

The History of Lying
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Lying has been with us since we learned to talk. It has had a bad reputation from the beginning of civilization and has often been punished under the law. Humanity is going through a resurgence of lying, particularly in our own country, where it is endangering public grasp of reality.

This danger started when Kellyanne Conway, Counselor to newly elected President Trump, declared that there were "alternative facts" during a Meet the Press interview on January 22, 2017. She defended White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer's false statement that the crowd size at Donald Trump's inauguration was larger than the crowds at former president Obama's, despite photos to the contrary. There really are no "alternate facts," just lies.

The Washington Post Fact Checker counted a total of 30,573 false or misleading claims made by President Trump during his four-year tenure in the White House. In his first 869 days as President, Donald Trump said 10,796 things that were either misleading or outright false, according to CNN.

Since his electoral loss in 2020, Trump has continued to lie and has promoted the "Big Lie" that he was cheated out of winning the presidency because of massive voting fraud. Despite numerous authorities confirming President Biden's win, Trump has poisoned his political base with belief in this Big Lie. Some have resorted to violence, including an attempted coup to overturn the election on January 6, 2020.

Lying is contagious. A New York Congressman, George Santos, an avowed Trump follower, is a shameless liar who has enraged his constituents as the lies pile up every time he speaks. He has lied about his work history, education, mother's death, his heroic deeds, his religion, and even his name. Santos is the butt of public laughter and shames the Republicans who have failed to kick him out of Congress.

The world's first religious prophet, Zoroaster, a Persian, preached that there was only one god, not the many worshipped in his time. This god, Ahura Mazda, was the god of light (light being everything good and true) and he warned that his light had cast a shadow, the Devil, identified as "the Lie." Zoroaster's religion was adopted by the Persian Empire. Truth was practiced by believers until their empire was conquered by the Arabs, bringing a new religion, Islam. Islam permitted lying to save one's life, even denying belief if needed.

Christianity addresses lying in a provision that if one takes an oath under God to tell the truth, one would be truthful. Violating such an oath could be punished by God and civil law. Unfortunately, today, punishment for lying is rare, except under legal procedures (trials) and to government authorities.

Americans are reared with the story of George Washington, our first president, who did not lie to his father about cutting down a cherry tree, despite expectation of punishment. This is a moral myth, meant for instructing children. Adults appear oblivious today.

Other moral stories about lying include The Boy Who Cried Wolf, whose lies resulted in nobody believing him when a wolf actually did come.

In dictatorships today, people have no choice but to lie because there is no justice. Women in fundamentalist religious countries must lie to survive the brutality of husbands and religious authorities. In fundamentalist Islam, a woman's testimony in court is worth half of a man's. In cases of rape, it requires four female witnesses to validate a rape claim but only one male to accuse or deny the claim.

Our own country was once devoted to credibility. The public was informed by facts provided in our reputable newspapers and in television news programs. The vast majority of citizens agreed with the official facts and acted accordingly.

Today, a minority follow "alternate facts," lies, provide by our former president and his propaganda arm, Fox News. Unfortunately, it only takes relatively few idiots to resort to violence and a gullible minority to believe that an attempt to overturn an election was done by "patriots."

Lying has dire consequences. Society depends on citizens being able to trust one another and trust their government. Zoroaster was right.

684 words

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