Obsessed with Truth? Deconstructing Oscar Brenifier's "Phenomenology of Lying"

MARTIN CARMANN
MCI MANAGEMENT CENTER, INNSBRUCK, AUSTRIA

Abstract

Oscar Brenifier's approach to Philosophical Practice is contested. In this text I analyze his "Phenomenology of Lying" in a deconstructionist manner. I try to strengthen its strengths and make suggestions as to how to mend some important shortcomings that I find. First, I summarize and structure the 13 reasons for lying that Brenifier lists, and second the 21 patterns of lying that he identifies. Third, I discuss his notions of reality and truth, which are too much "correspondence-minded", hence the belligerence. Fourth, I explore coherence and consistency as valuable alternatives. Fifth, I follow the trace of the "dead philosopher", which is a very interesting concept of Brenifier's. It leads to confirming the coherence approach from within. Finally, I draw conclusions for the philosophical dialogue. I claim that Brenifiers' enlightening intentions can be implemented better with a peaceful and patient attitude towards the people coming for advice.

Key words: *Brenifier, truth, lying, coherence, consistency, reason, deconstruction*

Oscar Brenifier is one of the most controversial philosophical practitioners worldwide. Recently, he has written a comprehensive article about the "Phenomenology of Lying" which is circulating these days.[1] The text is dense and challenging, and it contains a lot of food for thought. Brenifier differentiates 13 reasons and 21 manifestations of lying. The reasons highlight the inner motivation of people who are lying, the manifestations describe communication patterns, which are lies, according to Brenifier.

Brenifier's focus is explicitly on the "cognitive aspect" of lying as opposed to psychological or ethical considerations. For Philosophical Practice, this focus is essential as it can claim its right as an independent practice only if it establishes human thinking as an "autonomous" realm within human existence.

My plan is this: I am reading the text carefully, reflecting on its implications in a critical way. First, I will summarize the 13 reasons and, second, the 21 manifestations of lying. I will put them into short messages and group them into clusters, in order to give a handy overview and make them more usable for Philosophical Practice. Third, I will check Brenifier's notion of reality and truth, his most widely used antonyms to lying. I will question his implicit model of reality as correspondence with language. Fourth, I am going to substitute correspondence with coherence and its connection to consistency. Fifth, I am going to check Brenifier's concept of the "dead philosopher", which is very interesting for our question. Finally, I will draw conclusions for the philosophical dialogue.

The 13 Reasons for Lying

I am reconstructing the 13 reasons for lying by putting them into a table (see table 1). While doing so, I am working with the text in three ways:

1.) I am clustering the 13 reasons into three groups, thereby imposing a structure onto them. This is, of course, a heuristic manoeuver. It makes it easier to have an overview and then use the list of reasons. In column one, I differentiate between "fear-based reasons", "goal-oriented reasons", and "social reasons" that cause people to lie. Lying is fear-based if its basic motivation is avoiding or alleviating fear. Lying is goal-oriented, if its basic motivation comes from pursuing specific targets. And it is based on social reason if it has to do with following social rules, norms or the respect for other people.

2.) I am translating the key argumentation into messages. As most philosophical texts, Brenifier's treatise on lying doesn't disclose its intended circle of readers. It is own thinking put on paper, not communication in progress. There are a lot of reflective statements, hypotheses, explanations and arguments, there are no messages directed at anyone in particular, though. For reasons I have described somewhere else[2] I am giving this a twist. I am summarizing the text by putting it into messages that can be used in Philosophical Practice. The structure I am using is a conditional sentence: "You might be lying because … " and then follows the particular reason. The "you" in use refers to potential clients.

3.) One minor thing: By clustering the reasons, I am changing their order of appearance, while maintaining the names (column 2) and the numbers (column 4) from Brenifier's text.

Cluster	Name	Message: You might be lying because …	Nb.
Fear-based reasons	Self-Defense	you are afraid of somebody and want to defend yourself.	*1*
	Self-Justification	you want to justify yourself by offering explanations	*11*
	Fear of Reality	you do not want to face an unpleasant and harsh reality.	*7*
	Fear of Reason	you are afraid of the demands of reason.	*8*
	Pain	you are trying to deny pain.	*10*
	Mythomania	you are addicted to telling lies.	*9*
Goal-oriented reasons	Desire	you desire something that you wouldn't get without "modifying the perception" of others.	*2*
	Complacency	you are not satisfied with your own limitations and hence you try to appear differently to yourself and to others.	*3*
Social reasons	Education	you have been educated to comply with social norms, conventions, and expectations.	*4*
	Diplomacy	you want to be diplomatic and not hurt others' self-respect or feelings.	*5*
	Niceness	you want to be nice and not cause any trouble.	*6*
	Benevolence	you want to help or protect another person.	*12*
	Reassuring	you want to reassure someone with your message.	*13*

Table 1. The 13 reasons of lying and their underlying structure.

All of these reasons describe motives that might lead to either "saying what is false or hiding what is true", as Brenifier puts it. If we hear a lie in Philosophical Practice, we can use the three clusters of reasons as a checklist for finding out the motivation behind the lie which can help understand our client better.

Now, the question is: How can we detect it? How can we know someone is lying and not rely on gut feeling only? In order to help out, Brenifier has set up another list. He calls it the 21 "manifestations of lying" which I, with my background of more than 20 years of coaching, translate into "communication patterns". These communication patterns can be observed often. Whenever we see any of it being used, we know we might be hearing a lie.

The 21 Communication Patterns of Lying

Again, I am setting up a table (see table 2) in order to structure the complexity of the content. In principle, the same method as above applies. Column one contains the cluster title, column two the name of the pattern. Column three contains the message of the pattern in a nutshell and column five the number of the pattern from the text. Column four is new, though. It contains all the communication signals Brenifier's text links to a communication pattern. When in use, a communication signal can indicate the pattern attached. All of the words used in column four are quotes from the text. When in simple inverted commas, the sentences come from the clients themselves.

This time I am putting the 21 patterns into five distinctive groups. I call them "Hiding yourself", "Blurring reality", "Fighting for acceptance", "Insisting on own perspective", and "Putting on a show".

Cluster	Name	Message	Signals	Nb.
"Hiding Yourself"	Naivety	You are playing naïve, either seeing everything "nice and rosy" or, in the contrary, dark and dramatic.	Lack of experience of life or general knowledge, absence of good judgement; willingness to believe that people always tell you the truth.	1
	Ignorance	You pretend ignorance by saying "I don't want to know" or by saying "I am not sure".	'I prefer not to know.' 'I don't know.' 'I'm not sure.'	2
	Pretension	You pretend to have qualities you would like to have but have not.	About self-image; denial or bragging.	10
"Blurring Reality"	Chaos	You are using confusing communication as an immunization strategy against a reality you want to avoid. You prefer associative to logical thinking.	Lack of causal principle, of categorization, of reasoning.	3
	Vagueness	You thrive on vague hints and remain undecided, maybe even declare this a virtue.	Imprecision; no commitment to a given proposition.	5
	Diversion	You divert the attention of others by buying time.	'I need time to think.' 'We cannot find the right words.' 'I can't do it right now.'	6

	Smartness	You are using your smartness to confuse things with complicated arguments.	Semantic games and debates; vouching for the limitation of language; obscuring the discussion; gratuitous skepticism 'I am not sure this is the case.' 'I have some doubts about what you say.' 'I am not fully convinced.'	13
	Affirmation negation	You are weakening your own words by contradicting yourself.	Saying something and immediately denying it. 'Yes, but …' 'I would not say it is …' 'I was just joking …'	16
"Fighting for acceptance"	Omission	You are only telling part of the story, omitting some important aspects.	None, you need to know/ fathom the omitted parts to be able to tell.	4
	Redescription	You redescribe reality with different words thereby giving it a twist to the positive or negative.	Switching from positive to negative connotations and vice versa; exchanging neutral words with emotionally loaded ones; political correctness.	7
	Explanation	You are making up explanations thereby trying to justify yourself.	'Let me explain …' Using vague generalizations, referring to exceptions, extreme or absurd alternatives.	8
	Embellishment	You make reality more beautiful as it is.	Producing an artificial image with the purpose of arousing admiration and interest; seducing.	11
	Rhetoric	You downplay or inflate your messages with words.	Adverbs: 'a little', 'sometimes', 'partially', 'not always'; Hyperbolic expressions: 'very', 'wonderful', 'totally', 'perfectly', 'incredibly', 'always'; Indetermination: 'it depends', 'sometimes', 'maybe'	19

	Manipulation	You are telling others what they want to hear in order to get from them what you want.	Telling someone what he wants to hear, to please or flatter him, to seduce him, to lure him …	21
"Insisting on own perspective"	Sincerity	You insist on your sincere feelings and convictions without any self-criticism.	Emotional and cognitive attachment to an opinion; 'good conscience', Being in the right; well-meaning and honest; always truthful.	9
	Myth	You create myths by telling and re-telling stories in a peculiar way.	Establishing identity; telling stories, periodically repeated.	12
	Wishful Thinking	You describe things not how they are but how you want them to be, good or bad.	'Things are this way' instead of 'I would like things to be this way'. Idealizing.	14
	Bad Faith	You deny reality by stubbornly blaming some and declaring yourself or others to victims.	Denying a truth that is obvious for others; a form of stubbornness; avoiding responsibility for own actions and mistakes, and their consequences; victimizing.	20
"Putting on a show"	Narcissism	You are creating a show in order to get attention.	Seeing oneself as either great, powerful, smart, beautiful, or on the contrary, as a poor victim, as weak, stupid and ugly.	15
	Playing	You like to play with your imagination. You are joking a lot.	Inventing fiction; joking; irony; provoking; inducing laughter, thinking, emotional reaction.	17
	Bullshit	You don't care about rationality, reality or objectivity. You are just telling impressive stories.	Ignoring rationality, reality or objectivity; being full of conviction, not having distance to oneself or one's own speech.	18

Table 2. The 21 communication patterns of lying and their structure

Each of the communication clusters is tied to a peculiar way of dealing with the dichotomy of lying and truth:

- "Hiding yourself" means the person is trying to hide their perspective/ qualities behind a shield of defense mechanisms, such as naivety, ignorance, or a self-image that doesn't reflect the person's "true" self.
- "Blurring reality" refers to a class of communication strategies that obscure the truth by all sorts of relativizations, contradictions or vague general statements which are not clearly related to the present situation.
- "Fighting for acceptance" is subordinating the truth to social acceptance. It is more important to gain the "yes" of the other person than to share the truth.
- "Insisting on own perspective" claims the own position to be the only true one, seeking constantly for confirmation. Thereby, all true dialogue which equals the essence of two-way communication is refused.
- Last but not least, "Putting on a show" is a class of patterns that don't care for neither truth nor lying. They are focused on impressing others without any expectation towards finding the truth.

Having created a well-structured overview over all the patterns that Brenifier has described in detail, I need to state two things: We know now how people lie and what causes them to. This is useful when we have clients that seem to not tell the truth. We hear their words, see their patterns and scrutinize their motives. The question is: Why is this important for Philosophical Practice? Why would we want to figure out whether or not somebody is lying? What is the mission here? The second question is closely linked to the first one. Let's assume somebody is lying and we have found out. Why would we want to disclose/ address it? What is the purpose here?

Both aspects, mission and purpose are to be clarified. If we manage to do so, I assume, we can clearly describe and define the value and contribution of philosophical consultation as such. As is the custom with deconstruction I will not approach these questions from an outside perspective but follow the traces within Brenifier's text. Does it show any concern with these questions? Affirmative.

Questioning Reality

In order to answer the first question, we need to consider the peculiar relationship of language and reality. Hegel, in his "Phenomenology of Spirit" of 1807, is probably the first one to state that there is no fixed bond between a word and the reality it indicates.[3] Ferdinand de Saussure, in his famous "Course in General Linguistics" (first published in 1915) points out that the creation of meaning in language has to make do without any natural attachment to perceptions of whatever kind, not to speak of any trans-verbal reality.[4] The young Nietzsche, in a fragment of 1873 called "On Truth and Lies in an Extra-moral Sense", claims language to be a system of loose metaphors whose very condition is lying, as there can be no truth in metaphorical language.[5] I like the fervor with which he accuses all language of lying and attenuates truth to a simple feeling of being obliged to certain social communication rules.

How does Brenifier handle the difference of language and reality in his text? He doesn't seem to bother. He uses the notion "reality" as a singular term, indicating there is one reality out there that

can be perceived and accessed. He seems to insinuate a relationship of simple representation in sentences such as: "Reality is often unpleasant and harsh, in particular when compared to our wishes." Or: "Reason is a powerful tool … to better access the nature of reality." Or: The person "protect(s) himself from any intrusion of reality". He commands a "reality principle" that keeps us from buying into our own self-delusions or speaks about "the way things are". And he speaks about an "objective reality". Language as such, concedes Brenifier, can be ambiguous, vague, imprecise or illusionary. It can even "de-realize the world and events". This is interesting as he seems to set up a juxtaposition of one unequivocal reality and its unclear, subjective descriptions.

Reality as such is clear, language is not. At times, Brenifier uses the word "perception" or "our perception". It indicates that humans perceive reality, before they describe it in language. They tell the truth, if they describe their perceptions correctly, they lie if they don't. Now, how does Brenifier know that what humans perceive equals one objective reality? And that their descriptions are correct or wrong? How can he secure one objective reality in spite of subjective perceptions and descriptions? And how can he then tell, e.g., that a "manipulator fabricates a false reality through speech"? He uses a Kantian approach. Kant, in his "Critique of Pure Reason", solves the tension of subjective perception and objective knowledge by establishing the "I think" as a set of logical rules that guide, or rather: should guide, and limit, individual imagination.[6] Brenifier takes the same route. He uses the notions of "reason" and "logic" to secure the objectivity of one joint reality we all are supposed to perceive in the same way. If somebody thinks and communicates logically and rationally, they will recognize reality as it is. The problem with this approach lies in the ambivalence of "is" and "ought", does guide and should guide. Logical thinking or reason is a talent we all share, as opposed to: Logical thinking is an obligation we should all comply with. In the end it is all about the normative control of individual imaginative forces, or isn't it?

Brenifier would most probably deny that. He uses the expression "common sense" in order to indicate that this is not only a theoretical problem but is also reflected in how most people are understanding things. He states that terms can be "obvious to common sense" or speaks of "a truth that is obvious for others" and for ourselves, "if we accept to refer to a minimum of common sense". He even equals "common sense and logic" in one sentence. I object. While common sense was an emancipatory movement in the 18th century, it has a perilous connotation in the more and more diverse societies of the 21st century. Majorities are no clear indicator for truth anymore, they can be, however, for group pressure.

At its core, the problem is connected to how we understand the correlation of "truth" and reality. If we presume a correlation of correspondence, which is the easiest understanding, we will take reality as granted. In that case, the clarity of its cognition and descriptions is dependent only on the intricacies of language and how we master them. Despite his subjective turn, Kant has not fully abandoned such an understanding of reality as I have shown elsewhere.[7] And Brenifier is heading down that road, too. He thinks that we can see and describe our joint reality clearly if we think, act, and communicate in rational and reasonable ways. And he uses common sense to support that hypothesis.

While we need to acknowledge the reference of language to perceptions, there is no way of ever securing firm bonds between the two of them. We only have access to language and the experience that most people in most cases (with the exception of poetry or art) intend to indicate a "some-

thing" beyond language. But luckily, correspondence is not the only option available, there is also a second one. We can understand truth in terms of coherence. If we presume truth and reality to be in a correlation of coherence, the picture changes. It is no more about finding out what is out there and whether the reality of it is being represented correctly. If truth is a question of coherence, then we are observing whether or not the mental constructions of a person, expressed in their words, sentences, lifestyle, and body language, are coherent. Whatever a person utters becomes part of the text we are studying in order to find out whether everything is fitting. This has a significant effect on the question of truth and lying. Lying would mean that some aspects don't seem to fit.

Checking Coherence and Consistency

There are traces of coherence truth in Brenifier's text, especially when he talks about the "self-delution" of people. People are deluding themselves by playing more naïve than they are, by pretending ignorance when they have the knowledge, by hiding aspects of their thinking and being from themselves and others, by fabricating "creative" self-images etc. If deluding yourself equals lying, then being true to yourself equals truth, or truthfulness. The shift from truth to truthfulness which I use doesn't happen by chance. Heidegger has claimed Nietzsche to be the last metaphysician having taken exactly the shift from ontological truth to subjective truthfulness.[8] Again, we can find a trace of this shift in Brenifier's text. Let's listen to his own words:

> Authenticity is "the quality of being genuine and true, more endowed with integrity. Authenticity denotes an emotionally appropriate behavior, more distant and reflective, a significant and responsible mode of existence, since it is defined through a clear and conscious purpose. Authenticity implies a critical dimension because it maintains a broader scope, towards the person itself, including its inner conflicts; it maintains a relation to reason and reality."

With Brenifier, checking coherence equals checking authenticity. How authentically does a person handle the diverse aspects of their life, including references to self and reality? That's the question Brenifier is dealing with. Integrity, handling emotions, reflection, responsibility, purpose – these are the dimensions of authenticity he focuses on. Inner conflicts are hints at gaps in the coherent reality of the other person as is the language the person uses. The language signals Brenifier has listed do indicate issues with the truthfulness of a person, whether they emerge unintendedly, subconsciously, or are created on purpose. At the same time, he uses to watch his clients very carefully, he reads their body language and compares it to what they are saying. So he constantly checks the coherence of their reality, i.e. their truthfulness.

Let's pursue another trait that is part of the quote mentioned: the sequence of "reflective", "conscious", "critical", and "reason". Summarizing the text, we can state: Reason denotes conscious, critical reflection and, as such, it is part of an authentic personality. At the same time, conscious critical reflection can only take place on the level of language. So, there is a difference between checking the overall coherence of a life and checking its verbal description as such. I call the latter "consistency". The coherence check takes everything into account, all the manifestations of a life plan (language, lifestyle, body language). The consistency check focuses on the logical use of language when talking about certain issues. Thus, consistency is the logical, language-bound part of coherence. The coherence check can be seen as a wider, aesthetic approach to life whereas the consistency check focuses primarily on the logical aspect of thinking.

Of course, one could argue that, especially in Philosophical Practice, we are mostly confronted with the verbal self- and life-description of a client. As such, coherence and consistency might be overlapping to a great extent. Or, with Derrida, we could extend the meaning of text to basically everything[9] which again would cause the distinction of coherence and consistency to collapse. I still insist on differentiating the two for heuristic reasons. There are people, clients, who rely more on their thinking than others. For them, the consistency check is more important. Others do have other issues. For them, a coherence check in the wider sense of the word may suffice. Just offering a consistency check to everybody would not be enough.

The Dead Philosopher

Philosophical Practice is a practice that is based on theory but mustn't be mistaken for it. While this statement sounds trivial enough, it is very important. Academic philosophy, usually, makes do with scrutinizing a text and drawing intellectual conclusions from the examination. We have also done that with Brenifier's "Phenomenology of Lying" up to this very moment. We could close the file now stating there to be an issue with his notion of reality and making suggestions as how to mend that flaw. Things are more complicated, though.

Brenifier has mentioned at times that philosophical practitioners, when doing their work, need to be "dead as a person"[10]. This sentence sounds weird to most people. For our discussion of what "reality" means in Brenifier's universe, however, it matters a lot. "Being dead as a person" is a metaphor, of course. You can't be "really dead" and practice philosophical dialogue. But what else could it mean? In which context would such a statement make sense? In order to have a closer look, we need to refer to Brenifier's book on "Philosophical Consultation"[11], where he states: "To philosophize is to cease living"[12].

Brenifier himself admits this to be a symbolic remark[13] which he then illustrates by highlighting different possible meanings: philosophy as "learning to die", overcoming desires, creating abstract discourses and conceptualizations. All of these are, according to Brenifier, "contrary to life", "a rupture with life"[14] or "the way in which the intellect denies life"[15]. He calls "this inner philosopher" a "demon" which "prevents us from living"[16]. Then he moves on to the "ability to problematize" which "must examine the limits and falsity of any given opinion"[17] including one's own dearest principles and assumptions. Again, he likens this radical self-relativization to death:

> "And in order to accomplish such a change of attitude, one must actually 'die to oneself', 'let go', one must give up momentarily what is dearest to him, whether it be ideas and deep emotions. … By observing how the people involved in a discussion get heated when contradicted, how they use extreme positions and strategies to defend their ideas … we can conclude, indeed, that to give up one's own ideas is a kind of 'little death'".[18]

All of these arguments are not convincing as they are only playing with words. So far, death has been a weird metaphor for the different aspects of the lives philosophers live and the work they do. The metaphor is too strong and too weak at the same time. That intellectual work can create orgasms of its own—"little deaths", as they say in Italy—may be a smug anecdote but it can't bear any argumentative weight. So why bother? Because there is one more relevant thought in Brenifier's

text. It reaps most benefit, although it seems to be mentioned just as a side remark, when Brenifier equals Socrates' philosophical work to soul-searching:

> Socrates wanted to "examine the minds of his fellow-creatures by searching their souls. It was in this unique place, the soul of the others, that he found the truth. … Our proposition is that Socrates found the truth in people because they gave him the opportunity to give up his own thought, by penetrating theirs, they allowed him to die to himself, to give up his own being by penetrating theirs."[19]

Again, the comparison to death is disputable, but the scenery as such is not. Most philosophical practitioners may have made the same experience: Good philosophical dialogue can be described as soul-searching where the practitioners are invited to sort of 'enter into the life concept' of their clients. They are shown around and get to see inner assumptions, values, principles, thoughts, self-explanations, feelings, and desires of the other person. It is indeed like entering into a stranger's house, leaving your own home behind, even forgetting about it momentarily.

Now, how is this experience connected to our question of reality, truth, and lying? What kind of truth is it that we can find in the other person's soul? It is *their* truth, of course, we embark on *their* reality. Otherwise, "dying to yourself" would not make any sense even as a metaphor. We leave our own reality and truth behind in order to "search" and "examine" theirs as Brenifier puts it. We are invited on an adventure trip coming back enriched, as we have seen the world from a different angle. Returning into our own realities with our own truths, we are not the same anymore. We have expanded our worldview and, as such, our identities have changed as well. Our old worldview, "reality", has disappeared, a new one has emerged with the perspective of the other person being integrated to a certain extent.

So, the metaphor of the dead philosopher has a double meaning here: The philosopher is "dead as a person" as long as he or she is fully immersed into the reality of the client, helping sort things out or putting them into perspective. This "death" is temporary, as it ends at the latest when the client pays their bill. The other "death" is figurative, indicating that the self-concept of the philosopher, their perspective on life, is changing with each new, meaningful, "mind-boggling" philosophical encounter. It dies, so to speak, whenever a new concept arises.

Implications for the Philosophical Dialogue

Our discussion of reality/ realities, coherence, and consistency has significant implications for what we do in Philosophical Practice. While there are some traits in Brenifier's argumentation and methodology that I subscribe to, there are others that I think need a change of concept. Let me start with the insights the text provides:

- One goal of philosophical consultation, next to amplifying autonomy, is increasing authenticity. Authenticity is not the "core" of a person, but their way of openly handling cognitive or emotional dissonances within themselves or with others. It is at least part of the mission of Philosophical Practice to help people become more authentic.
- Lying to themselves and/ or to others limits the innate potential of a person. This is especially true for fear-based lies. But, also, goal-oriented or social lies limit a person

as they weaken their resolve and their readiness to stand and face conflict. Part of the purpose of Philosophical Practice is to provide the client with sufficient feedback so that they can become aware of their subconscious, or half-conscious, or full-conscious sacrifices of personal freedom which they make for the sake of something else whenever they are lying.

- The gaps, cracks, and fissures in language and lifestyle can be used for checking the coherence or consistency of a life concept. This is probably the essence of Brenifier's work and the most valuable insight he has been providing us with.
- Reason is the ability to create meaning, to interpret, judge, evaluate and decide.[20] It is the ability to problematize and to conceptualize. It claims general relevance and it doesn't care about idiosyncrasies. It is demanding, it can be harsh and even brutal at times.[21] This power needs to be trained, cultivated and kept under control in order to not be hijacked by individual aggressive tendencies.

Here are some suggestions for a change in theory design:

- Reality is the reality of the client that needs to be checked in terms of coherence. As it is their reality concept it needs to be treated with respect, patience, and clear feedback. I am aware that these aspects can collide. Nevertheless, we need to help the clients understand their own way of thinking in order to reach the authenticity-goal mentioned. In addition to that, I suggest using the term "reality" in its plural form, "realities", for the sake of epistemological clarity.
- We enter into the world of our client if we are invited in. This is not a "penetration"[22], however, and soul-searching very rarely takes the form of a "hand-to-hand combat with reality"[23], especially not if the reality concept of the other person is at stake. Being aware of the raw powers of reason, I nevertheless advocate a disarmament of words when it comes to the intimate encounter of joint philosophical practice.
- We can check the conscious life plan of a person in terms of consistency, if the person wants us to. Inconsistent thinking creates trouble, either emotional or cognitive. However, freedom is also the freedom to create trouble for yourself. We can't do the work without conscious permission. We can only offer observations and feedback. It is up to the person whether they take it or not.
- The notion of "common sense" needs to be dealt with cautiously. It doesn't serve the cause if we use it to increase pressure on our client. Thus, common sense would only be the philosophical equivalent of group pressure which an independent person will always resist against, with or without a consistent life concept. For dependent people, however, this kind of pressure limits their autonomy right from the beginning which we cannot want.
- Suppose we critically examine the consistency of a life concept and detect flaws in its rational construction. Suppose we manage to feedback this to the client in a constructive way. If the client's answer is "I don't know", this doesn't indicate ignorance. It indicates that the client hasn't thought about this aspect yet and needs time to reconsider his or her life plan. The same holds true for sentences such as "I need time to think". With a notion of consistency in place, these sentences develop a new meaning, they need to be taken literally. People do really need time to ponder over their principles, assumptions, and convictions. If we think about truth in terms of correspondence, there's no need for

waiting. Just look and describe what you see "out there" or within yourself, and don't lie! If truth is a question of coherence and/ or consistency, it makes sense to ask for reconstruction time, ideally in an authentic way.

- With the change in truth, also the notion of lying becomes way less important than Brenifier has put it. Lies are just fissures in the life-plan of a person. As Brenifier states correctly, lying is not always conscious, and if it is conscious, the intentions are not always bad. From my perspective, creating a trans-moral, pure cognitive meaning of the word "lying" is too much of an effort. In most language systems, lying equals cheating and is deemed bad. In Philosophical Practice, it is not important to figure out whether a person is lying or not. This is not an end in itself. This is just one possible entry point to philosophical dialogue. The important question is for which purpose the person is telling lies and if there are other, less harmful or more effective ways to serve this purpose.
- A "Phenomenology of Lying" is indeed very helpful insofar as it supports the philosophical practitioner with identifying the traces of self-delusion in language and lifestyle. From my perspective, it would be too much to expand it to a quasi-ontology of communication. Brenifier doesn't seem to intend that, but he seems to make theoretical ground for it, especially in connection with the recurring notion on one "reality" that needs to be referred to. When talking about sincerity, Brenifier himself discusses similar deviations. I suggest changing the headline of the text to "Phenomenology of self-delusion" and re-arrange the argumentation accordingly.

I am coming to the end of my analysis. The text provides plenty of inspiration which we can use very well in Philosophical Practice. I have started out with the question of whether or not Brenifier's text is obsessed with truth. It is, from my perspective, as lying conjures up truth as its identical twin. For me, neither lying nor truth are in the center of my attention, my mission is autonomy. However, freedom has a close connection to truth and truthfulness, as Jesus has already remarked: "Truth will set you free"[24].

Notes

1. Not having been formally published yet, the text is difficult to quote. Here's how I do it: If not marked otherwise, each quote in inverted comas comes directly from Brenifier's text.

2. See M. Carmann (2020), Martha's Messages, where - building in the works of Austin and Searle - I show how to substitute denotative with appellative speech-acts.

3. G.W.F. Hegel (2011), Phenomenology of Spirit (Cambridge Hegel Translations), transl. by T. Pinkard, Cambridge.

4. F. de Saussure (2011), Course in General Linguistics, New York.

5. F. Nietzsche (1999), Unpublished writings from the period of the Unfashionable Observations (The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche, Vol. 11), transl. by R.T. Gray, Redwood City.

6. I. Kant (1999), Critique of Pure Reason (The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant), transl. by P. Guyer and A.W. Wood, Cambridge.

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8. M. Heidegger (1991), Nietzsche, transl. by D.F. Krell, New York.

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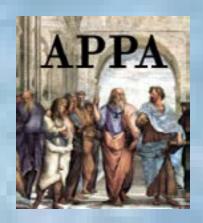
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Dr. Martin Carmann, born 1969, has studied Theology and Philosophy. His doctoral thesis on Derrida and Kant was published in 1999. Since then, he has been working worldwide as a leadership and organization development coach. His philosophical background is Derrida, Luhmann, Kant, and Hegel.

Correspondence: mc@carmann.at

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