knowledge of the harms, will likely bring into doubt the sincerity of her friendship. By steering

us away from moral failure in general and repeated moral failure in particular, a policy of honesty about our bad acts encourages us to attend to the rightness of our moral principles and character. Conversely a willingness to use false excuses to evade the external penalties of our bad acts eliminates that motivational force.

False excuses may also diminish motivation for moral improvement by keeping us ignorant of the full nature and extent of the harms we cause. If aggrieved parties cannot explain to us the damage done by our wrongs, we will likely to underestimate the damage of similar actions in our future decision-making. Along similar lines, false excuses preclude taking advantage of the insight and assistance that others (particularly friends and family) can offer in the process of moral improvement.

So dishonestly excusing our misdeeds to ourselves and others inhibits the process of moral growth in a number of ways. By minimizing our knowledge of areas of moral weakness, false excuses conceal the necessity of and the opportunities for moral growth. They also diminish the positive motivational force of the painful emotions of moral failure and the penalties for wrongdoing imposed by others.

Defending Honesty

In the history of Western philosophy, honesty has traditionally been assumed to be of unquestionable moral value. While we might appreciate the deep respect for the truth which often motivates this assumption, the inadequacy of the traditional defenses of honesty has paved the way for many of the recent attacks on the virtue.³⁴ Historically, the most common argument for honesty (often offered as the only argument) is the argument from trust: dishonesty is wrong because it endangers the trust that makes good relationships (and thus society) possible.³⁵ False excuses turn this argument on its head and expose its limits, precisely because revealing wrongdoings can also seriously damage or even destroy a relationship. Generally speaking, justifications for honesty which focus upon the harms done to others lose their force when a deception is unlikely to be exposed and aims to benefit others. Honesty needs a firmer foundation than just “Oh, but you might get caught!”

In contrast, the arguments marshaled against false excuses in this paper, particularly the argument that false excuses impair our capacity for moral growth, are cut from a different cloth. They focus upon the harm the liar does to himself—even if never caught in his lie. These arguments are fundamentally egoistic, in that they appeal to the moral agent’s own long-range interests. So by way of closing, let me simply suggest that such egoistic arguments for honesty can and do provide a strong foundation for the virtue. Admittedly, the idea of defending honesty on the basis of self-interest will seem strange, even absurd to many people. Philosophers and laypersons often regard self-interest as essentially opposed to morality, such that the very purpose of ethics is the restraint of self-interest. I regard this view as fundamentally mistaken for reasons that I cannot address here. Nonetheless, I hope that the arguments for honesty about wrongdoings given in this paper indicate that a deep and rich understanding of self-interest can provide a solid foundation for this very important virtue.³⁶

Notes

¹ Shelley Taylor and Jonathon Brown, “Illusion and Well-Being: A Social Psychological Perspective on Mental Health,” *Psychological Bulletin* 103, no. 2 (1988).; Shelley Taylor, *Positive Illusions: Creative Self-Deception and the Healthy Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 1989).

- ² David Nyberg, *The Varnished Truth: Truth Telling and Deceiving in Ordinary Life* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1993), 10.
- ³ Charles Ford, *Lies! Lies!! Lies!!!: The Psychology of Deceit* (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press, 1996).
- ⁴ Jeremy Campbell, *The Liar's Tale: A History of Falsehood* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), 14.
- ⁵ Evelin Sullivan, *The Concise Book of Lying* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2001), 135.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, 136.
- ⁷ Sissela Bok, *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life*, 2nd Vintage Books ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), 25.
- ⁸ Leonard Peikoff, *Objectivism: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand* (New York: Dutton, 1991), 270.
- ⁹ Tara Smith, *Viable Values: A Study of Life as the Root and Reward of Morality* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), 166.
- ¹⁰ Herbert Fingarette, *Self-Deception* (Los Angeles: UC Press, 2000), 42.
- ¹¹ Annette Baier, "The Vital but Dangerous Art of Ignoring," in *Self and Deception*, ed. Roger Ames and Wimal Disassanayake (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), 54.
- ¹² Nathaniel Branden, *The Psychology of Self-Esteem*, 32nd anniversary ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2001), 44.
- ¹³ Mike Martin, *Self-Deception and Morality* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1986), 37.
- ¹⁴ Mike Martin, "Introduction," in *Self-Deception and Self-Understanding*, ed. Mike Martin (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1985), 30.
- ¹⁵ Robert Solomon, "What a Tangled Web: Deception and Self-Deception in Philosophy," in *Lying and Deception in Everyday Life*, ed. Michael Lewis and Carolyn Saarni (New York: The Guilford Press, 1993), 42.
- ¹⁶ Nyberg, *The Varnished Truth*, 88.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁸ George Serban, *Lying: Man's Second Nature* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001), 111.
- ¹⁹ Nathaniel Branden, *Honoring the Self* (New York: Bantam, 1983), 69.
- ²⁰ Nyberg, *The Varnished Truth*, 81.
- ²¹ Daniel Goleman, *Vital Lies, Simple Truths* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), 243.
- ²² *Ibid.*, 251.
- ²³ Daniel Putman, "What Exactly Is the Good of Self-Deception?," *International Journal of Applied Philosophy* 10, no. 2 (1996): 20.
- ²⁴ Taylor and Brown, "Illusion and Well-Being," 194.; Taylor, *Positive Illusions*, 126.
- ²⁵ Thomas Gilovich, *How We Know What Isn't So* (New York: Free Press, 1991), 78-9.
- ²⁶ Randall Colvin and Jack Block, "Do Positive Illusions Foster Mental Health? An Examination of the Taylor and Brown Formulation," *Psychological Bulletin* 116, no. 1 (1996): 9.
- ²⁷ Nathaniel Branden, *The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem* (New York: Bantam, 1994), 93.
- ²⁸ Marcia Baron, "What Is Wrong with Self-Deception?," in *Perspectives on Self-Deception*, ed. Brian McLaughlin and Amélie Rorty (Berkeley, CA: UC Press, 1988), 439.
- ²⁹ Solomon, "What a Tangled Web," 48.
- ³⁰ Baron, "What Is Wrong with Self-Deception?," 439.
- ³¹ Serban, *Lying*, 166.
- ³² Roy Baumeister, "Lying to Yourself: The Enigma of Self-Deception," in *Lying and Deception in Everyday Life*, ed. Michael Lewis and Carolyn Saarni (New York: The Guilford Press, 1993), 177, Ford, *Lies! Lies!! Lies!!!*, 263.
- ³³ Branden, *Honoring the Self*, 68.
- ³⁴ Nyberg, *The Varnished Truth*, 81.
- ³⁵ Bok, *Lying*, 18, Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Lewis White Beck, 2nd ed. (New York: MacMillan, 1990), 403, John Stuart Mill, "Utilitarianism," in *Utilitarianism and Other Essays*, ed. Alan Ryan (London: Penguin Books, 1987), 294.
- ³⁶ I particularly wish to thank Robert Campbell, Jason Walker, Christopher Robinson, Mike Huemer, Greg Perkins, Paul Hsieh, Arthur Silber, Will Thomas, Orson Olson, and Luc Bovens for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper. Surely, any errors are entirely their fault!