



Why We Lie: The Evolutionary Roots of Deception and the Unconscious Mind

David Livingstone Smith

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Deceit, lying, and falsehoods lie at the very heart of our cultural heritage. Even the founding myth of the Judeo-Christian tradition, the story of Adam and Eve, revolves around a lie. We have been talking, writing and singing about deception ever since Eve told God, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." Our seemingly insatiable appetite for stories of deception spans the extremes of culture from King Lear to Little Red Riding Hood, retaining a grip on our imaginations despite endless repetition. These tales of deception are so enthralling because they speak to something fundamental in the human condition. The ever-present possibility of deceit is a crucial dimension of all human relationships, even the most central: our relationships with our very own selves.

Now, for the first time, philosopher and evolutionary psychologist David Livingstone Smith elucidates the essential role that deception and self-deception have played in human--and animal--evolution and shows that the very structure of our minds has been shaped from our earliest beginnings by the need to deceive. Smith shows us that by examining the stories we tell, the falsehoods we weave, and the unconscious signals we send out, we can learn much about ourselves and how our minds work.

Readers of Richard Dawkins and Steven Pinker will find much to intrigue them in this fascinating book, which declares that our extraordinary ability to deceive others--and even our own selves--"lies" at the heart of our humanity.

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