A Ruse By Any Other Name

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Acknowledgements

Introduction

> "I honestly beleave it iz better tew know nothing than two know what ain't so."
> [Original colloquial spelling]
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> **Billings (1874, p. 286)**

If one reads the websites of many professional magicians, one soon encounters widespread claims of expertise in "deception". Many magicians claim that they are a "Deception Expert", a "Deceptionist", a "Master Deceptionist" (presumably, somebody who has advanced beyond the level of mere "Deceptionist"?), a "Master of Deception", a "Deception Artist", or even a "Master of the Deceptive Arts". They advertise shows with titles like "Deception", "Beyond Deception", "An Evening of Deception", and "The Art of Deception". And the association between magic and deception has been further perpetuated by the 2018 ABC show 'Deception', about a magician who is recruited by the FBI to work as a consulting illusionist, helping them to solve crimes.

Why is it that so many magicians claim to have expertise in deception as opposed to, say, magic? Are such claims valid? Have the performers who make these claims ever studied, or even considered, deception as a topic distinct from magic? Do they understand the relationship between magic and deception? And can they even define what deception is?

This series of articles intends to help magicians develop a better understanding of deception so that they can advance their professional practice. The articles draw from the author's career-long cross-disciplinary study of the topic and will discuss deception as a generalised phenomenon that is independent of, and transcends, domain. The series invites readers to consider more deeply the relationship between magic and deception, the reasons why the study and practice of magic provide only partial insights into the broader field of deception, and how a more comprehensive understanding of the topic of deception can inform and advance the theory, study and practice of magic.

This introductory article seeks to define and bound the topic of deception and explores some of its core characteristics.

The Ubiquity of Deception

> "Deception is everywhere".
>
> **Artist Jim Sanborn, creator of cryptographic artwork for the CIA (in Zetter, 2010)**

Deception exists throughout life. It occurs at all levels from the microbial to the geopolitical, and in every environment, including terrestrial, aquatic, and airborne settings. Bacteria employ molecular mimicry to trick their hosts into letting them enter cells so that they can survive long enough to reproduce. Plants use scent and visual mimicry to attract, predate on, and pollinate using insects, and employ a wide variety of different forms of deception, for survival and reproduction. Deception is used by fish, reptiles, amphibians, arthropods, birds and mammals, with many different systems of deceptive signalling and behaviour that occur across a broad swathe of the electromagnetic spectrum. Children learn to lie at an early age, and the emergence of plausible lying is indicative that they are employing higher-level cognitive functions, including theory of mind (the ability to conceive the world from the perspective of others), and the construction of narrative - both skills that are fundamental to all human deception.

Deception occurs in almost every area of human endeavour, including advertising and marketing, archaeology, art, confidence tricks, fashion, forgery, fraud, gambling, health, intelligence, linguistics, military deception, music, packaging, politics, practical jokes, the psychic industry, science, social engineering, special effects, sport (as a legitimate tactic,

and as cheating), theatre, and many other areas. And yes, deception also occurs in magic. Increasingly, deception is becoming highly prevalent in cyberspace, where humans fool each other, humans are fooled by software, software is fooled by humans, and software is fooled by other software.

Deception is sometimes malevolent, resulting in the target (i.e. the focus or object of the deception) suffering some form of disadvantage, such as a scam that steals their money. However, what is generally less well appreciated is that deception can also be benevolent, wherein the target benefits from being deceived. Examples of benevolent, pro-social deception occur in art, comedy, drama, education, entertainment, fashion, beauty, make-up, gambling, magic, medicine, parenting, practical jokes, sport, storytelling & fiction, theatre, *trompe l'oeil*, visual effects, white lies, etc. For example, in a pharmaceutical application, a foul-tasting and inedible cough mixture might be 'repackaged' using pleasant flavouring as a 'wrapper', so that the medicine becomes palatable and can be ingested by a patient to treat the symptoms of their cough. Interestingly, the deceptive strategies employed in all such benevolent applications are precisely the same as those used within cases of malevolent deception. This recurrence of strategy raises a range of important issues concerning the ethics of deception, that may form the basis of a future article.

From the partial selection of domains identified above, one can begin to appreciate the vast span of environments and forms in which deception occurs to create an advantage for the deceiver, and often for the target too. Before diving deeper into the characteristics of deception, however, let us first define a few terms.

Defining Deception

When seeking to understand what deception is, a perhaps obvious place to start would be a dictionary. However, dictionaries turn-out to be surprisingly weak sources for those seeking clarity on the topic. For example, the Oxford Dictionary of English defines deception as:

> "[To] deliberately cause (someone) to believe something that is not true, especially for personal gain."
> **Oxford English Dictionary (2016)**

This definition falls short in several respects. First, it implies that truth or falsehood is a binary either-or state (i.e. things are true, or not true), and does not consider the possibility of varying degrees of truth, partial truths, subjective truths, contested truths, and unknown truths (for an excellent exposition of the complex nature of truth, see MacDonald, 2018). The second problem is that the definition cannot accommodate situations in which a deceiver wishes their target not to believe a true situation. The definition, therefore, is unable to accommodate situations in which an entity is operating covertly, and wants the target to have no suspicion, let alone belief as to their real identity or behaviour. A third, more fundamental problem with this definition is that it is entirely feasible to deceive a target without lying and by communicating using nothing but the truth. This form of deceptive strategy is referred to as 'paltering' (Rogers et al., 2017), and can be lingual or temporal. This important and often overlooked fact highlights the limited utility and value of lying and lie-detection paradigms for making sense of the broader field of deception.

In the context of a magic routine, for example, the performer might have a card selected by a spectator, memorised by them, and then returned to the deck. The selection is controlled to the top of the deck, at which point the performer announces "I swear I have no idea what your card is…" moments before he glimpses the selection, and then goes into a regular overhand shuffle. "I also have no idea where your card is in the deck. I swear I'm not keeping track of it. This is a real shuffle, and I promise that I will not try to sneak a look to see what your card is. However, if you can concentrate on your card, I will see if I can tell you what you are thinking of." All of these statements are 100% true and constitute an example of temporal paltering. In this case, truthful statements expire just after they have been

communicated faithfully, thereby creating an understanding in the head of the target that is itself based on expired (and not current) truth.

Other domains in which deception occurs employ their own localised definitions, but these are often specific to application and do not generalise well to deception more broadly. They also often have other inherent problems - for example, military definitions of deception often fail to distinguish deception from influence, and a number define deception as being prejudicial to the interests of a target. As discussed earlier, deception can, in many applications, intentionally be advantageous to a target.

Some years ago, the author formulated a working definition of deception that sought to address these concerns and set the notion of deception against a more contemporary, pragmatic and utilitarian psychological foundation (Henderson, 2011). Over the intervening years, the definition has remained extant in the face of extensive road-testing, critique and utilisation by many hundreds of deception practitioners from across a wide variety of different domains. Deception is defined as:

> "Deliberate measures to induce erroneous sensemaking and subsequent behaviour within a target audience, to achieve and exploit an advantage."
> **Henderson (2011)**

Let us now consider the different components of this definition.

Deception is a deliberate act.

The definition begins by suggesting that deception is a deliberate and intentional act, a view shared with a range of other authors and researchers in the field (including Buller & Burgoon, 1994; Galasinski, 2000; Caspi & Gorsky, 2006; Carrion et al., 2010). As a result, activities that unintentionally or accidentally induce erroneous sensemaking are non-deceptive acts, and should more accurately be considered as mistakes, misinterpretations, misunderstandings, gaffs, etc. It is therefore not possible to deceive by accident.

Deception is induced.

Deception occurs via a process of induction. A deceiver deliberately engages in a specific action or actions intended to fool the target. Deception does not, and cannot, happen by itself.

Deception works by inducing errors in sensemaking.

A vital component of this definition relates to the notion of 'erroneous sensemaking', meaning that the deceiver leads some aspect of the target's understanding of the world to be wrong, or in error. It is this focus on error that differentiates deception from other related concepts, such as influence, persuasion or coercion, etc. For an explanation of how sensemaking functions, see Klein et al. (2006b, 2006a); and Klein et al. (2007). For an account of how magic manipulates sensemaking, see Henderson (2017).

The goal of deception is behaviour change.

Deception aims to change the future behaviour of the target. If there is no behavioural change in the target resulting from their erroneous sensemaking, the same outcome could and would have been achieved by the deceiver doing nothing.

In many domains, the deceiver's goal for the target's behaviour change may be straightforward. For example, in military deception, the goal may be to get the enemy to move their defences to one location so that you can surprise them by attacking from a different direction (such as the 'left hook' strategy used by Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf in Iraq during the First Gulf War). Similarly, in sport, the deception goal could be to fool the opposing team into deploying their defenders against an empty-handed runner who convincingly mimes carrying the ball, whilst the real ball carrier crosses the goal line unopposed on the other side of the field. And in a cyber phishing attack, the hacker's goal could be to get their target to click on a link that will result in malware (software that compromises the integrity of a computer system) being installed on their computer to record and transmit their

keystrokes as they enter their banking credentials.

In other domains, the deceiver's behaviour change goal for the target may be more subtle. For example, it may be less obvious what behaviour change a magician would seek in their spectator. In this case, it is worth considering what the target's (i.e. the spectator's) immediate and longer-term behaviour would have been had the deception failed. The spectator at the show may have groaned with displeasure and disappointment at not being fooled or entertained, would not have applauded, would probably have told others how bad the show was, would suggest to others that they do not go to see the magician, they may demand a refund, and they probably would not go to future shows by the same magician. However, by strongly fooling the spectator (i.e. inducing error in their sensemaking, leading to surprise, and a sense of awe and wonder), their behaviour would likely be the opposite of each of these reactions.

Deception is directed towards a defined target audience.

A deceiver directs deception towards a specific, identified and bounded target audience. The deception target may be an individual, a group, an organisation, a more extensive populous, and potentially even higher levels of human collective, such as a nation state. A target may also comprise any system that exhibits some form of behaviour, and within which behaviour change may be sought, including computer software, an algorithm, hardware control systems, etc.

Successful deception creates advantage for the deceiver, and sometimes the target.

Deception seeks to obtain an exploitable advantage for the deceiver, for example:

- *Military deception* - in military operations, the deceptive force defeats its enemy.

- *Trompe l'oeil* - the artist attracts visitors to his show through word of mouth and potentially induces them to buy his work.

- *Magic* – the magician earns money from her show, with the audience writing good reviews, recommending the show to others, and paying to come back to see future shows.

- *Casino cheating* – the card sharp leaves the casino with more money than he went in with.

- *Practical jokes* – the prankster gains pleasure and entertainment from their prank succeeding.

- *Environmental fraud* - the petroleum company's selective use of the one statistical model that (seemingly) 'proves' their low levels of environmental impact, receives benefit from the resultant governmental permissions to build further processing sites, ultimately leading to higher profit.

Deception can also result in mutual benefit, wherein both the deceiver and the target gain benefit when the deception is successful. For example:

- When a magician successfully fools her audience, the audience benefits from the pleasure of being wowed, delighted and entertained, and the magician benefits by receiving the audience's praise, money, word of mouth publicity, and future attendance at their shows.

- When a chemistry teacher teaches her class a model of an atom, simplified to the point of being fundamentally incorrect (as her students are not yet capable of grasping the more accurate quantum field theory), she benefits in multiple ways. Her class learns the principles of atomic weight and the periodic table, they pass their exams, and they hit the school's targets. Her pupils benefit from learning the basic principles of

chemistry, leading them to obtain good grades and better university and employment prospects.

Is It Feasible to Deceive One's Self?

It seems logically coherent to conceptualise deception as a transactional act that is committed intentionally by one person or organisation (i.e. the deceiver) against another (the target). However, many students of deception suggest that deception does not entail a deceiver fooling a target; instead, that the target always deceives themselves (for example, see Demosthenes, 349BC/1852, p. 57; La Rochefoucauld, 1678/1871, p. 16; Rousseau, 1762, p. 150; von Goeth, 1908, p. 94; Hoffer, 1955, p. 260; etc.). However, the notion of a target somehow being able to fool themselves seems intrinsically paradoxical. Three broad schools of thought exist concerning this issue, the Intentionalist, Motivationist and Deflationist perspectives. Each is now summarised.

The 'Intentionalist' Perspective

The Intentionalist Perspective (e.g. Talbott, 1995) posits that self-deception in effect operates internally on the same basis as inter-agency deception, whereby a deceiver intentionally seeks to induce their own erroneous beliefs. This creates a situation in which the self-deceived person holds a true belief while at the same time incorrectly believing the contrary. The view postulates a partitioned belief system, in which one part believes the truth, and this part intentionally brings-about the erroneous belief in the other part. For example, in Aesop's fable about The Fox and the Grapes (Baldwin, 1824, pp. 42-44) a hungry fox first sights some grapes that appear purple, ripe and sweet; but after he realises he cannot reach them, he decides that they are too green to eat. He, therefore, intends to deceive himself; and is left holding onto parallel contradictory views.

The 'Motivationist' Perspective

An alternative view, the 'Motivationist' perspective (e.g. Nelkin, 2002) posits that strong desire for certain incorrect beliefs about the world to be true can lead to these desired beliefs overriding and eventually replacing original correct beliefs about the world. For example, consider Person A, whose partner, Person B, dies unexpectedly. Person A's desire to reconnect with Person B is so strong that they decide to visit a psychic, despite being highly sceptical about their claims. As a result of the psychic stating that they have made contact with Person B and seeming to pass-on detailed personal information from them, Person A's sceptical beliefs are overwhelmed and replaced by the belief that it is possible to communicate with the dead. In this case, there is no intent for Person A to deceive themselves, as the deception occurs only as a side-effect of the desire to believe. There is also no requirement to hold conflicting views, as one view becomes replaced by another.

The 'Deflationist' Perspective

A third view, the 'Deflationist' perspective (e.g. Scott-Kakures, 2012) suggests that self-deception occurs as a consequence of biased cognitive processing that is itself the product of the motivational states of the subject. For example, if I strongly wish something incorrect to be true, I may pay more attention to information that confirms or supports my wish than information that weakens or disconfirms it. At some point, in light of all the positive supporting evidence I have collected that supports my wish, I am led overwhelmingly to the conclusion that my incorrect belief must be true. For example, if I am open-minded (and thus undecided) as to the possibility that the moon landings have been faked, I may decide to research the matter for myself. Online searches take me to a site that provides some shocking, exciting, and possibly plausible information that, if true, would prove that the moon landings were falsified. As a result, I conduct further searches looking for additional evidence that corroborates this information and happen to find plenty. After some time conducting further research, the amount of evidence I have gathered showing that the

moon landings are false is now so overwhelming (and with so little contradictory evidence available) that I have no choice but to believe that they were a hoax. In this manner, my desire for something to be true has biased the information I search for and subsequently find, which in turn leads me to search for more of this same type of information. Eventually, the weight of this one-sided 'evidence' is so overwhelming that I am compelled to adopt a false belief.

Despite widespread and popular suggestions that all deception is self-deception, none of these theories help explain the vast majority of deception that occurs in the natural world. Whilst the psychological belief formulation processes manipulated by a deceiver to fool a target exist in the head of that target, the agency that acts upon these processes is external to them. An important question, therefore, is to consider who does the 'heavy lifting' required to make deception work – the deceiver or the target? Before unpacking this issue, however, it is first necessary to consider the relationship between influence and deception, and the consequences of a target discovering the use of deception.

The Relationship Between Influence and Deception

As deception seeks to bring about change in the target's behaviour, all deception influences the target's behaviour. So, is deception merely influence, or are influence and deception somehow different?

Influence is defined here as:

> "Deliberate measures to induce desired sensemaking and subsequent behaviour within a target audience, to achieve and exploit an advantage."
> **Henderson (2011)**

Note the critical difference in this definition compared to that for deception – the term 'erroneous sensemaking' has been replaced by the term 'desired sensemaking'. It is this difference that sits at the heart of what deception is, what deception is not, and how deception relates to other similar concepts. Whilst error in the target's sensemaking is fundamental to deception, error is not necessary within a target's sensemaking for influence to occur. For example, a target may be incentivised to change its behaviour through the offer of financial reward. In this case, the target is influenced to change its behaviour by (correctly) making sense of the reward offered, and no erroneous sensemaking or deception is involved. Deception is thus a class of influence, differentiated from other types of influence by its specific focus on inducing error in the target's sensemaking. As a result, all deception involves influence, but not all influence involves deception.

Next, we shall consider issues relating to the discovery of deception.

Secrets, Revelations and Surprises

> "… the most critical observer should not even suspect, let alone detect, the action."
> **Erdnase (1902, p. 83)**

Erdnase's principle from The Expert at the Card Table applies to a wide variety of deceptions in which even the target's suspicion as to the mere possibility of deception could prove disastrous, in some cases even life-threatening to the deceiver. For example, consider undercover police officers infiltrating a violent criminal gang, Special Forces operating covertly behind enemy lines, or even a card sharp cheating in a dubious game of poker, etc.

In some cases, the target may gain benefit from the revelation, or their discovery of, deception employed against them. For example, a visitor to an exhibition of work by French artist Bernard Pras might pass through the door of a gallery to find themselves facing a portrait of Malian actor Sotigui Kouyate. Only when they change position within the gallery, and thus their viewpoint, can they discover, appreciate, and enjoy the fact that the exhibit is an anamorphic installation that works by exploiting human perceptual processes.

The portrait is entirely illusory. In reality, it comprises a spatial assembly of tree branches, sticks, clothes hanging on a line and scattered on the floor, a palm frond, broken crockery, etc., which, when viewed from a single forced perspective, align to form the impression of a portrait of the actor.

In other cases, the use of deception will always necessitate a reveal, irrespective of the deceiver's desire or intent for this revelation to occur (note that the term 'reveal' here refers to the recognition on the part of the target that deception has taken place, and is not related to the notion of exposure in magic). Whenever a magician performs an effect, an impossible outcome is always revealed at the effect's conclusion, thereby serving to let the spectator know that deception has occurred. In many forms of military deception (for example, fooling the enemy as to the timing or location of an attack) once the real attack occurs, the deception is inevitably revealed, and the enemy force becomes aware that they have been fooled. In both of these instances, the revelation of the deception creates surprise. When the target is not aware that deception is present or has occurred, they do not experience surprise. For more on the manipulation of sensemaking to achieve and amplify surprise in magic, see Henderson (2017).

In summary, some circumstances dictate that a deceiver only gains an advantage if they remain covert, and their use of deception is never discovered. In other cases, a deceiver only gains benefit if the target becomes aware that deception has occurred. And in other forms of deception, there is no option but for the deceiver to eventually disclose their use of deception to the target. The advantages and disadvantages of these different outcomes are context, situation, and goal dependent.

Once Deception Has Been Discovered, Can It Be Repeated?

Revelation of the use of deception to a target may result in a range of problems for the deceiver. The deceiver may suffer a significant loss of initiative and be unable to continue with their deception plan. A covert capability is compromised and now has to be burned (i.e. given up or written-off). The disclosure may lead to an expectation on the part of the target about the deceiver's potential use of deception in the future, leading the target to increase their vigilance, monitoring and security. However, just because the target knows that you have used deception to fool them previously, this does not mean that the deceiver cannot use deception (even the same deception) to fool them again.

Good deception should always seek to divorce method from effect, for example by creating false expectations in the head of the target, or suggesting false solutions – strategies that are also intrinsic to effective magic (e.g. see Tamariz, 1988; Lamont & Wiseman, 2005, pp. 75-80). This means that whilst the target may indeed realise that they have been fooled, they will not necessarily know how they were fooled.

When portraying false solutions, the deceiver can plant false clues that will lead the target to conclude incorrectly that the outcome was achieved using a different method (i.e. the target is driven to be absolutely certain, but absolutely wrong). Even if the target does suspect or somehow has deduced correctly how they were fooled, this creates a set of expectations that can be exploited (for example by changing the method through which the same outcome is achieved next time). Also, real activity can be portrayed as deceptive activity (to be dismissed by the target), exploiting and confirming the target's suspicions that deception may occur - a strategy known as 'reverse deception'. An example of reverse deception occurred during Operation Bertram in El Alamein in 1942, when Commonwealth forces dumped waste materials under camouflage nets, making them appear to be ammunition or ration

dumps. Axis forces noticed these, but, ignored them as no offensive action followed and the 'dumps' did not change. This allowed the 8th Army to build up supplies in the forward area unnoticed by the Axis, by replacing the rubbish with real supplies and ammunition (Barkas & Barkas, 1952).

Revelation of the use of deception to the target does not preclude its future use. However, good deception should always build-in the capability to deceive the same target again in the future.

Who Does the 'Heavy Lifting' in Deception?

> "Such things as we being bewitched do imagine, have no truth at all either of action or essence, beside the bare imagination."
> **Scott (1584, p. 318)**

An important, yet overlooked, principle in the design of deceptive action is that the formulation of erroneous belief occurs entirely inside the head of the target (note that this does not constitute self-deception as an external source, the deceiver, still induces the deception). Consider the 'Ghost Tap' effect (Marshall, 1980, pp. 17-18) in which a performer seemingly proves the presence of a spirit to a spectator, who feels a tap on the back of their head whilst whist the magician's hands appear to be occupied, the index fingers of each of the magician's hands resting on the spectator's closed eyelids. The effect is achieved by the magician swapping his two index fingers for the index and middle finger of one hand as soon as the spectator closes their eyes, thereby leaving one had free to execute the taps. The position of the hands and fingers are reversed just before the spectator opens their eyes again.

Despite the incredibly simple mechanics upon which this effect relies, it can, (especially when amplified by setting an appropriate scene, and the use of engaging narrative) provoke an incredibly strong reaction from the spectator, including shrieks, leaping into the air, stunned silence, profound confusion, or some combination of these. Immediately after the

effect, it is also usual for the spectator to look behind them, to see who it was that tapped them on the head (the effect works best if done in a one-to-one setting, with no other people around). The experience that the magician has, and the experience that the spectator has are very different. To the spectator, at the time of being tapped on the head, it genuinely feels as if a third entity is in the room with them. However, for the magician, in practical terms, they deliver some patter, swap fingers, and tap the spectator on the head with their free hand.

The effect demonstrates how a target's mind can take just a couple of fragments of information and mentally use these to fabricate a rich, vivid, and visceral (yet entirely erroneous) internal mental experience, that feels vastly different from the simple, subtle, means used to induce it. This asymmetry between the simplicity of the method and the magnitude of its effect occurs in many cases of deception. It helps explain why simple actions can create such powerful, deceptive effects, such as balsa wood and canvas being used to simulate an entire army convincingly in the middle of the Egyptian desert (Barkas & Barkas, 1952), security penetration testers gaining access to secure government buildings using nothing more than a pizza delivery bag (Dupuy, 2014), and people successfully using fruit to hold-up and rob banks (Hartley-Parkinson, 2019; Times of Israel, 2019).

> "Too great cleverness is but deceptive delicacy, true delicacy is but the most substantial cleverness."
> **La Rochefoucauld (1678/1871, p. 17)**

It is the target that does all the 'heavy lifting' involved in being deceived. It is they that put the pieces together, they assemble the narrative, they fill-in the gaps, they make the wrong assumptions, they project their thoughts incorrectly into the future, and they make erroneous sense of what is happening. In doing so, it is the target who builds an erroneous world, an erroneous belief, erroneous assumptions, and erroneous expectations in their head.

The target's subjective experience of reality and their resultant beliefs about the world may be very different from their objective reality and the real state of the world. This is important when it comes to designing deceptive action. For example, imagine a client tasks you to make their target's house vanish into thin air. The target arrives home from work, and as they are walking up to the front door, their house evaporates in front of their eyes, leaving no trace. There are many potential ways to achieve this – bulldozers, wrecking balls and explosives may come to mind. When viewed through the lens of deception, however, it becomes clear that you do not, in reality, have to make the house vanish. Indeed, it is readily apparent that it is impossible to make a house vanish into thin air! Deception creates an opportunity to use significantly more elegant and efficient means to achieve the desired outcome – by shaping the target's beliefs about events, as opposed to trying to create the events for real. Indeed, it may be impossible, or too risky, or too expensive to create such events. However, inducing erroneous beliefs about those events having occurred may indeed be feasible, be low risk, and be significantly cheaper than producing the events for real. Instead of thinking about bulldozers, wrecking balls and explosives, we instead begin to consider lighting, projection, black art, sound effects, misdirection, inflatables, set-design, rumours, witnesses, news reports, misdirecting a target towards a simulacrum of their house, etc. The two approaches to the problem are very different.

When seeking to do something that involves affecting a target's experience of reality, it is not necessary to create that experience for real; only to allow the target to believe that they have had that experience for real.

These are just some of the core components of deception, but of course, there are many others. Other elements, dimensions and principles of deception will form the basis of future articles.

Summary

Dictionary definitions of deception are inadequate. Accordingly, deception is defined here as: "Deliberate measures to induce erroneous sensemaking and subsequent behaviour within a target audience, to achieve and exploit an advantage." Deception is an intentional transaction that occurs between deceiver and target. It is possible to deceive without lying, and also to deceive using nothing more than the truth. Deception is a form of influence, and therefore, all deception involves influencing, but not all influence involves deceiving.

Deception seeks to change future behavioural outcomes to the benefit of the deceiver, and often the target too. If the target's behaviour does not change as a result of their erroneous sensemaking, the same outcome could and would have been achieved by the deceiver doing nothing. Revelation of the use of deception to the target does not preclude its future use; however, good deception will always build-in the capability to deceive the same target again in the future. And it is usually feasible, cheaper and less risky to create a belief in having experienced impossible events in the head of a target than to attempt to construct and administer such events for real. This simplicity of method is a crucial point for all deception planners to bear in mind, irrespective of their domain of professional practice.

Deception occurs everywhere that life exists, at all levels from the microbial to geopolitical. But does anything link together these different forms of deception? What are the common threads, and where are there differences? In later articles, I shall seek to un-weave and disentangle some of the threads that constitute this seemingly complex tangled web. I will discuss how deceptive principles from magic have been exploited in other domains and will explain why a cross-disciplinary study of deception is fundamental to enhancing deceptive practice in any area of application, including magic.

In the next article, I shall address in more detail the relationship between magic and deception and will highlight fundamental issues in deceptive practice where the theory and practice of magic have little to contribute. By highlighting such limitations with the generalisability of magic, magicians should start to see how their practice sits in relation to the broader field of deception, and what they can learn from other domains where it occurs.

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