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### PROJECT

## The Evolution of Deceit and Self-Deception

I intend to complete a book on deceit and self-deception that will put this subject at last on a scientific footing. It will be based on evolutionary logic and will incorporate findings from numerous disciplines, including neurophysiology, brain chemistry, immunology, experimental and social psychology, and the study of everyday life. The main argument is that self-deception evolves in the service of deceit, by improving our ability to fool others and by doing so at less immediate cognitive cost to the deceiver. Of course hiding reality from yourself is a dangerous game to play and self-deception is associated with numerous costs. Many famous thinkers (e. g. Freud, Marx) have claimed to have a theory of self-deception, either explicit or implicit, but none of these has had any kind of firm scientific foundation, nor have they withstood the test of time.

### Recommended Reading

Burt, A. and R. Trivers. 2006. *Genes in Conflict: the Biology of Selfish Genetic Elements*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Trivers, R. 2002. *Natural Selection and Social Theory: the Selected Papers of Robert Trivers*. New York: Oxford University Press.

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### COLLOQUIUM, 09.12.2008

## Deceit and Self-deception

Deception is everywhere, at all levels of life

There is a co-evolutionary struggle between deceiver and deceived

Self-deception evolves in order to more effectively (and efficiently) to deceive others

"Cognitive load" is a key factor in the detection of deception in humans

Intelligence and deception appear to be positively correlated (and self-deception?)

Deception starts very early in childhood (indeed, in utero)

Self-inflation is the rule in life, with both benefits and costs

There is such a thing as imposed self-deception

Old-age positivity may give immune benefits

Self-deception makes a unique contribution to warfare

Power, the illusion of control and lack of male empathy all make their contribution

So do false historical narratives: every country has one

The recent Israeli/American adventure in Lebanon is used to illustrate some of this

Summary: self-deception is important in human life at all levels