A proposition constructs a world with the help of a logical scaffolding, so that one can actually see from the proposition how everything stands logically if it is true. One can draw inferences from a false proposition (Wittgenstein, [1921] 1971, p. 41).

Although etiquette expert Emily (Mrs. Price) Post claimed that etiquette requires “honesty and trustworthiness in every obligation” (Post, 1945, p. 2), she offered this advice for the unhappy visitor:

If you go to stay in a small house in the country, and they give you a bed full of lumps, in a room of mosquitoes and flies, on a floor over that of a crying baby, under the eaves with a temperature of over a hundred, you can the next morning walk to the village, and send yourself a telegram and leave! But you feel starved, exhausted, wilted, and are mosquito bitten until you resemble a well-developed case of chickenpox or measles, by not so much as a facial muscle must you let the family know that your comfort lacked anything that your happiest imagination could picture—nor must you confide in any one afterwards (having broken bread in the house) how desperately wretched you were (pp. 428–29).

Post’s claim of honesty in etiquette is belied by the fact that many of her prescriptions sacrifice honesty in personal relations for the appearance of pleasant discourse. Her prescriptions utilize many of the ploys of the skilled deceiver.
and rely on normative presuppositions and inferencing processes essential to honest communication and the attainment of knowledge. In this essay, I elaborate the nature of deception to show how deception is a natural outgrowth of communication and knowledge (just as illusion is a natural outgrowth of perception).

Communication, Presuppositions, and Conventions

Deception frequently parasitizes "communicative action oriented toward reaching understanding" (Habermas, [1976] 1979, p. 209). In such communicative action, for one person to communicate with another, the communicator (addressor) and "understander" (addressee) must share particular expectations or presuppositions about the communicative exchange. These expectations or presuppositions are, specifically, that the addressor is telling the truth about the external world, that the addressor's utterances are justifiable in relation to interpersonally accepted roles and norms, and that the addressor is sincerely making his or her communicative intentions evident to the addressee.¹ These presuppositions are not untestable or blind assumptions, but are implicit "claims" to the validity of the offered communication. If these claims are apparently violated, a (mature) addressee can make them the theme of the communicative exchange—that is, can verify his or her understanding—by questioning the addressor about their validity in this exchange. Thus, for example, if an addressee believes that the addressor is insincere, the addressee can ask the addressor if she or he truly believes what she or he says, or can ask for evidence that the proposition is in fact true.

The presuppositions described by Habermas derive from the fact that human communication is based on conventions. Conventions are regularities which are maintained within a group, in part because they are in general mutually maintained and recognized as regularities by group-members (Lewis, 1969). As
Lewis (1969, p. 78) maintains, a convention exists because “almost everyone” conforms to a regularity, and because “almost everyone expects almost everyone else” to conform to the regularity. We presuppose that a speaker is telling the truth, is sincere, and is acting in accordance with norms because we expect that “almost everyone conforms” to our conventional regularities. If a conventional regularity is to remain conventional, most people within the community must conform to the regularity, which results in sincerity, truth-telling, and norms, as well as our consequent presuppositions about them. There can, of course, be conventions of insincerity and falseness, but even here the fact that everyone knows of the insincerity and falseness creates a paradoxical form of sincerity and truthfulness in that no one is deceived and everyone knows how to interpret the convention. More commonly, the expectation that a speaker is sincerely presenting his or her intentions is implicit but not activated in normal speaking (Millikan, 1984, p. 67–9) and, like the other validity claims of Habermas, remains implicit unless the communication would be incomprehensible without its elucidation.

The deceiver who wishes to remain undiscovered must appear to satisfy these validity claims without making the victim suspicious, because the victim is unlikely to think about the validity claims unless he or she is made suspicious. The more the deceiver relies on the victim’s implicit assumptions and the less the victim infers motivation on the deceiver’s part in setting up the signs of regularity and preying on the victim’s implicit assumptions, the less likely is the victim to become suspicious. For example, to avoid victims’ inferring motivation, criminals set up scams in which large parcels of money are found “accidentally” to get victims engaged in money-laundering schemes (Blum, 1972).

Con men avoid suspicion not only by hiding the fact that they are violating a validity claim, but also by calling attention to and explaining away any apparent violation of a validity claim (Hankiss, 1980). So, for example, John Felix was
swindled out of $50,000 by two con men named Nelson and McPherson who claimed they could find out which horse had won a race before the betting was closed, which would allow Felix to place “bets” on a horse which had already won; when Felix questioned their sincerity, they proposed that Felix check out the veracity of their claims and offered (false) “proofs” of their veracity (Train, [1908] 1922, pp. 103–21), bringing the validity claims of truth and sincerity to the foreground and thereby appearing to verify their honesty. Deceivers can also attempt to imply that the interpersonal relation between themselves and their victims is justifiable, as when the con man Nelson justified his friendliness toward Felix by claiming to have met him at a gambling house. In another instance, a con man told police that documents which showed his (nonexistent) academic honors were being renovated, and then informed them, as an aside, “I should mention that although I received my award from the University of Tokyo in 1977, the date on the document is 1952. This is because in Tokyo the year 1952 corresponds to our 1977” (Harris, 1987, p. 124). This bizarre fabrication has the ring of sincerity: by directing attention to an odd facet of false “evidence” and explaining it away, the con man directs the victim’s attention away from the evidence per se and appears all the more sincere for admitting how suspicious looking the odd facet is.

Another con man, John Hamrak, utilized both hiding and calling attention to all three validity claims to deceive. In trying to steal a valuable clock in a city hall in Hungary, Hamrak arrived with an accomplice acting as a technician and told the man responsible for the clock that they had come to take the clock for repairs. Because the clock was valuable, the man did not want to release it.

Instead of further substantiating his role, Hamrak responded by calling the alderman’s attention to the extraordinary value of the clock, declaring that it was for this reason that he had come for it in person. . . . When Hamrak points out that the clock is extremely valuable, he tells the truth and is sincere. . . . If the
victim acknowledges the con man's remark as truth and accordingly reflects that a man who speaks the truth is an honest man and can be trusted, the truth of the statement is referred back to the intention and validates it (Hankiss, 1980, pp. 108–9).

Hamrak here engages in a "blurring" of the "distinction between truth and sincerity" (Hankiss, 1980, p. 109). His openhanded answer to one validity claim—that of speaking the truth in relation to the value of the clock—implicitly suggests both: (1) that all his other statements are satisfying this validity claim to truth, and (2) that he is also satisfying the validity claim of sincerity. The validity claim to the normality and appropriateness of their respective interpersonal roles is satisfied implicitly by the appearance of the technician and by Hamrak's request for the clock.

The presuppositions described by Habermas appear to depend upon typically tacit expectations about regularities in language use. Deception is an explanation which is "outside normality" (Hankiss, 1980, p. 108) precisely because it violates validity claims and expectations derived from what is likely to happen or be the case. In order for deception to occur, then, the victim must have expectations, the deceiver must have expectations about the victim's expectations, and the deceiver must act with those expectations in mind. As a result, deception paradoxically requires "a shared system of interpretation and meaning" (Mawby and Mitchell, 1986, p. 321) or a "mutual alignment of perspectives" between deceiver and victim (Quiatt, 1988, p. 261). This mutual alignment in deception derives from normal human communication, in which speaker and audience share myriad "common background belief[s]" (including those of Habermas) called "pragmatic presuppositions" (Stalnaker, [1974] 1977, p. 137). In general, "A proposition P is a pragmatic presupposition of a speaker in a given context just in case the speaker assumes or believes that P, assumes or believes that his addressee assumes or believes that P, and assumes or believes that his addressee recognizes that he is making these assumptions, or has these
beliefs" (Stalnaker, [1974] 1977, p. 137). Transformed to incorporate deception, the definition becomes: "a proposition $P$ is a deceptive pragmatic presupposition of the person in a given context when the person does not assume or believe that $P$, but does assume or believe that the addressee assumes or believes that $P$, and does assume or believe that the addressee assumes or believes that the person is making these assumptions or has these beliefs." Given that deceiver and victim must have some beliefs in common if deception is to be effected, it is not surprising that some con men view deception as a means of connecting with another person, even while they harm that person (Blum, 1972). What makes deception predictable and ubiquitous is our reliance upon pragmatic presumptions to organize our understanding of and responses to the world.

Knowledge, Expectations, and Regularities

Such pragmatic presumptions derive from our knowledge of regularity. A regularity is discovered when the co-occurrence of at least two things or events is usual, such that the existence or occurrence of something $S$ (a sign) implies that something else $T$ (an object, an event, or other thing) is (will be, should be) the case. With knowledge of regularities, one can make predictions about someone from myriad signs they exhibit, such as clothing and hairstyle (Hyman, 1977, p. 21), as well as less obvious clues such as "faint involuntary cues" normally given off by the person's musculature under questioning (Scheibe, 1979, pp. 18–9). Regularities present in technology similarly afford predictive possibilities. One man started a scam with the knowledge that a bank's transfers of money "were made by telex initially, then confirmed or finalized by mail [such that these] transmissions could be monitored, diverted, and substituted" (Klein and Montague, 1977, p. 56).

A regularity can also involve activity on the part of the observer, such that if $S$ is observed, the observer is likely to
enact $T$. While I lived in Worcester, Massachusetts, one secretary took perverse pleasure in handing me things only to pull them back sharply when I moved to take hold of them; her father had played this game with her as a child, but it is a common mammalian game (Mitchell and Thompson, 1990) and one of the earliest deceptions by children (Chevalier-Skolnikoff, 1986, p. 210). In Clifton, New Jersey, for a time during the summer of 1989, several neighbors displayed quite real-looking but also quite fake fruit in a bowl, enjoying people’s mistaking the fruit for real; one woman unintentionally delighted her friend by attempting to bite into the fruit after being invited to eat some. In a pizza parlor in Albany, New York, after I handed my payment for lunch over the clear countertop which sloped smoothly down in front of the pizza-cutting table below it, the cashier handed me my change below the countertop, with the result that I smashed my hand into the clear partition to obtain the change; the man laughed when he handed me change over the countertop. He deceived (with as much apparent pleasure) the next patrons as well.

Once the functional or operative procedures of any system are known, the deceiver can derive reasonably accurate expectations about the system. Because of the usual co-occurrence of $S$ and $T$, $S$ becomes a sign for $T$. However, because knowledge of a regularity between $S$ and $T$ does not indicate that $S$ and $T$ must co-occur, but merely that they usually co-occur, $S$ can imply $T$ when $T$ is not the case. Thus occurs the possibility of deception: the fruit in the kitchen bowl can be fake; clear glass may be present between a cashier’s hand and one’s own; the coughing poker player might repeatedly cough before bluffing in order to be able to “bluff a bluff” by coughing when not about to bluff.\(^5\)

A regularity may also be expected which is not based on usualness, much as a stereotype is expected but not “statistically normal,” and this expectation of regularity is as easily used for deception as is statistical normality (Anderson, 1986, pp. 338–39). Thus, people sometimes expect regularities when
there are none. Roy Cohn appealed to the inconsistency between his “toughness” and the presumed “softness” of homosexuals as evidence against his actual homosexuality (Clemons, 1988, p. 69), but his stereotype is not a depiction of the statistically normal homosexual (Weinberg and Williams, 1974, p. 222). And people are often quite willing to extrapolate from a small sample to every instance and, hence, to have inaccurate beliefs about usualness (Nisbett and Ross, 1981). Thus, an expected norm can be created without any appeal to actual normality. For example, Hollywood movies provided a style for gangsters which their real-life counterparts came to imitate: “nobody was quite sure how gangsters really talked, or even what they looked like. The gangsters themselves . . . didn’t . . . know how they were supposed to behave. So Hollywood taught them” (Friedrich, 1979, p. 83).

Any time a regularity is known or expected, the sign of the regularity can be used to deceive. This capacity for misrepresentation is a necessary constituent of signs (Eco, 1976, pp. 6–7) precisely because of their reliance upon regularity. Because our sociality is both dependent upon and perfused with signs, we are continually prey to deception.

Schemas

People’s expectations of regularity (and thus normality) exist as schemas, which are mental representations which organize and categorize regularities. Schemas provide “a framework within which to locate new items of knowledge” (Jones, Harré, and Lamb, 1983, p. 544). Presuppositions described by Habermas are schemas, as are concepts, event knowledge, sensori-motor knowledge, and just about any understanding (explicit or implicit) of what generally (regularly) goes with what. Schemas can coordinate many regularities, such that in a regularity between S and T, S may represent many “signs” or indicators and T may represent many correlated outcomes,
objects, events, signs, or other things. Schemas allow people to have expectations, but these expectations need not be accurate. In some cases this inaccuracy develops from a flaw in the creation of the schema, as when people have expectations about usualness after exposure to only a very few instances of an apparent regularity. But the inaccuracy of some expectations derives from the nature of schemas. Schemas by their nature have both preservative and constructive qualities. They tend to retain or preserve knowledge of what is (inferred to be) usually the case and to ignore information which is different from the expected and, thus, to create or construct information to make the person’s experience fit into his or her current schemas (Bartlett, [1932] 1972; Jastrow, [1935] 1962; Loftus, 1979).

Using signs of regularity to deceive may seem a rather simple operation of producing the signs. However, even when production of signs of regularity seem very simple and unelaborated, as does the false money-giving gesture of the pizza-cashier, they rely on schemas about the context in which they are to be enacted. The prankster cashier not only needed to know that I will move my hand toward him (such that it will hit the clear partition) when he moved his hand containing change toward me, but also that the money-giving gesture had to occur (1) after I had given him my money, (2) after he had opened the cash register, (3) after I had ordered my pizza, (4) while I was in the restaurant, and so on. Simply handing me some change required a great deal of event-relevant knowledge which was accessed when engaging in the activity. In order to maintain the presumption of normality, the deceiver must understand the typical and sequential context within which to enact the deceptive sign. This contextual knowledge is found even in deceptions by very young children, whose schemas coordinate many understandings of regularity. For example, after her attempts to get her mother to bathe her by pointing to soap and saying “Ba” were unsuccessful, a 21-month-old infant lay down on the floor as if needing a
diaper change, gesturing toward her diaper and saying "Cack" to indicate a dirty diaper; her mother, however, knew that the child's diaper was clean (Dunn, 1988, p. 20).

Contextual, event-relevant knowledge is incorporated into scripts, which are schemas about the sequence of an event which are (commonly) empirically derived. Scripts are "specific knowledge [we use] to interpret and participate in events we have been through many times" (Schank and Abelson, 1977, p. 37), such as eating in a restaurant or going to a movie. "Since certain sequences of events frequently occur in a specific order we must postulate that people have developed special mechanisms to deal with them. That is, there are certain groupings of causal chains that exist in the form of large conceptual units" (Schank and Abelson, 1977, pp. 37-8). Any instance of these "large conceptual units" is a script—"a standard event sequence" (Schank and Abelson, 1977, p. 38). People can recognize scripts and apply them to "fill . . . in the causal chain between two seemingly unrelated events by referring to the script" (Schank and Abelson, 1977, p. 38). Because people easily extrapolate from single instances to generalized claims, scripts probably do not require actual experience to develop but can also derive from vicarious experiences, such as watching an event on television or hearing about it.6 Once a deception is started during enactment of a script, the following of the script allows the deceiver to benefit from the deception. Upon receipt of the telegram she sent herself, Emily Post's unhappy guest can leave without explanation because she has been called away by "someone else."

Scripts are not the only complex schemas utilized in deception. Other common schemas exist for scenes and stories (Mandler, 1984). Particular deceptions may require, to produce a simulation, more specific skills and their consequent schemas. In the nineteenth century, the female hunter Lucy Lobdell's efforts to make money for her poor family and then to secure a happy existence with her female lover required her
to dress and act the part of a man and later a husband. She made up her mind "to dress in men's attire to seek labor, as I was used to men's work. . . . I might work harder at house-work, and get only a dollar per week, [but] I was capable of doing men's work, and getting men's wages" (Lobdell, 1855 1976, p. 219). One forger "slipped in and out of other people's handwriting as he did his various pseudonyms and biographies, with complete ease" (Harris, 1987, p. 116). But along with these schemas and skills, the deceiver must be able to take the perspective of the victim if the deception is to be successful. For example, a successful art forger must have, in addition to the artistic skills (for example, visual-motor dexterity) necessary to create works similar to the artist's, schemas for: (1) recognition of visual similarities among (some of) the artist's works as well as between these works and the forger's work; (2) a tacit appreciation of a victim's expectations of the "look" of the artist's works (which may depend upon sharing the victim's culture); and, in some cases, (3) an understanding of artistic implements (for example, types of materials used) and expectations of people in the historical period in which the artist worked. For example, the forgery Fortune Teller, purported to be by seventeenth-century French painter George de la Tour, was discovered to be a fake because the painting depicts costumes which were not found in other seventeenth-century paintings, and displays a lack of the "care for . . . minutiae" which in an essential characteristic of la Tour's work (Wright and de Marly, 1980, p. 23). In this case, failure to successfully employ the last two schemas led to the recognition of forgery because the painting went against (some) people's expectations concerning la Tour's works. In deceptions during wartime (and assuredly elsewhere), "the deception plan must emerge logically out of the past, must correspond logically with current activities, and proceed logically toward the future. It is therefore vital that the "story" or deception scenario be so designed that when it diverges from reality, as it most assuredly must, the divergence can be
explained away in context of what has occurred previously and will happen in the future” (Sexton, 1986, p. 352). To deceive successfully, then, one needs to know what is expected to be regular by the victim and to effect a simulation suited to that.

 Scripts and Plans

To know what a given victim expects to be regular, and, thus, how that individual will act, requires knowledge not only of the human condition and the cultural conventions of the community in which the person lives, but also of the normal patterns in the life of the victim which differ from or are not covered by these conventions. In the same way, a player in sports must have knowledge of the limits of human physical capabilities of the rules of the game, and of the opponent's habitual patterns to play effectively (Mawby and Mitchell, 1986, p. 320). Simply assuming that a person follows the conventions is problematic because one may have inaccurately designated the victim as a member of a particular community. Or the victim may not be a member of the class of “almost everyone” to whom conventions apply. One must develop a constrained schema relevant to the particular person or class of persons (acumen) in addition to a generalized schema for people in general (sagacity) (Scheibe, 1979, p. 40).

In making a prediction about another, the predictor accesses knowledge about regularities embodied in schemas, such as a script. But schemas such as scripts do not allow understanding of novel (nonregular) situations. What does a predictor do when the situation she or he encounters is novel? People can deal with never-before-encountered situations “because they have access to the mechanisms that underlie scripts”; that is, they have access to plans (Schank and Abelson, 1977, p. 70). “A plan is made up of general information about how actors achieve goals. A plan explains how a given state or event was prerequisite for, or derivative from, another state or event”
Thus, using a plan, a person can make predictions, via inference, not only about what led to what or what leads to what, but also about an agent’s intentions. “By finding a plan, an understander can make guesses about the intentions of an action in an unfolding story and use these guesses to make sense of the story” (Schank and Abelson, 1977, p. 70). In some cases, enactment of deception requires following a script, as when con artists follow rather closely a credible storyline (Blum, 1972). But even here, deceivers must be attentive to novelty in the form of deviation of victims from the scripted responses. Indeed, if the same people interact again after a deception has been uncovered by the victim, use of the same scripted deception will become less likely to be effective because the victim knows the deception. For example, in teaching someone deceptive plays in bridge, an expert offers “a word of caution”: “To attempt to memorize these deceptive plays, with the aim of putting them into a habitual pattern of behavior, will only serve to make a stereotyped player of you; and your opponents will get to know your style and profit thereby” (Karpin, 1960, p. 220). Similar injunctions to avoid being obvious by repeating the same ploys are relevant in sports as well (Barnett with Borgi, 1971, pp. 29, 37; Dawson with Billings, 1972, p. 66). The potential deceiver is best directed to learn to understand plans: “in studying the deceptive tactics . . . presented, one’s objective should be to analyze and understand the motivation that gave birth to them, rather than to memorize them in order to earmark them for immediate and future application. . . . [Y]ou will learn how to utilize your imagination so that it can rise to the fore via its own momentum when the circumstances for its practical employment arise” (Karpin, 1960, pp. 220, 21). Plans, then, are a means by which people can figure out what other people are doing (or what they themselves should do) when not following scripts.

Using both plans and scripts, people recognize and make sense of regularities. With scripts, once people recognize the
particular sequence of events underway, they can make predictions from experience. With plans, people make hypotheses about the goals of the agent, and then make predictions by inferring what is necessary to achieve these goals. The person imaginatively places the agent in a context within which the agent's activities make sense. Just as when we use context to infer the meaning of sign used conventionally, we use context imaginatively to infer for ourselves how an experience unusual for us is experienced by another (Walton, 1990, p. 34).

Knowledge of another's psychological experience is often second nature to many who frequently deceive others, as this check-forger describes:

> Every situation is different, and if you don't lean to play them by ear, you're in big trouble. Maybe this is where experience really counts; you learn to read these people. For instance, after a while, when someone makes a confirming phone call you can almost overhear the conversation just by the set of his shoulders or the way he fingers the [forged] check. If he's told he's holding a stiff, you can almost see it burning his fingers (Klein and Montague, 1977, pp. 16-17, italics deleted).

Surprisingly, such ability to take the part of the other demonstrated in acumen need not result in any sympathetic or compassionate response to another's turmoil at being deceived. The deceiver can invent reasons why the other deserves to be deceived even while the deceiver recognizes that the victim would be psychologically better off without the deception. So the same imaginative propensity which allows someone to take the perspective of the other also allows the person to imagine the other from a perspective which discounts the other's perspective.

Deceptions do not require a deceiver to know every regularity, or even many of them, anticipated by the victim, because deceptions are circumscribed. If I am to deceive you in basketball, I do not need to know what you expect in normal social interaction, and vice versa. Although elaborated skills
used for deception in one area need not extrapolate to any other area, the skills used within a particular type of deception may need to be tremendously flexible if the deception is to be repeatedly and successfully enacted. Different flexibilities will be required if the deception is intended to be short-term or more protracted.

When deceptions are short-term, the deceiver may not be inconvenienced by the victim's knowledge of the types of deceptions that are likely to occur. For example, many deceptions in sports and games are so well-known to the victims as to be codified (Castello and Castello, 1962, pp. 37-42; Barnett with Borgi, 1971, pp. 29, 37-38, 51, 55; Dawson with Billings, 1972, pp. 30-31, 37-57; Finson and Remsberg, 1978, pp. 59–62), and victims find out rather quickly that they have been deceived and can attempt to control their responses later (Mitchell and Mawby, 1986). Professional fishermen engage in short-term deceptions toward other fishermen with whom they are in contact via radio exchanges, as when they claim they are not doing well in a particular place but then fish in the same place the next day (Andersen, 1980, p. 208). In such well-defined domains, deceptive techniques are likely to be scripted, and the scripts are likely to be known to victims (if only because they themselves are likely to use them!). For many short-term deceptions, deceptions of identical or similar type are reciprocated such that roles are frequently reversed: deceivers becomes victims, and victims becomes deceivers. When the interest in deception is expressive, as in keepaway games or the fake fruit gambit, the deceiver expects the victim to discover the deception and delights in watching him or her become aware of the deception.

Expectations About Expectations About Expectations

The deceiver needs a flexible corpus of skills to enact a deception because the victim has a flexible corpus of skills
which can be used to defeat the deception. Particularly when deceptions are more protracted, the deception must be tailored to the victim, and, thus, very specific knowledge of an individual is needed. How is this knowledge gained?

As one check-forgery noted, "The best way to learn a bank's check-clearing schedules or find out who approves checks there is to open an account and do some legitimate transactions" (Klein and Montague, 1977, pp. 21–2, italics deleted). To get some sense of how someone operates, one must similarly engage in "legitimate transactions." Thus, knowledge of a victim is best gained by observation of and involvement with the victim. Presumably, extensive interaction with another should allow a deceiver to take the other's perspective. Unless the deceiver can take the perspective of the other, more protracted deceptions are likely to fall apart. The unseemly consequence of the greater knowledge gained through intense involvement with another is that one should expect to be most easily deceived by those who know one best, because they have access to the type of knowledge which one is most likely to be taken in by (Mitchell, 1988; Quiatt, 1988; Bond, 1989; McCormack and Parks, 1990; Buller, Strzyzewski, and Comstock, 1991).

Even when the victim seems to be taking the bait, the deceiver must continue to look at things from the victim's perspective if the deception is used frequently or is at all protracted: "the success of any disinformation operation depends on being able to monitor how far your enemy accepts the disinformation you are feeding him" (Wright with Greenglass, 1987, p. 79). The victim is going to try to verify, to some degree, what the deceiver says and does according to some schema-based model (accurate or inaccurate) the victim has of the situation created by the deceiver. As the epigraph from Wittgenstein notes, one can make inferences from false propositions. One small aspect of the total configuration presented by the deceiver could make the victim suspicious if that aspect diverges from her schema that the configuration is
intended to access and the consequent predictions. For example, the fact that one art forger’s partner stayed in expensive hotels whereas he could afford only cheaper ones told him that he was not receiving the 60 percent of their joint proceeds his partner claimed (Irving, [1969] 1971, pp. 108–09). Just as the deceiver can imagine plans within which to entangle a victim, the victim can imagine what the deceiver might be imagining. Such acumen led historian Hugh Trevor-Roper to recognize that a set of diaries and other artifacts purportedly authored by Hitler were fakes: he asked himself, “How would a forger of Hitler’s diaries proceed?” developed a model, and discovered that the diaries “had a discomforting correspondence with this model” (Trevor-Roper, quoted in Harris, 1987, pp. 307–8).

To circumvent the victim’s suspicions, the deceiver can provide the other with information which fits the victim’s expectations. For example, by creating story after story about Rock Hudson’s romantic involvements with women to camouflage his romantic involvements with men, the press allowed people to believe the expected: that Hudson was heterosexual (Adler with Reese, 1985). The deceiver’s objective is to access the victim’s schemas as unobtrusively as possible, so that the victim has no awareness that he or she is being entangled. Because the victim may make false inferences and rearrange his memories and beliefs to conform to his available schemas, he is often an unknowing participant in his own deception. The victim is most vulnerable, however, when he or she ardently seeks and expects to find what the deceiver supplies. Here, a victim is likely to be highly credulous and undemanding of verification, presumably because his belief that something is the case overcomes his need for verification that it is the case. Such credulity occurred with the paleontological discovery of a skull with simian jaw and human skull, assumed to evidence an evolutionary “missing link” between apes and humans called “Piltdown man” but actually a forgery which satisfied scientific expectations (Weiner, [1955]
Scientists may be particularly susceptible to deceptive “evidence” which fits expectations because these expectations are so explicit: fictional findings are often “accepted as genuine because they provided the ‘right’ and expected answers, and because colleagues, supervisors and reviewers wished to believe [these] findings” (Kohn, [1986] 1988, pp. 83, 56).

The expectations of the victim need not be reasonable, but can instead be unlikely to be satisfied unless someone is deceiving and knows the victim’s expectations. Peter Wright described such a case with the Soviet spy Penkovsky, who appeared to be assisting the British when he provided thousands of documents about highly sensitive Soviet military systems. The fact that some were original documents, and that Penkovsky claimed that he copied others, shown him by an uncle who was a senior military commander, when his uncle left the room, seemed to Wright to “smack more of James Bond than of real life” (Wright with Greenglass, 1987, p. 209).

It is precisely those cases in which behavior seems designed to appeal to one’s expectations rather than to any likely regularities that deception may be inferred. Trevor-Roper first suspected that something was not quite right about the Hitler diaries when he noted that one letter, supposedly written by Hitler to an object of infatuation, “fitted in ‘just a little too neatly’ with the known historical record” (Harris, 1987, p. 307). However, uncritical cultural assumptions may be accessed when the victim is invested in believing what the deceiver provides, as Wright discovered when fellow intelligence agents refused to believe that a counterspy was actually working for the enemy: because the operation was a much needed success, his suspicions were “greeted with howls of outrage” (Wright with Greenglass, 1987, pp. 209, 207).

Certainly, victims are often active participants in their own deception in that they often believe what they hope to be true, not always what seems likely. Deceivers map their enactments
to fit the victims' schemas in order to make predictions. But the deceiver is not totally dependent upon the existing schemas of the victim. The deceiver has another option: he or she can make the victim take a perspective supplied by the deceiver. That is, the deceiver can tell a story.

**Story-Telling and Self-Deception**

When adolescent Geoffrey Wolff was told by his father, a con artist, that they suddenly had money because he had inherited his father’s estate, Geoffrey believed him. Much later he wrote, “To believe the fable of the inheritance required great will, an appetite for credulity I can now credit only by assuming that I preferred this fabulous notion to the transparent reality that my father was a drifter, living off a woman who didn’t seem inclined to give anything away free” (Wolff, 1979, p. 155). Although a story may offer a victim information which fits in with his hopes or beliefs, the particular beliefs the story provides may not all be ones the victim had prior to being influenced by the story. Thus, a story depends upon accessing particular expectations such as scripts, but also upon accessing plans, the means the victim has for interpreting nonscripted phenomena. By providing a story, the deceiver provides the victim with a perspective different from the victim’s own, but one which the victim can make his or her own. For example, Hollywood filmmakers created stories about people such as gangsters which purported to be true and became so as a result, and Hollywood actors created stories about their lives which were believable yet untrue but perfectly acceptable to fans (Friedrich, 1979, p. 171). Past president Ronald Reagan blatantly confused movies with reality, and in more subtle ways perhaps all Americans do, since the Hollywood “dream factory of the 1940’s . . . created much of what Americans today regard as real” (Friedrich, 1979, p. xiii).
“Before any tale can greatly please the hearer thereof, it must have some degree of verisimilitude; it must conquer part of our faith” (Nevins, [1938] 1969, pp. 194–5). Stories are particularly useful ways to achieve verisimilitude in deception because

a well-constructed story may sway judgments even when evidence is in short supply. . . . [When] audiences for stories . . . have not been directly exposed to the events or actions in them, they have little recourse but to base their judgments about the credibility of stories on assessments about story structure. . . . To the extent that these assessments yield ambiguities, the story will be . . . regarded as implausible (Bennett and Feldman, 1981, p. 68).

Thus, one of the means normally employed by people to determine the veracity of a deceptive story is to discern its plausibility. The objective for the deceiver is to create a story which is unambiguous because “the more ambiguous the story is . . ., the less plausible it is” (Bennett and Feldman, 1981, p. 88). Deceptions in wartime often employ a “deception 'story,' which frequently draws inspiration from enemy perceptions of reality. . . . [T]he deception officer must draw on all his resourcefulness and knowledge of the enemy's psychology to select those stimuli that will cause the enemy to react in the desired preselected manner” (Sexton, 1986, p. 352). When evidence is nonexistent, suspect (Haywood, 1987, p. 28), or difficult to gather, people turn to structural properties of the story to determine its truth value—a bit of our natural history quite useful to deceivers. “Since it would be senseless and practically impossible to investigate the veracity of isolated details in a con artist's story, those details will assume a meaning from the context. Identifying the logical consistency of a series of details (the con man's story) with the truth and genuineness of the whole story is one of the main sources of the con artist's success” (Hankiss, 1980, p. 109). It was exactly this sort of logic—taking the logical consistency of the whole for
truth—which Hugh Trevor-Roper (cited in Harris, 1987, p. 296) used to explain his initial belief in the genuineness of an archive of forged relics supposedly from Hitler's own hand. Trevor-Roper invented his own story to go along with the "evidence."

Once the deceiver provides the victim with a story, the victim may well look for evidence. To protect the victim from knowledge of the deception, the deceiver can produce "facts" which are unverifiable (West, 1985, p. 29). For example, in weaving their own "plausible fantasy" about events in history, deceivers "often rely on the alleged participation of individuals who have long since died, thus making evidence all the harder to obtain" (West, 1985, p. 140).

However, even without the deceiver's assistance, once the story is in mind, people may look for evidence which supports the story and fail to look for disconfirmatory evidence (Watson, 1968)—that is, they may act with "the general inclination to bend thinking [and observation] toward a conclusion reached in advance" (Jastrow, [1935] 1962, p. 195). In some cases, all the deceiver has to do is, "Create a belief in the theory and the facts will create themselves" (Jastrow, [1935] 1962, p. 195). A story allows the deceiver "to build up in the victim's mind a false world-picture which is temporarily consistent by any tests that he can apply to it, so that he ultimately takes action on it with confidence" (R. V. Jones, cited in Moss, 1977, p. 15). For example, Kujau, the forger of the Hitler diaries, gave his victim, newsreporter Gerd Heidemann, a story with just enough plausibility to satisfy him and let him look for "evidence" to validate it. Kujau told Heidemann that the Hitler diaries were smuggled from East Germany, having been retrieved from an airplane crash over which Hitler had expressed great distress because of the loss of valuable documents. To find evidence to support these claims, Heidemann "worked long hours and even risked dismissal to make the story of the diaries credible. . . . It is not surprising that by the end he wanted to believe in the existence of the
diaries so desperately: by then he had put more work into them than Kujau” (Harris, 1987, p. 126).

A victim’s wanting to believe in the deception comes up repeatedly in deception scenarios. Indeed, con men often claim that victims deserve what they get because their desire to believe the false information is driven by greed or other malicious desires (Blum, 1972). We are especially likely to call this will to believe “self-deception” when evidence available to the victim is so strong that rational inferences from this evidence indicate falsehood.15 In these instances, the victim puts more faith in the story he or she believes to be true than in the available evidence. One woman described her boyfriend’s deception: “He would make up these stories, these long stories, and I would believe him . . . It made me angry at myself that I could be so gullible and that I could believe something that didn’t even sound like it was true to begin with, but I wanted to believe it so bad” (Werth and Flaherty, 1986, p. 297). The woman continued to believe her boyfriend’s stories for three years, even though she read in her boyfriend’s diary “accounts contradicting those he had presented to her, and discovered a photograph of her [boyfriend] at a dance he had denied attending” (Werth and Flaherty, 1986, p. 297). The reporter Heidemann believed he owned the gun which Hitler used to kill himself, a Belgian FN, and refused to believe that it was a fake even when it was pointed out to him by someone who had seen the actual suicide gun, a 7.65 millimeter Walther, at Hitler’s side after his suicide. “Heidemann could not be swayed from his belief in its authenticity. He seemed to read great significance into the fact that only one of the revolver’s bullets had been fired” (Harris, 1987, p. 161). Similar self-deceptions seem present in the British Intelligence service in relation to obvious spies, and in John Felix when he chose to believe con artists even though he knew that they were lying to him.

Interestingly, deceivers also experience self-deception in “denying to themselves their attempts to deceive” (Werth and
Flaherty, 1986, p. 299). Apparently, the deceiver is also taken in by the internal consistency of the story, as one check-forger notes: “after you've cashed some of the same checks elsewhere, you can feel genuine anger when someone questions one of them. It's almost as if you've convinced yourself the check is perfectly good” (Klein and Montague, 1977, p. 16, italics deleted). One woman, who for eleven years deceived her husband as to her love toward him, said, “If you are going to lie about something, eventually you have to believe it in order to live with yourself” (Werth and Flaherty, 1986, p. 299). Deceivers' self-deceptions are also present in Lucy Lobdell's efforts to secure happiness in an apparently normal existence in that she “considered herself a man in all that the name implies” (Wise, [1883] 1976, p. 222); in Roy Cohn's denials of his homosexuality; and in the members of the Hollywood film community who named names before the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC), yet denied that they had hurt anyone (Navasky, 1980, pp. 281–85).

Often, the self-deception of both deceiver and victim results in a shared delusional system, in which each knows that the other knows of the deception but neither admits of the knowledge (Blum, 1972, pp. 14–7; Werth and Flaherty, 1986, pp. 299–300). By not acknowledging that he or she knows of the deception, the victim introduces a new level of complexity into the deceit. But self-deception can occur without anyone other than the deceiver being affected by it. In cases in which the “victim” of a deceiver's self-deception is only him or herself, beneficial consequences may even result: “High levels of motivation and achievement often require an unrealistically positive self-image, whereas people with more accurate self-perceptions tend to lose the motivations to go on with the business of living. . . . A belief which is unjustified and indeed false may well be instrumentally useful” (Elster, 1989a, pp. 6–7).

The pervasive experience of self-deception within deception is a result of our ability to entertain models of the world
independent of our experience. Our capacity for understanding is particularly implicated in its ability to allow us to create or imagine possible as well as actual worlds (Rappaport, 1979, p. 224). Self-deception cannot become incorporated into deception until the deceiver or victim makes a mental model of the deceptive activity in the form of a story or other narrative-like structure (which may or may not be dependent upon language). If a story is not involved in a deception, as when players enact acceptable deceptions in sports (Mawby and Mitchell, 1986) or in other comparatively simple deceptions such as the change-giving gesture of the man at the Albany pizza parlor, self-deception is not implicated. It is the juxtaposition between a story and what is actually the case which breeds self-deception. “Self-deceivers fabricate an elaborate 'cover story' to fill the gaps created by their failure to spell out something” (Dorpat, 1985, p. 51). When the deceiver or victim has such a story or model, she examines the model for internal consistency and is led to have certain beliefs from the model (as the epigraph from Wittgenstein states). At the same time, she also looks into the world or herself for confirmation of these beliefs. Self-deception arises because these two operations are under separable control: the model-generating “module” can function without the empirical-testing “module,” and vice versa. Thus, self-deception is not something which entails special explanation in terms of evolutionary mechanisms leading to its inception.\(^\text{16}\) Rather, self-deception is a natural by-product of the differentiation in humans between the capacity to use stories (and other “narratives” such as theories) as models of the world and the capacity to look to the world for understanding. Evolutionary explanations which “suggest that the primary adaptive function of self-deception is to make individuals better deceivers” (Krebs, Denton, and Higgins, 1988, p. 106) fail to recognize that self-deception is clearly not beneficial for victims, yet presumably derives from the same processes as self-deception in deceivers.\(^\text{17}\)
The failure to use the empirical-testing module in relation to information from the world is denial (Dorpat, 1985, p. 2). Denial may also result from failure to test predictions from the story-creating module and can be supported by a story, as when someone only accepts information which corresponds to the story or makes excuses and rationalizes inconsistencies between the story and contradictory evidence. But denial does not require a story to be effected.

*Imagination, Make-Believe, and Props*

The fact that the story module can function independently from the empirical-testing module suggests that the wildest stories can be told with the expectation that another will believe them. And, indeed, very strange assertions have been made by liars hoping to be believed. For example, when the con artist Kujau was asked to explain to the police why he falsely claimed to have a doctorate, Kujau “swore that he was the author of eleven books on Nazi Germany, including . . . a five-volume study, *Adolf Hitler the Politician*—all published by Ullstein company in Munich. He declared that . . . he possessed not merely one but three doctorates, awarded to him by the universities of Tokyo, Pretoria and Miami” (Harris, 1987, p. 123). Such invention unrestrained by reality is the essence of fiction. Indeed, the first fictional novels were deceptions. Daniel Defoe, whom “many regard . . . as the first true novelist” (Drabble, 1985, p. 263), passed off many of his novels as historical fact (Defoe, [1722] 1981, p. 21) and fabricated facts in his journalistic ventures (Burgess, 1966, p. 13).

But fiction is broader than storytelling, including anything which is depicted. Following Walton (1990, p. 296), “Let us broaden our understanding of ‘depiction’ to include representations that are auditory or tactile or otherwise perceptual in the way that paintings are visual. A depiction, then, is a representation whose function is to serve as a prop in
reasonably rich and vivid perceptual games of make-believe.” In fictional representations, someone offers an audience a prop, such as a story, a child’s doll, a snow fort, a painting, a theatrical production, or a concerto. The prop suggests particular imaginative scenarios for the audience to participate in. “Props are generators of fictional truths, things which, by virtue of their nature or existence, make propositions fictional . . . a fictional truth consists in there being a prescription or mandate in some context to imagine something” (Walton, 1990, pp. 37, 39). Thus, a doll prescribes imagining a baby, rather than a hippo or a wartime atrocity; Picasso’s Guernica prescribes imagining the horrors of war, rather than the rinsing of dishes or the play of a kitten. The particularity of the representation promotes a particular kind of imaginal experience (Walton, 1990, p. 297).

To generate fictional truths, the observer is to infer other propositions which are congruent with the representation, much as when a listener attends to the propositions in a story to make inferences. Representations also “contribute to social imaginative activities by assisting in the coordination of imaginings” (Walton, 1990, p. 21), thereby providing a common background for the mutual alignment of perspectives. Such inferencing and mutuality in imaginings is reminiscent of the pragmatic presuppositions and consequent mutual alignment of perspectives in normal human communication—and in deception.

Deceivers clearly utilize props and other depictions to prescribe imaginings of victims. These can be simple, such as fake fruit in a bowl, or elaborate, such as the pool hall furnished with bogus betters and pool players where John Felix met his con artists to place his bet (Train, [1908] 1922). The difference between makers of deceptive and nondeceptive fiction is that deceivers are engaging in a game of make-believe with victims which the victims are not privy to as a game of make-believe—an instance of deceptive pragmatic presuppositions.
Verification, Signs of Deception or Truthfulness, and Recursion

Once a deception becomes scripted or well-known to a victim, either through repeated exposure or explicit teaching, the victim may infer deception from observed correlates of a known deception. For example, if a host knows of Emily Post's advice for unhappy guests, suspicion may arise when a guest is called away by a telegram. The discernment of signs of regularity allows for both: (1) the detection of deception and (2) the avoidance of the detection of deception. This apparent contradiction occurs because: (1) the deceiver should find it difficult to both recognize and falsify all signs which might expose a deception, and (2) the deceiver can use his or her knowledge of signs which regularly indicate deception to falsify these signs so as to appear innocent. Because discernment of truth depends upon the imperfect correlation implicit in regularity, truth is necessarily not always distinguishable from falsehood and, thus, cannot always be proven. Even when signs of deception and truth-telling are not intentionally manipulated, as in normal responses to a question during a lie-detector (polygraph) test, they can be inaccurate indicators (Ekman, 1985). Once signs of deceit and truthfulness are recognized as such, their presentation can be used to indicate deception when truthfulness is the case, and truthfulness when deception is the case. For example, when trying to decide whether Hitler wrote the multiple forged diaries attributed to him, some historians were deceived because they took the unlikelihood of a forger's taking so many risks and producing such a voluminous output as evidence of lack of forgery (Harris, 1987, pp. 272, 302). Yet this interpretation is exactly what the forger expected: "Kujau knew that the more improbable his inventions sounded, the more likely people were to believe that he could not possibly be lying" (Harris, 1987, pp. 128–29). Because "rationally convincing" arguments are known to be the basis for verification (Barzun and Graff, [1957] 1969, p. 216, italics deleted), deceivers can manipulate
“evidence,” such as the unlikelihood of a forgery, to fit into a rationally convincing argument. Apparently, one can always invent a story to account for anything: “It would seem that there are an almost unlimited number of alternative explanations available to help keep alive a really durable myth” (West, 1985, p. 25).¹⁹

Like any other sign which is based on regularity, a sign of deception or truth-telling is at best usually associated with deception or truth-telling—it need not always be associated. Thus, any means of detecting deception becomes, for a deceiver, a means of avoiding detection and thereby a means of deception (Goffman, 1969; Dennett, 1978, p. 279). Indeed, the more the observer relies on seeking out foolproof cues, the more vulnerable he should appreciate he has become to the exploitation of his efforts. For, after all, the most reliance-inspiring conduct on the subject’s part is exactly the conduct that it would be most advantageous for him to fake if he wanted to hoodwink the observer. The very fact that the observer finds himself looking to a particular bit of evidence as an incorruptible check on what is or might be corrupted is the very reason why he should be suspicious of this evidence; for the best evidence for him is also the best evidence for the subject to tamper with (Goffman, 1969, pp. 79–80).

To appear truthful, a deceiver should simulate innocence, especially when this apparent innocence would lead a victim to believe that the person is unafraid of a deception being uncovered. This ploy is a common one for check-forgers: “you may hit a bank accountant who wants to look self-important. To do this he may decide to phone your check. Well, with this type you’d try very quickly to convince him that okaying the check is just as much a demonstration of importance” (Klein and Montague, 1977, p. 16, italics deleted). The deceptive use of cues of innocence to avoid detection of deception was elegantly enacted by Clifford Irving, who falsely claimed to have interviewed Howard Hughes and been authorized by him to publish the interviews as Hughes’ autobiography. When
questioned by detectives, Irving utilized a well-known sign of innocence in humans: “When we’d catch him up on something that looked incriminating, he’d freely say, ‘Gee, that makes it look bad for me, doesn’t it? But that’s the way it happened.’ He conveyed the picture of being candid, even to his own detriment—while he was turning out lie after lie” (Phelan, 1982, p. 22). Thus, the heuristics of innocence can be transformed into heuristics of deception: “con artists are eager to direct their victim’s attention to the most sensitive issue, thus authenticating their role by seeming to injure their own cause” (Hankiss, 1980, p. 109). Such authentication of one’s role was likely attempted by the homosexual lawmakers who validated their image as heterosexual by supporting anti-gay legislation (Branch, 1982; Borger, 1983, p. 36).

Deceivers may also avoid discernment of deception by inserting the false into the class of things believed true, thereby using external authentication. For example, the authenticity of the painting *Fortune Teller* as a la Tour was originally decided based upon its similarity to another forgery, the *Cheat*, which was initially assumed to be by la Tour but was then authenticated as a la Tour based upon its similarity to the *Fortune Teller*. The imbroglio became even more convoluted when another version of the *Cheat*—an unforged painting falsely attributed to la Tour which was apparently the original model for the forgery—was then authenticated as a la Tour based upon its similarity to its own imitation (Wright, 1984)!

Although some models are very difficult to distinguish from their imitations or forgeries (Haywood, 1987, pp. 108, 119), in many instances differences in style become discernible. Several forgeries of la Tour were discovered because the forgers “misunderstood the seventeenth-century way of seeing. . . . One reason for this misunderstanding of the past . . . is that they are trying to appeal. They must sell their wares, and must strike a chord which will echo in their own time. As soon as a few years pass the work becomes ‘dated’” (Wright, 1984, p. 127). Even when the forger and original artist are contempo-
raries, art historical analysis assumes that adequate knowledge of an artist's (or forger's) oeuvre allows detection of forgeries: "The premise on which an art historian works is that however much a particular painter tries to change his style he will always give himself away by certain little tricks of 'handwriting'" (Wright, 1984, p. 145). This premise seems unsupported in the forgeries of van Goghs (believed to be the work of Otto Wacker) because, according to the 1932 testimony of art reviewer Julius Meier-Graefe (cited in Jeppson, 1970, p. 84), "some of Wacker's van Goghs were of such high quality that, if proved false, no expert in future would ever be able to distinguish between true and false van Goghs with any certainty."

However, given enough time or enough forgeries, similarities between forged paintings and differences between the models and the forgeries would likely unmask the forgeries. When Hans van Meegeren was arrested in 1945 by the Dutch for collaboration with Nazis because he sold them a Vermeer, he revealed that the painting was a forgery by himself (Haywood, 1987, p. 115–16). Van Meegeren deceived highly qualified art experts, but today his forgeries seem more obvious (Goodman, 1968, p. 110). What accounts for this transformation? Goodman (1968, p. 111) suggested that the inclusion of any one forgery into the corpus of paintings actually by an artist modified the "criteria for acceptance" of any other painting into the corpus, such that additional forgeries came more and more to look like painting in the "authenticated" corpus. Once the forgeries were separated from the actual paintings, it became easy to spot differences. The art forgeries mentioned—of la Tour, Vermeer, and van Gogh—clearly resulted from the inclusion of fakes as genuine works of the masters. A similar problem occurred in verifying of the Hitler diaries, when many purportedly genuine instances of Hitler's signature were, in fact, those of a forger (Harris, 1987, p. 180). And planners of disinformation in wartime deliver coherent false and true information to the
enemy through double-agents (Moss, 1977, p. 23) or newspaper and magazine reports (Sexton, 1986, p. 353). Once the victim distinguishes fake from genuine artifacts, distinctions become ever more salient. But distinguishing between them in the first place is problematic. According to Clifford Irving [1969] 1971, p. 145), one art expert so frequently accepted fake Dufy watercolors as authentic that he later denied authenticity to two genuine Dufy paintings. If this story is true, it suggests that differences between similar works by different people can be distinguished, but this distinguishing need not result in detecting what is genuine.

The deceiver may also prepare the way for further deceptions by introducing expectations into believable simulations—that is, by producing a story within a story. Once a simulation is accepted as genuine, it becomes a means of introducing the victim to new beliefs and expectations. For example, Kajau inserted a sentence concerning a “small book” written by Hitler about Ludwig II in one of his forged Hitler diaries, so as to make people receptive to finding such a book, which Kujau then forged (Harris, 1987, p. 247).

Not only is it impossible to determine in all cases whether deception or truthtelling is occurring, but knowledge of signs of truthfulness or deception bring about new ways by which one can be deceived, if only by the deceptive use of these signs (Goffman, 1969; Klein and Montague, 1977; Anderson, 1986). Knowledge of regularity thus creates the possibility (1) of knowledge, (2) of being deceived about one's knowledge, (3) of knowledge of being deceived about one's knowledge, (4) of being deceived about one's knowledge of being deceived about one's knowledge, and so on. This embedding or recursiveness occurs because what is true of signs in general must be true of signs of deception and truthfulness—the regularity between signs and what they are signs of indicates what is likely but not necessarily the case given the sign. The recursiveness of signs of deception and truthtelling are sometimes humorously presented in novels.22 As a result of the recursiveness of
deceptive signs (and indeed of any representations), there is “the likelihood of several kinds of vagueness, ambiguity, obscurity, indeterminacy, undecidability concerning what is true and what is fictional, not to mention changes along these various dimensions during the course of one's experience” (Walton, 1990, p. 271). One is reminded of Peter Wright's despairing conclusion to his attempts to determine whether or not Roger Hollis was a spy: “It would have been nice to have solved the riddle. . . . But the secret world is not so simple, and at the end the shadows remained, as dense as before, shrouding the truth” (Wright with Greenglass, 1987, p. 336).

Thus, the same evidence of conformity to expectation used to implicate someone as honest can also support an interpretation of deception, and vice versa. Such symmetrical uses for evidence of regularity becomes problematic for innocent people when the nonexistence of any evidence of deception is itself taken as evidence of deceptive subterfuge. Because people can hide indications of their deceptive intentions, the lack of any signs of deception can be taken as a sign of either truthfulness or deceit depending upon one's expectations. Just this situation was where Japanese-Americans found themselves after the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor in 1941. Although early newspaper reportings assumed that the Japanese-Americans were exactly what they appeared to be—that is, “good Americans”—this attitude changed later without any evidence to the contrary. Although he acknowledged that Japanese-Americans had never sabotaged America's war efforts, one newspaperman wrote, “It is a sign that the blow is well organized and that it is held back until it can be struck with maximum effect,” and California's attorney general claimed that this lack of sabotage was “ominous”: “it looks very much to me as though it is a studied effort not to have any until the zero hour arrives” (Friedrich, 1979, pp. 112, 114). As a result of the delusional belief that Japanese-Americans were part of a plot by the Japanese to invade California, along with absolutely no evidence at all of any such collusion, Japanese-Americans
had their property confiscated and were herded together and imprisoned in "relocation camps." It is dismally ironic that there was not a single case of sabotage by Japanese-Americans throughout the war (Friedrich, 1979, p. 112).

Of course it is always possible (though unlikely) that someone can be so good at deception that she or he never does anything that a victim can use as evidence for deception. Such possibility is what leads us to infer something from nothing. After all, the only understanding we have of deception is from failed deceptions or those revealed by their perpetrators. But deception is usually likely to be revealed by an inconsistency between what the world should be like, as predicted from the story presented by the deceiver, and what the world is like. Consequently, every deception entails the withholding of information which would allow the victim to recognize the deception. Knowing what not to present takes as much skill as knowing what to present in a deception, as suggested by one child's inadequate deception, "I didn't break the lamp and I won't do it again" (Vasek, 1986, p. 296). By withholding, the deceiver is trying to avoid implausibility.

A deceiver may attempt to withhold other sources of information from the victim by getting the victim to withhold information from others which would allow the others to recognize the deception. Such secrecy allows the deceiver to control information received by the victim. Con men commonly set up situations in which it appears to be in the victim's self-interest to keep secret about some information (Blum, 1972). Such a tactic was employed by the deceivers perpetrating the Hitler diaries and led one historian to the general rule: "Beware of secrecy and being pressed to make a quick decision. . . . secrecy and speed work for the con man. To mount a proper check would protect us but would not be acceptable to the vendor" (Phillip Knightley, cited in Harris, 1987, p. 290). Secrecy can also be used self-deceptively to protect oneself from information one does not want to gain. For example, one friend A informed me that a mutual friend
B once claimed that an unnamed person had been caught doing something disreputable, and that circumstantial evi-
dence suggested to A that the unnamed person was my friend C. I was surprised because I did not believe such behavior likely of C, but A did not like C and used this belief that C was a cad as support for A’s dislike of C. A asked me not to tell anyone about these suspicions. I subsequently asked B if C was the unnamed person, and B said C was not the person and could not understand how A could have thought that C was the person.

This deception had a relatively short history in part because it was subjected to verification before it could be passed on. Other deceptions are similarly thwarted when they are subjected to inquiry. If a deception is undetected, obviously no evasive action can be taken. When advertising first began, for example, numerous deceptions proliferated because no effort was made to verify the claims of advertisers (Kintner, 1978, pp. 3–5).

Once the victim recognizes the deception, she or he is usually capable of eventually taking action against the deceiver or against the continuation of the deception (Werth and Flaherty, 1986). But while deceptions are not subject to control, they can escalate. One woman, who “toward her husband . . . felt no control concerning his deceit,” experienced a ramification of deception when she found herself deceiving her husband’s lover; the married woman lied about the quality of her relationship with her husband and about her knowledge of the affair (Werth and Flaherty, 1986, p. 301). In many cases, attempted controls are not effective because the putative “controllers” are interested parties. Thus, even when each party is attentive to possible deceptions, ramification is possible. For example, “The Hitler diaries project was less than one month old but already it had at least three layers of mendacity. Kujau was deceiving Heidemann; Heidemann was deceiving Kujau and the management of Gruner and Jahr; and the management of Gruner and Jahr
was deceiving the editors of *Stern*” (Harris, 1987, p. 149). Deception ramifies into self-deception for both victim and deceiver, as well as into collusion in denial of the deceit (Werth and Flaherty, 1986).

Victims can attempt to thwart deception by developing skepticism (Smith, 1986) and seeking multiple signs of evidence (R. V. Jones, cited in Moss, 1977, p. 26). However, by introducing safeguards against deception, victims influence deceivers to introduce further deceptions to quash the skepticism and satisfy the new evidence requirements, and, thus, deception escalates. This interaction between deception, skepticism, and escalation of deception is nicely characterized in the development of deceptive bidding in bridge. When deceptive bidding was introduced, several prominent bridge players attempted to rule the deception out of the game or simply played without it. When their competitors played deceptively, however, they were required to follow along or lose. In the period 1926–1935, when deception was first introduced, it was “crude and obvious,” but became more sophisticated, and potential victims became “less gullible” and “learned to recognize the feints and hoaxes”; consequently, deceivers “invented new gadgets, new gimmicks, new and less crude deceptive and harassing techniques. . . . deceptive and harassing bidding in the period 1936–48 . . . became more refined and more subtle, and thereby more difficult for its victims to identify and counterattack successfully” (Karpin, 1960, pp. 20, 59). A similar development of crude deception, skepticism, and more refined deception is present in other games (Sacks, 1980) and in sports.

Victims’ skepticism can also be used by deceivers, who may even induce skepticism to use it against victims. For example, during WWII the Germans shot down and captured a British bomber carrying the still experimental G beam, a navigational device which used radar to guide British bombers over Germany (Moss, 1977, p. 22). To counteract the Germans’ knowledge, the British invented a J beam (G and J are similar
sounding in German), built three J beam stations in southern England which transmitted navigational beams over Germany and had a double agent send information "overheard" about the J beams to German intelligence. The Germans responded by jamming the J beams, and did not learn until six months later that the bombers were actually using radar. When the Germans began to jam the radar (G beams), British bombers used the J beams. Because the Germans had established that the J beams were a hoax, they did not jam them (Moss, 1977, pp. 22–3). The Germans learned to their detriment that skepticism must be continually active, so that even information classified as false can later be used honestly to deceive.

Summary

From this overview, we can now come to some conclusions about human deception. Deception occurs when an agent intends that because of its behavior and props, another organism (or the agent itself) will come to have (and perhaps act on) a false expectation which is recognized as false (at some level) by the agent, and the agent succeeds in this intention. To carry out this intention, the agent relies upon its own and its victim's knowledge and expectations of regularities, embodied in schemas. Schemas derive from experience of regularities (scripts), inference from similar experiences or context (plans), or taking the perspective of another (plans). Because schemas preserve knowledge of what is usual or of what is expected, victims as well as deceivers may have inaccurate expectations. Deceivers utilize presuppositions about the victim's expectations, and about the victim's expectations about the deceivers expectations, to create a mutual alignment of perspectives between deceiver and victim.

If a deception is protracted, the victim may attempt to verify. The deceiver can use knowledge of what evidence the victim expects to indicate truthfulness to simulate such evidence of
truthfulness. The deceiver can avoid suspicion by tailoring the deception to fit the victim's expectations, and can constrain the victim to keep the information secret so that others cannot inform the victim of the deception. The deceiver can also provide the victim with a new set of expectations by telling the victim a plausible story. Telling a plausible story requires withholding as well as presenting information. Victims (as well as deceivers) often put more faith in a plausible story than in disconfirmatory evidence, at least for a time, thereby exhibiting self-deception. Our ability to create as well as believe stories derives from our capacity to use depictions to engage in imaginative games of make-believe.

If deceptions are protracted or if the same deception is to be used repeatedly with the same individual, victims become skeptical. Such skepticism can stop a deception. While deceptions are uncontrolled, they ramify into new deceptions or more frequent enactments of old deceptions. When deceptions are expected but cannot be controlled, the deceiver must invent new deceptions to circumvent the victim's skepticism. Because signs of deception and truthtelling can themselves be hidden or used deceptively, the victim has no absolute basis for inferring deception or honesty, and deceivers and victims can believe stories which have no evidential basis. As a result, deception as well as honesty may go unrecognized.

Notes

3 See Millikan, 1984, pp. 68–70.
4 See also Dennett, 1978, p. 279.
5 See Hayano, 1980, p. 117.
6 See, for example, Episode 4 in Hutt et al., 1989.
8 See Bennett and Feldman, 1981, p. 130.
9 See, for example, Karpin, 1960, p 301; Mawby and Mitchell, 1986, p. 321.
10 See Blum, 1972.
11 See, for example, Christie, [1924]1982, p. 33.
13 See also Tomasulo, 1989.
15 See, for example, Harris, 1987, pp. 177–78.
19 See also Bennett and Feldman, 1981, pp. 66–7.

References

Blum, R.H., Deceivers and Deceived: Observations on Confidence Men and Their Victims, Informants and Their Quarry, Political and Industrial Spies and Ordinary Citizens (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, Publisher, 1972).
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