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Lying and Deception: Theory and Practice

Thomas L. Carson

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Lying and Deception: Theory and Practice Thomas L. Carson
Thomas Carson offers the most comprehensive and up-to-date investigation of moral and conceptual questions about lying and deception. Part I addresses conceptual questions and offers definitions of lying, deception, and related concepts such as withholding information, "keeping someone in the dark," and "half truths." Part II deals with questions in ethical theory. Carson argues that standard debates about lying and deception between act-utilitarians and their
critics are inconclusive because they rest on appeals to disputed moral intuitions. He defends a version of the golden rule and a theory of moral reasoning. His theory implies that there is a moral presumption against lying and deception that causes harm — a presumption at least as strong as that endorsed
by act-utilitarianism. He uses this theory to justify his claims about the issues he addresses in Part III: deception and withholding information in sales, deception in advertising, bluffing in negotiations, the duties of professionals to inform clients, lying and deception by leaders as a pretext for fighting wars, and lying and deception about history (with special attention to the Holocaust), and cases of distorting the historical record by telling half-truths. The book concludes with a
qualified defence of the view that honesty is a virtue.

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