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Nothing But the Truth

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On the Definition of Lie

In my book on the Internet Court of Lies, I argue that the best definition of "lie" is the legal one that is used in the oath: "The Truth, the Whole Truth, and Nothing But the Truth."

The reason is that this definition does not rely on anything other than the definition of "Truth" and set theory.

Definitions that use words like "intent," "deceit," and so forth, just create hopelessly circular definitions. Since lies themselves are most manifest in subtlety in our natural language, it is best to keep definitions simple and to rely on a single word, not a mess of them, and the thing tried in the court, "truth".

That said, it is pretty easy to see a lie is 'not the truth' or 'not the whole truth', but what is 'nothing but the truth'?

As we will see, this is what the "nothing but the truth" set exclusion principle is all about. Lies can justify lies. Lies to justify lies are lies too.

I have written many articles on Medium.com using the rich environment of civil reporting and argument to explore lies and how they might be treated in the Internet Court of Lies.

As in some prior cases, I referred specifically to content in another article that illustrated "in the wild" the case I was exploring. The same is true here. It will also cause us to explore what in my book on lying I called by its technical name: "implicature" and the use of "labels" like "fiction" to keep the lying clean.

Also, remember that the Internet Court of Lies tries lies, not people who say or write them.

Part of the reason for that is that there are lots of good lies. As I say in my book, it is not just "Santa Claus" it is "Fiction." So, in choosing an example from Medium.com I am not saying the suspect lies there are bad or socially unacceptable.

Often, we might conclude something is a lie, but is socially acceptable, or, at least, not socially unacceptable. In this example, I am neutral on the social acceptability dimension. I will leave that to the imagined plaintiff and jury in the Internet Court of Lies.

Here is an excerpt from …

(How) Patriarchy's Winning the American Election

Patriarchy's Choosing a new Patriarch. Women are Being Marginalized. America Needs Better.

eand.co

> *"Do you remember when women led the pack in the running for the next American President? I do. And it was a beautiful and awesome thing — because they were the best candidates by far? It wasn't so long ago. So how did we get right back here…to this dismal place…yet another dude…of just the same kind…in the lead…all over again? How come patriarchy's winning the election…all over again?*
>
> *On the Democratic side, the top two contenders in the polls are currently…Joe Biden and Mayor Pete. The two men. The two white men. The two white men of a certain kind. Leaving a long trail of more brave, courageous, thoughtful, and bold women with far more transformative and intelligent ideas behind them.…while not having any ideas themselves at all…and being applauded and cheered for it.*
>
> *What the? Patriarchy strikes again, that's what the.*
>
> ***America's a classic patriarchal society. A band of brothers bonded together in violence, by aggression, through cruelty, for power.** If you think I exaggerate, consider for a moment that America has the highest incarceration rate in the world, the largest number of kids in concentration camps (what a phrase to have to write), or the least gender equality and progress in the rich world, all by a very, very long way. A patriarchy is a caste society of gender — where men are on top, and women beneath them — and America's a textbook example. That's why, for example, there are more CEOs named "James" than all women CEOs of blue chip companies. It's why America still doesn't have formal constitutional gender equal rights. It's why America has a higher maternal mortality rate than…Russia. The evidence is endless — if, that is, you care to look."*

So, for the sake of this discussion, let's file a suit in the Internet Court of Lies on the Fiat Lie "Patriarchy is Winning the American Election." The argument in the excerpt above contains some factual evidence but a lot of assertions that are inside the exclusion set of "nothing but the truth". Here I mark that up with [FACT …] and [LIE-T …] factually untrue and [LIE-WT …] for not the whole truth. I also use "->" for implicature comment.

> *[FACT Do you remember when women led the pack in the running for the next American President? I do. And it was a beautiful and awesome thing —]*
>
> *[LIE-WT because they were the best candidates by far?] -> asserting an assumed implicature*

[FACT It wasn't so long ago. So how did we get right back here…]

[LIE-T to this dismal place…]-> Another possible Fiat Lie

[FACT yet another dude…] -> Negative implicature, though factual

[LIE-WT of just the same kind…]-> Needs explanation, something is missing

[FACT in the lead…all over again?]-> Negative implicature, though factual

[LIE-T How come patriarchy's winning the election…all over again?]-> just a repeat of the Fiat Lie being tried in the Court

[FACT On the Democratic side, the top two contenders in the polls are currently…Joe Biden and Mayor Pete. The two men. The two white men.]-> negative implicature because of two men..two white men compare to just two white men but then why "white" for the patriarchy argument?

[LIE-WT The two white men of a certain kind.] -> What kind?

[LIE-T Leaving a long trail of more brave, courageous, thoughtful, and bold women with far more transformative and intelligent ideas behind them.…while not having any ideas themselves at all…and being applauded and cheered for it.] No factual evidence for both Biden and Pete.

[LIE-T What the? Patriarchy strikes again, that's what the.]-> repeat of the tried fiat lie again.

[FACT America's a classic patriarchal society.]

[LIE-T A band of brothers bonded together in violence, by aggression, through cruelty, for power.] no factual evidence

[FACT If you think I exaggerate, consider for a moment that America has the highest incarceration rate in the world, the largest number of kids in concentration camps (what a phrase to have to write),]

[LIE-T or the least gender equality and progress in the rich world,] -> "Saudi Arabia?" "China"? sorry but…not factually true.

[LIE-WT all by a very, very long way.] -> no evidence

> *[FACT A patriarchy is a caste society of gender — where men are on top, and women beneath them — and America's a textbook example.]*
>
> *[LIE-T That's why,] no evidence proving the asserted causation*
>
> *[LIE-WT for example, there are more CEOs named "James" than all women CEOs of blue chip companies.] -> this factual evidence is not sufficient*
>
> *[LIE-WT It's why America still doesn't have formal constitutional gender equal rights.]*
>
> *[LIE-T It's why] no evidence proving the asserted causation*
>
> *[LIE-WT America has a higher maternal mortality rate than…Russia.]*
>
> *[LIE-WT The evidence is endless — if, that is, you care to look.] -> need causal evidence that patriarchy is actually winning the election.*

This argument fails the "nothing but the truth" test and suggests that the Fiat Lie (i.e., the suspected lie) is indeed more possibly a lie. We then have to decide what the deceit might be, if there is an intention to deceive this way, what the motivation for the deceit might be, and whether this is socially acceptable or not.

The argument may be made that it is not obvious that these particular two candidates, Biden and Pete, are particularly patriarchal.

Indeed, at least one highly respected linguist and cognitive scientist at Berkeley, George Lakoff, argued in a number of his books (see Amazon) that the difference between Democrats (Liberals) and Republicans (Conservatives) is that Republican believe that government should be 'absolute control by a father figure' 'patriarchal' while Democrats believe that government should be 'controlled by consensus' 'matriarchal'. Differences in personal experience lead people, of either gender, to one view or another. I find his arguments better founded (read his books). Just sayin.

That said, the Internet Court of Lies is just to judge that the tried Fiat Lie is not a lie, or if it is, then how it is not the truth, not the whole truth, or nothing but the truth.

No matter what, the case made leaves it a lie as "nothing but the truth" since the supporting context is full of other Lies and Fiat Lies. In effect, the judgement would be that the Fiat Lie is a Lie, but there is little evidence for malicious intent, intention to lie, or evil motivation.

It is probably socially acceptable for some, and not for others as long as we agree, at the very least, it is a 'nothing but the truth' lie.

So, barring a better defense than the one given, it is no longer a Fiat Lie, it is not the truth, it is a Folk Lie. It is not a particularly serious one, and might well reflect differences of opinion.

By the way, in a different context, the sentence "Patriarchy is Winning the American Election" might well be judged True. The Internet Court of Lies only judges Fiat Lies … assertions that are suspected to be lies.

It is the immediate context also written by the person asserting it that settled the case that this was a lie in the way it was meant. The context contained lies to back the fiat lie. A better context might have settled it as true.

However, the Internet Court of Lies tries Fiat Lies, not people. We cannot tell someone to do something different.

In my book I point out that we have dealt with this problem before with labels, like "Fiction" to make combinations of lies and truths acceptable.

However, this article is clearly not non-fiction reporting, but an opinion piece that is a mixture of truths and lies. So, the Court may order a label be suggested to clarify this. Perhaps "A Partly Factual Opinion".

The Court could assert that if this lie is so labelled, the lie would be socially acceptable, not poorly motivated, not badly intended, not intended to deceive, and only a little bit deceiving.

So, in having looked at this Fiat Lie through the eyes of the Internet Court of Lies, we could now be safer from this Fiat Lie since …

Fiat Lies are Genocide on the Human Race

The Internet Court of Lies

medium.com

What is missing in my analysis in this article is that the Internet Court of Lies would open dialogue among a group of people, including jurors, and allow a counter suit by anyone

that wanted to take the position that the assertion is in fact true and bring in better, more truthful, evidence of its truth. And this time, “Nothing But the Truth.”

That seems unlikely to succeed since we are trying the lie and its context which themselves are truly appearing in the media and have truly appeared. The case may be deemed adjudicated with the requirement for the label “A Partly Factual Opinion”.

Other suits brought to the Internet Court of Lies may request to be part of the class of such lies that are “Partly Factual Opinions”.

Anyone who wants to make this case on some other piece and have that case judged by the Internet Court of Lies, may find, through the miracle of Artificial Intelligence assist confirming the claims such as what I have done above. Then accepted immediately to the already adjudicated class of “Partly Factual Opinions.” These are similarly socially acceptable with that label, not poorly motivated, not badly intended, not intended to deceive, and only a little bit deceiving.

Again, spinning forward in time a bit, perhaps there are already a thousand such suits already found to be members of this class and documented by the Internet Court of Lies.

In this situation, the adjudication of the new case, with AI assist, could be a few seconds, not a few weeks as would be the situation for manual Court processing, or a few years as would be the case in a regular court of law that seeks civil or social damages from people.

The label itself is truthful and the lie declared a good lie in context like “Fiction” but not exactly fiction in this case, but a partly factual opinion, which is not bad.

The Court might also create or update a Wikipedia encyclopedia page describing “Partly Factual Opinion” as a type of Fiat Lie so everyone can notice that a label like this can make a partly factual opinion more acceptable on the Internet and other Media. If the label is used, a suit attempted could still be adjudicated to this class suit instantly just to have the Court confirm the label for that article is what the Court would agree is the right label.

The purpose of the Internet Court of Lies is to provide a place where enforced moderated dialogue about lies can temper harmful lying in the Media and on the Internet. The content publishers can use the findings of the court to assist them in how they handle suspect content. The Court does not direct them. The only law the Court requires is free speech and thereby the right to have an open dialogue on suspect, Fiat, lies.

I discuss this use of labels to clarify lies to be socially acceptable in more detail in my book, “How to get your (good) lies back: The Internet Court of Lies” on Amazon in Kindle, Audible, and Paperback: https://www.amazon.com/How-Get-Your-Lies-Back-ebook/dp/B07Q2DNJJK/ A lot of this detail is explored in my articles written in Medium.com for the wonderfully rich, civil, natural language environment that exists on Medium.com.

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