

Deception: a deeply controversial concept which has often been misunderstood

The word *deception* comes from the Latin *decipere* (*de-* and *capere*), that is, "grasp and remove", meaning "lure" and "trap", and comes to the English language through Old French. From the beginning, the word was given a negative connotation, because it is considered synonymous to *fraud*. The condemnation of the use of deception and trickery as a morally reprehensible practice, a shameful expedient and an unlawful conduct has prevented the study of deception as an integral part of strategy, at least in the Western world. When we develop a plan to achieve a goal in a given time, and using a certain amount of resources, we have always to face circumstances, people, organizations and limitations that hinder our purpose. One way to solve this problem is to take direct action against what opposes us. This choice of a direct approach to problems can rarely produce a satisfactory solution, but always manages to produce bitter and costly conflict. A more intelligent and more useful option to implement our strategy is to hide its purpose and its most delicate steps from those who might be interested into opposing it. The best way to hide our purpose is to induce potential antagonists to look elsewhere, while we try to achieve it, or even to mislead our opponents to perceive our purpose in such a way to believe that its achievement is to their (real or illusory) advantage. In this way, we can turn an obstacle into an asset, reducing the potential for conflict that is otherwise triggered to our disadvantage. This ability to take advantage of the characteristics of a situation and change the behavior of potential adversaries in a manner more favorable to our intentions, is the ultimate meaning of deception. Therefore, this website is not concerned with frauds, hoaxes or trickery; instead, it investigates the idea of deception as a tool of analysis and strategy.