The truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

LIES

TRUTH

## Did Moe lie?

1. Moe has eaten the cake Juliet was intending to serve to company. Juliet asks Moe, *'Did you eat the cake?'* Moe says, *'No. Maybe the cat did.'*

Did Moe lie?

## Did Mary lie?

2. John and Mary have recently started going together. Valentino is Mary's ex-boyfriend. One evening John asks Mary, *'Have you seen Valentino this week?'* Mary answers, *'Valentino's been sick with mono for the past two weeks.'* Valentino has in fact been sick with mono-nucleosis for the past two weeks, but it is also the case that Mary had a date with Valentino the night before.

Did Mary lie?

## Did Nurse Braine lie?

3. Two patients are to be wheeled into the operating room. The doctor points to one of them and says, *'Is Jones in here for the appendectomy or the tonsillectomy?'* Nurse Braine has confused the patients' charts and replies, *'The appendectomy'*, when in fact poor Jones is supposed to have his tonsils taken out.

Did Nurse Braine lie?

## Did Shomol lie?

4. Shomol is invited to dinner at his boss's house. It was a dismal evening enjoyed by no one. Wanting to say something nice to the boss's wife, Shomol says to his hostess, *'Thanks, it was a terrific party.'*

Is Shomol lying?

--from L. Coleman & P. Kay, 'Prototype semantics', *Language* 57 (1981)

## What constitutes a lie?

- The speaker has made a false statement.

- The speaker knows that the statement is false (i.e. the speaker does **not** believe that the statement is true).

- The speaker intends to deceive the hearer(s).

### Did Moe lie?

1. Juliet asks Moe, *'Did you eat the cake?'*
   Moe says, *'No. Maybe the cat did.'*

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### Did Moe lie?

| Speaker | Is the state-ment false? | Does the speaker know that the state-ment is false? | Does the speaker intend to deceive? |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Moe | **YES** | **YES** | **YES** |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

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### Did Mary lie?

John asks Mary, *'Have you seen Valentino this week?'* Mary answers, *'Valentino's been sick with mono for the past two weeks.'*

## Did Mary lie?

| Speaker | Is the state-ment false? | Does the speaker know that the state-ment is false? | Does the speaker intend to deceive? |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Moe | YES | YES | YES |
| 2. Mary | NO | NO | YES |
| | | | |
| | | | |

## Did Nurse Braine lie?

The doctor says, *'Is Jones in here for the appendectomy or the tonsillectomy?'*
Nurse Braine replies, *'The appendectomy'*, (when in fact poor Jones is supposed to have his tonsils taken out)

## Did Nurse Braine lie?

| Speaker | Is the state-ment false? | Does the speaker know that the state-ment is false? | Does the speaker intend to deceive? |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Moe | YES | YES | YES |
| 2. Mary | NO | NO | YES |
| 3. Nurse Braine | YES | NO | NO |
| | | | |

## Did Shomol lie?

(It was a dismal evening enjoyed by no one.)
Shomol says to his hostess, *'Thanks, it was a terrific party.'*

## Who's the 'biggest' liar?

| Speaker | Is the state-ment false? | Does the speaker know that the state-ment is false? | Does the speaker intend to deceive? |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Moe | YES | YES | YES |
| 2. Mary | NO | NO | YES |
| 3. Nurse Braine | YES | NO | NO |
| 4. Shomol | YES | YES | NO |

## The leading perjury case:
*Bronston v. United States* 409 U.S. 352 (1973)

Issue: Bankruptcy examination

Defendant: Samuel Bronston, president of a movie production company

Fact: Bronston had had personal and company bank accounts abroad.

## Interrogation of Bronston

- Q: *Do you have any bank accounts in Swiss banks, Mr.Bronston?*

- A: *No, sir.*

- Q. *Have you ever?*

- A: *The company had an account there for about six months, in Zurich.*

However, Bronston failed to state that he also once had a personal bank account in Switzerland for 5 years, with more the $180,000 in it.

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## Bronston's Verdict:
## Guilty of Perjury !

**Trial court's instruction to the jury:**

The defendant could be convicted of perjury if he gave an answer that although "not literally false, but when considered in the context in which it was given, nevertheless constituted a false statement."

Bronston: *"The company had an account there for about six months, in Zurich."*

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## What happened next?

- The trial court had <u>convicted</u> Bronson for perjury.
- The appeals court <u>affirmed</u> the conviction.
- The U.S. Supreme Court unanimously <u>reversed</u>.

WHY?

Because Bronston's answer, although unresponsive, was 'literally true'.

## What makes an answer to a yes/no question 'literally true', but unresponsive?

It does not really answer the **yes/no** question.

> Prosecution: "*Do you have any accounts in Swiss banks?*"
> Bronston: "*The company had an account there for about 6 months, in Zurich*"

> John: *"Have you seen Valentino this week?"*
> Mary: *"Valentino's been sick with mono."*

## What looks like a 'responsive answer' may not be!

Although it appears to answer a <u>content question</u>, it does not really do so -- **not** '*the whole truth'*.

Boss: "<u>*Why*</u> *weren't you at work yesterday?*"
Employee: "*I was sick.*"

Wife: "<u>*Where*</u> *did you go this afternoon?*"
Husband: "*I got gas for my car, I went to Home Depot, and I stopped by the drug store.*"