

**Doug Olena**

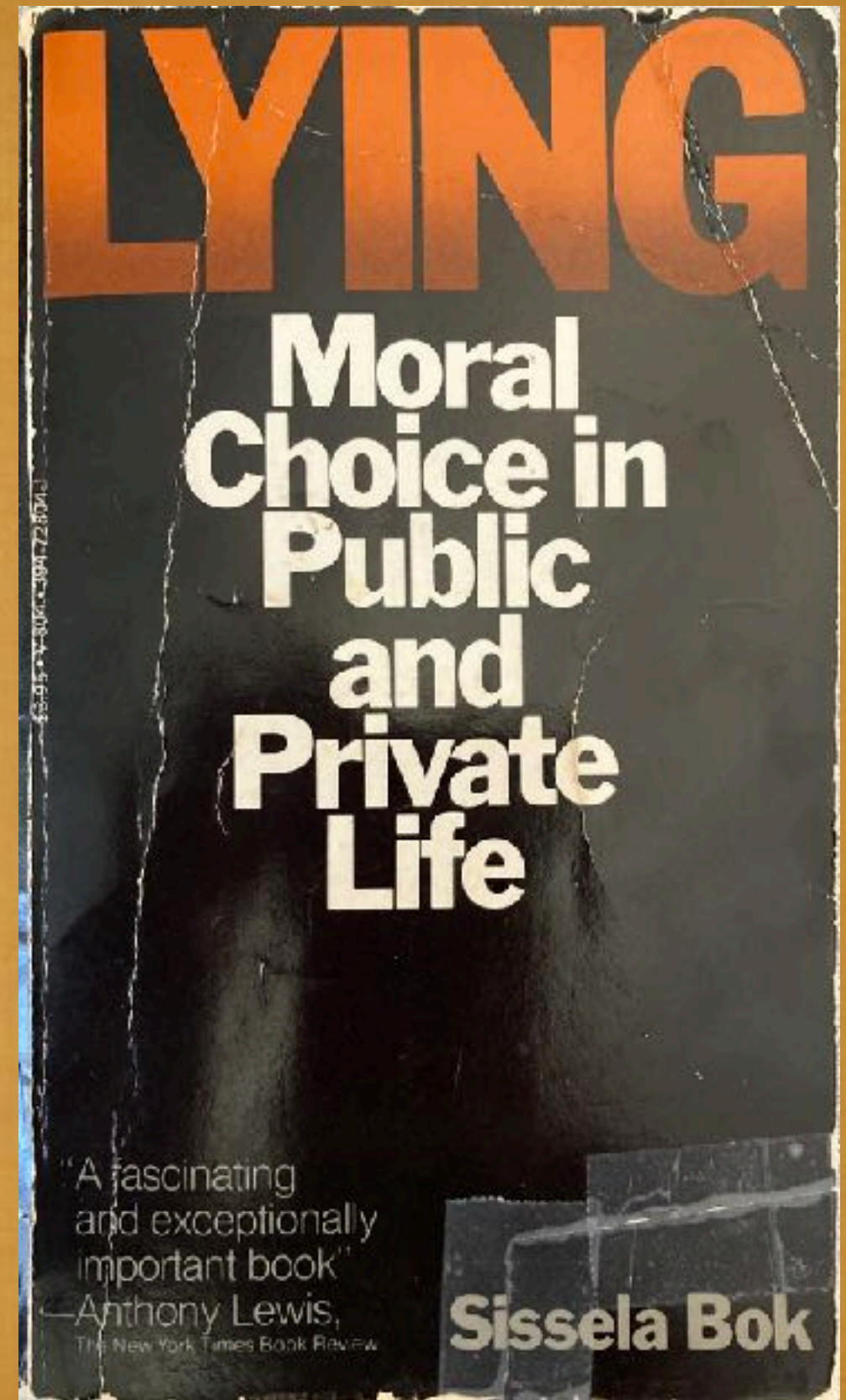
# **Lying & What Is the Shared Ethic?**

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LYING BY  
SISSELA BOK



# Intentional Deception

- 14 “Certain religious and moral traditions were rigorously opposed to all lying. Yet many adherents wanted to recognize at least a few circumstances when intentionally misleading statements could be allowed.”
  - Speaking falsely to thieves and those who don’t deserve the truth.
  - Speaking with mental reservations.
- 14 “Such definitions serve the special purpose of allowing persons to subscribe to a strict tradition yet have the leeway in actual practice which they desire.”

# Intentional Deception

- 14 When the rules were the strictest, loopholes were sought out most often.
- 15 Bok suggests that it doesn't matter whether the definition of lying is strict or broad, as long as we retain the right to morally evaluate "the intentionally misleading statement."
- Bok reiterates her "definition of a lie: an intentionally deceptive message in the form of a statement."
- To add to the lie itself are the many ways information can be distorted and biased to suit any one individual, group, or ideology.



# Intentional Deception

- 16 “The many experiments on rumors show how information can be distorted, added to, partially lost when passed from one person to another, until it is almost unrecognizable even though no one may have intended to deceive.”
- To avoid all these tangles, Bok will look only at clear-cut lies, where it is clear the speaker intended to mislead the hearer.
- “Therefore clear-cut lies will often be singled out and considered separately.
- What do such lies do to our perception and our choices? And when might they be justified?

# The Shared Ethic

Lee Smolin, scientist

# The Shared Ethic

- Lee Smolin in *The Trouble With Physics*:
- “*Science has succeeded because scientists comprise a community that is defined and maintained by adherence to a shared ethic. It is adherence to an ethic, not adherence to any particular fact or theory, that I believe serves as the fundamental corrective within the scientific community.*”\*

\*Lee Smolin, *The Trouble With Physics: The Rise of String Theory, the Fall of Science, and What Comes Next* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006), p. 301.

# The Shared Ethic

- “There are two tenets of this ethic:
  1. If an issue can be decided by people of good faith, applying rational argument to publicly available evidence, then it must be regarded as so decided.
  2. If, on the other hand, rational argument from the publicly available evidence does not succeed in bringing people of good faith to agreement on an issue, society must allow and even encourage people to draw diverse conclusions.”\*



# The Risk of Truth

- Deep-seated worry is often the reason for withdrawing commitment to truth.
- One's courage fails when a possible outcome promises contradiction of a core belief.
- But, if truth contradicts a core belief then that belief must be wrong, and should be abandoned even with attendant problematic consequences.

# The Shared Ethic

James Rachels, ethicist



# The Minimum Conception of Morality

- \* 14 The conscientious moral agent is someone who is concerned impartially with the interests of everyone affected by what he or she does;
- \* who carefully sifts facts and examines their implications;
- \* who accepts principles of conduct only after scrutinizing them to make sure they are sound;
- \* who is willing to 'listen to reason' even when it means that earlier convictions may have to be revised;
- \* who... is willing to act on the results of this deliberation.

# MORALITY W/O HUBRIS

- 191 “...THE VARIOUS THEORIES ARE NOT CONSISTENT WITH ONE ANOTHER, AND MOST ARE VULNERABLE TO CRIPPLING OBJECTIONS.”
- RACHELS WILL MAKE AN ATTEMPT IN THIS FINAL CHAPTER TO SAY WHAT A SATISFACTORY THEORY MIGHT BE LIKE.



# MORALITY W/O HUBRIS

- **191 A MODEST CONCEPTION OF HUMAN BEINGS**
- **191-192 “A SATISFACTORY THEORY WOULD... BE SENSITIVE TO THE FACTS ABOUT HUMAN NATURE, AND IT WOULD BE APPROPRIATELY MODEST ABOUT THE PLACE OF HUMAN BEINGS IN THE SCHEME OF THINGS.”**
- **ONE NEED NOT ACCEPT HIS VIEW OF HUMAN ORIGINS TO REQUIRE HUMILITY ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOCIETY.**
- **ARROGANCE ABOUT OUR PERSONS OR PLACE IN THE SCHEME OF THINGS HAS NEVER PROVIDED BENEFIT TO INDIVIDUALS OR HUMANITY.**

# MORALITY W/O HUBRIS

- **192 HOW REASON GIVES RISE TO ETHICS**
- **“BECAUSE WE ARE RATIONAL, WE ARE ABLE TO TAKE SOME FACTS AS REASONS FOR BEHAVING ONE WAY RATHER THAN ANOTHER.”**
- **193 “THE ORIGIN OF OUR CONCEPT OF ‘OUGHT’ MAY BE FOUND IN THESE FACTS.”**
- **“WE FIND OURSELVES IMPELLED TO ACT IN CERTAIN WAYS... AS A RESULT OF THINKING ABOUT OUR BEHAVIOR AND IT’S CONSEQUENCES.”**
- **“WE USE THE WORD ‘OUGHT’ TO MARK THIS NEW ELEMENT OF THE SITUATION.”**



# MORALITY W/O HUBRIS

- 193 IF WE ARE TO ACT ACCORDING TO GOOD REASONS, THEN REASON REQUIRES THAT WE ACT IMPARTIALLY TO ALL HUMANS.
- PSYCHOLOGICAL EGOISM IS NOT REASONABLE BECAUSE WE ARE BY NATURE SOCIAL CREATURES.
- SELF-CENTERED BEHAVIOR DOES NOT FIT ANY RECOGNIZABLE REALITY.

# MORALITY W/O HUBRIS

- 193 “SO THERE IS A PLEASING THEORETICAL ‘FIT’ BETWEEN
  - A. WHAT REASON REQUIRES, NAMELY IMPARTIALITY;
  - B. THE REQUIREMENTS OF SOCIAL LIVING, NAMELY ADHERENCE TO A SET OF RULES THAT, IF FAIRLY APPLIED, WOULD SERVE EVERYONE’S INTERESTS; AND
  - C. OUR NATURAL INCLINATION TO CARE ABOUT OTHERS, AT LEAST TO A MODEST DEGREE.”
- “ALL THREE WORK TOGETHER TO MAKE MORALITY... NATURAL FOR US.”