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Liar. The Art of Detecting Deception and Eliciting Responses
Global Traveler LLC, Leesburg 2008, pp. 126

The cover of the book tells the reader that the author is a former CIA Chief Polygraph Examiner and Interrogator, which naturally is a strong incentive to dive in, but which also makes the reader's expectations soar. Fortunately, the expectations are satisfied. Moreover, since the book is relatively brief and written in a focused, matter-of-fact manner, it is one of the rare texts where every sentence counts.

The book is filled with neither theoretical sophistication nor redundant erudition (despite its rich list of references). At first glance, it might therefore appear to be a sort of introductory manual targeted at a wide general audience. However, I believe that a person with no inside knowledge of police or intelligence operations will understand little of it, since the subtleties, allusions and understatements are accessible only to readers who have already had their fair share of real-life confrontations with an opponent. It seems therefore that the audience that *Liar. The Art...* is in fact addressed to is law enforcement investigators and information collectors, whether in the public or private sector, already rather advanced in their professional career.

In terms of specific contents, it must be said that McManus gives little room to polygraph examinations. He (partially) devotes one chapter to the subject matter, but the discussion is limited to a general description of the method

and the controversies to which it gives rise. However, in the closing remarks he notes that "...the polygraph is still the best tool available for the detection of deception and will continue to play an integral role in both the law enforcement and intelligence communities" (p. 16).

The key question that the author asks and that the book is organised around and attempts to answer is: "How do you convince someone to provide information that is not in his/her best interest?" The entire book is a book of instruction of sorts, guiding the reader through the various aspects of the answer to this question.

Thus, we learn about behavioural and verbal signs of truth and deception, we study how to develop interviewing strategies, how to establish rapport between the interviewer and his "Subject" and, finally, how to elicit information. A note on an issue which is interesting and noteworthy: McManus consequently capitalises the word "Subject". This is no random choice, given how he emphasises the relevance and importance of treating the person who is being interrogated with respect, and points to such behaviour as one of the crucial conditions of the interrogator's success.

As a sample of how knowledge is presented in the book, let me comment on two matters which are, in my opinion, of the greatest significance, i.e. establishing rapport and elicitation. "Rapport is established the moment eye contact is first made and is continually built upon as personal interaction progresses (...), by showing patience, sincerity and compassion for the people you're interviewing. (...) Rapport can easily be developed and exploited if you make the effort to do so", writes McManus. It is therefore important to ask the Subject, "How was your trip today?", "Is there anything I can do to make you more comfortable?" The rapport, once established, can easily be lost. Factors conducive to such loss include: lack of professional knowledge on the part of the interrogator, his/her sloppy appearance or slouching, downgrading the status of him/herself or of the Subject, arrogant attitude, interrupting or finishing sentences, abruptly changing the subject, "going for the jugular", etc. According to McManus, "subtlety is the key to your success in establishing rapport" (p. 43-44). This introduction is followed by a number of specific instructions on how to proceed depending on how the situation develops. The instructions are often illustrated with specific examples of dialogues which help put the matter in an appropriate tactical context. Brief exercises which allow the reader to evaluate his/her newly acquired knowledge contribute to the educational value of the text.

McManus emphasises on a number of occasions that the purpose of elicitation is not to gain a confession (where the Subject admits to being guilty of certain acts), but to gain valuable and reliable information. However, it is difficult not to notice that an authentic confession constitutes, in the eyes of the author, precisely such valuable information. This comes as no surprise, since we read in the book that “providing the Subject with justification for his/her guilty wrongdoing is the key to getting a confession”, and “using the Subject’s emotions, values, and self-perceptions is the key to getting credible and reliable information” (p. 55-56).

The chief subject matter of the book, i.e. a detailed presentation of strategies of gathering information from individuals, is complemented by a broad discussion of how intercultural differences influence the above-mentioned strategies. It is clear that this aspect is of particularly keen interest to McManus. A sizeable portion of this section is devoted to issues of contacts with representatives of Middle Eastern culture. The reader is explained how easily a gap in know-how may lead to a failure in an interview with an inhabitant of that area. One question that seems neutral but pertains to the Subject’s spouse may be enough even to break rapport that has been established previously, and the loss may be impossible to remedy. Attention is drawn to a different understanding of responsibility between American and Middle Eastern culture; an Arab interlocutor should not be told “you lost it” since he/she is likely to turn to denial; instead, “it went missing” or “it was lost” is more appropriate. An appropriate gesture to greet someone in the Middle East is to squeeze gently both of their hands. It makes a good impression to express admiration for the contribution of the Arab culture to global thought in astronomy, geometry, mathematics, etc. The list of instructions and useful hints goes on.

A similar description is provided with regard to other cultures. In Latin America, a bare minimum of initial greetings requires a person “to say Hello, to shake hands, and to ask about one’s family. Anything less is an insult and provokes a deep emotional reaction; it is difficult to communicate effectively with clenched teeth” (p. 82). This by no means is to say that it is enough to know a few handy pointers. Latin America is enormously diverse, and cultural differences between Ecuador and Argentina are, according to McManus, as great as those between France and China. In Africa, in turn, what is truly important is the understanding of the continent’s long tradition and rich heritage, and the acute sensitivity on the African continent to the issue

of the slave trade. The above-mentioned illustrative examples are of course just a glimpse at the knowledge the book offers with regard to the problem of intercultural differences in information gathering.

Liar. The Art... is surprisingly packed with information, considering the book's moderate length. The language is simple, but extremely to the point, which forces the reader to pay attention relentlessly, and to constantly stay close to what the author is saying. At times one has the impression that McManus himself stands close by, and with a gentle smile guides the reader, at the same time requiring the reader to use his/her wits, to think clearly, and to be ready to undertake a significant effort.

The book was written in the aftermath of 9/11. In McManus's own words, "there are no fool-proof recipes for detecting deception and eliciting information; however, information is the best defense, as well as the most viable weapon in resolving any conflict, terrorism being no exception". The book itself is a signature that Barry L. McManus puts in huge letters under the old piece of wisdom: *Plus ratio quam vis*.

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