DAWES HICKS LECTURE ON PHILOSOPHY

Thomas Hobbes: Rhetoric and the Construction of Morality

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I

TOWARDS the end of *The Elements of Law*, which he completed in 1640,[1] Thomas Hobbes launched the first of many attacks on the state of moral philosophy in his time. Those who talk about 'right and wrong, good and bad', he complains, are largely content to adopt the opinions 'of such as they admire, as Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca and others of like authority'. But these writers have failed to provide us with anything approaching a genuine understanding of virtue and vice. They have merely 'given the names of right and wrong as their passions have dictated, or have followed the authority of other men as we do theirs' (Hobbes, 1969, p. 177).

One of Hobbes's primary aims as a philosopher is to overcome this kind of reliance on authority[2] and formulate what he describes in *Leviathan* as 'the science of virtue and vice' (1985, p. 216). In his later writings, moreover, he insists with increased confidence that he has in fact attained his goal. He already declares in Chapter XXVI of *Leviathan* that his conclusions in that treatise 'concerning the Morall Vertues' are 'evident Truth' (1985, p. 323). Five years later, he speaks with even greater

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[1] For the date of completion see 'The Editor's Preface' in Hobbes (1969), p. vi. *The Elements* was at first circulated in manuscript, but was subsequently published (in two separate parts) in 1650. See Hobbes (1969), p.v. and n., and cf. Macdonald & Hargreaves (1952), pp. 9–10.

[2] On Hobbes's wish to transcend such 'authority' see Danford (1980).

assurance in *De Corpore* of the contrast between his own knowledge of moral theory and the mere opinions of ancient philosophers on the same subject.[3] There were 'no philosophers natural or civil among the ancient Greeks', even though 'there were men so called'. If we think of moral and political theory as a genuinely scientific subject, then it is 'no older . . . than my own book *De Cive*' (1839, p. ix).

It has been a valuable feature of recent scholarship on Hobbes and his contemporaries to insist that, in advancing such claims about the scientific standing and evident truth of their conclusions, they were pitting themselves against a prevalent form of scepticism.[4] It is arguable, however, that the nature of the sceptical challenge they took themselves to be facing has been characterized in an oversimplified way. It tends to be assumed that their basic concern was with the doubts increasingly expressed about the status of the sciences following the rediscovery of Sextus Empiricus's manuscripts in the latter part of the sixteenth century.[5] Sextus had not only outlined the familiar contentions of Academic scepticism, but also the more radical doubts associated with Pyrrho and the Pyrrhonist school of Alexandria. The Pyrrhonians had suggested that, because conflicting evidence can always be assembled for and against any given proposition, it will always be rational to suspend belief.[6] It was this new threat to the idea of truth that the systematic philosophers of the scientific revolution are said to have opposed.

There seems no doubt that the wish to counteract Pyrrhonism does much to explain the epistemology of the period. As a number of scholars have shown, it is against this background that we need to read the anti-sceptical arguments of Descartes, as well as the 'mitigated scepticism'

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[3] The Latin version of this text first appeared in 1655, the English translation in 1656. See Macdonald & Hargreaves (1952), pp. 41–2. Cf. Hobbes's further complaints in Chapter I about 'the want of moral science' (1839, p. 10).

[4] This claim was first systematically argued by Richard Popkin (although there are interesting remarks in Brunschvicg (1944), esp. pp. 113–54). See esp. Popkin (1979), and for a full list of Popkin's contributions to the discussion see Watson & Force (1988). The influence of this Pyrrhonist background has recently been explored in the case of Descartes as well as Hobbes. On Descartes see especially Curley (1978); on Hobbes see Pacchi (1965), esp. pp. 9–10 (discussing Popkin) and pp. 63–9, 97–100, 179–83. On Hobbes and scepticism see also Battista (1980), esp. pp. 73–4; Missner (1983); Sarasohn (1985); Sorell (1986), esp. pp. 63–7 and Tuck (1988 & 1989).

[5] See for example Curley (1978), pp. 12, 16; Popkin (1979), p. 214; Missner (1983), p. 408; Tuck (1989), pp. 7, 14. None of these writers discusses the *Ars rhetorica* as a source of sceptical arguments.

[6] For this characterization of Pyrrhonism see Popkin (1979), pp. xiv–xvi. Cf. also Dear (1984), p. 192.

associated with Gassendi and Mersenne.[7] To equate the challenge of scepticism with that of Pyrrhonism, however, is to overlook a quite different range of sceptical arguments that proved at least as troublesome to those whose main aspiration—as in the case of Hobbes—was to create a science of morality. These further doubts arose not within the domain of philosophy, but rather within the neighbouring discipline of rhetoric, the assumptions and procedures of which also attained a new importance in the latter part of the sixteenth century.

The earliest English treatises on the *Ars rhetorica* appeared in the course of the 1550s,[8] by which time the study of rhetoric had already established itself as an integral part of the linguistic training provided by the English Grammar schools.[9] It was a training that could scarcely have been less hospitable to the idea of reducing moral philosophy to a science. Students of rhetoric were encouraged to argue not in a demonstrative but rather in a forensic style, part of their skill being to show that a plausible case can always be constructed even out of the most unpromising dialectical materials. Still more threatening to the idea of a moral science was the fact that they were also expected to master a number of specific techniques for persuading an audience that any normative question can always be debated more or less effectively *in utramque partem*.[10] Most threatening of all was the fact that these techniques included a *figura* known to rhetoricians as *paradiastole*, the precise purpose of which was to show that any given action can always be redescribed in such a way as to suggest that its moral character may be open to some measure of doubt.

These considerations bring me to the thesis I shall seek to develop in what follows. It is against this rhetorical background, I shall argue, that Hobbes's concern to establish a science of virtue needs to be understood. To a large extent, what Hobbes may be said to be *doing* in laying out his

[7] On Descartes see Curley (1978) and Popkin (1979), pp. 172–92. On Gassendi and Mersenne see James (1986–7). On Gassendi see also Bloch (1971), esp. pp. 110–47 and Sarasohn (1982) on his 'modified scepticism'. On Mersenne see also Lenoble (1943), esp. pp. 190–5 and 321–8 on his critique of Pyrrhonism, and Dear (1984).

[8] Richard Sherry, *A Treatise of Schemes and Tropes* (1550) contains the first survey of *Elocutio* in English. See Sherry (1961). Thomas Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique* (1553) is the earliest work in English to furnish an outline of all five of the classical *partes rhetoricae*. See Wilson (1962). (But the first English treatise on *Inventio*, Leonard Coxe's *The Arte or Crafte of Rhethorique*, had appeared as early as c.1530. See Coxe [c.1530] and cf. Howell [1956], p. 90 and Crane [1965].)

[9] For a survey of this training, and the place in it of neo-classical rhetoric, see Baldwin (1944), vol. 2, pp. 1–68.

[10] Kahn (1985), esp. pp. 158–61 claims that Hobbes also argues in this rhetorical style. Her thesis (that Hobbes's practice is out of line with his professed precepts) is ingeniously argued, but also seems to me overstated, as I try to indicate below.

moral theory is addressing himself to this particular form of rhetorical scepticism and seeking to demonstrate that it can be overcome.[11] It follows that, if we wish to understand the role of scepticism in Hobbes's thought, as well as the shape and character of his own arguments about the science of virtue, we have no option but to start by setting off across the rugged and ill-charted terrain of Renaissance rhetorical theory.[12] In particular, we need to begin by examining the *figura* of paradiastole, the main device employed by practitioners of the *Ars rhetorica* to indicate the shifting and ambiguous character of virtue and vice.[13]

II

The history of the word *paradiastole* begins with a curious irony. The word itself is obviously Greek, and its literal meaning can perhaps be conveyed by saying that it describes the rhetorical act of going beyond a certain

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[11] As this way of expressing the point is intended to underline, my argument attempts to exemplify the specific approach to the history of philosophy which I discuss and defend in Skinner (1988b), esp. pp. 273–85. Note that, when I connect scepticism with rhetoric, I am only arguing that rhetoric encouraged a form of moral scepticism. I am not arguing that Renaissance rhetoricians revived the thesis of Academic scepticism (a thesis convincingly criticized in Monfasani [1990], esp. pp. 191–200).

[12] Howell (1956) provides the only full-scale outline, but even he has nothing to say about the use of specific rhetorical techniques. But for an excellent outline which concentrates on the Italian background see Monfasani (1988), and for two valuable introductions to the Renaissance *Ars rhetorica* as a whole see Vickers (1988), pp. 715–45 and Vickers (1989), chap. 5, pp. 254–93. For a salutary emphasis on the importance of *elocutio*, and the current neglect of this theme, see also Vickers (1981), and for a list of the figures and tropes see Vickers (1989), pp. 491–8 (a list which does not, however, include paradiastole). Recent commentaries on Hobbes (my own included) have been woefully insensitive to the importance of this rhetorical background for an understanding of Hobbes's thought. It is true that the position is now beginning to improve. Zappen (1983) discusses Hobbes's supposed Ramism, Kahn (1985) his alleged use of techniques of dialogue, Sacksteder (1984), Johnson (1986) and Mathie (1986) his changing attitudes to rhetoric, Sorell (1986), pp. 133–7 and 1990a and 1990b his use of persuasive devices. But even these scholars fail to address what I take to be the central question: what impact the Renaissance understanding of the *partes rhetoricae* had upon the organization and presentation of Hobbes's political science. It would admittedly take a book to do justice to this theme. This is the book I am trying to write. Meanwhile, this lecture simply attempts to consider one element (that of *paradiastole*) within one subdivision (that concerned with the *figurae sententiarum*) of one of the five *partes* (that of *elocutio*) of the neo-classical *Ars rhetorica*.

[13] The *figura* of paradiastole has so far been little studied. But I am much indebted to Cox (1989) for her remarks (especially at pp. 53–5) on the Italian background, and to Whigham (1984) for general discussion at pp. 40–2 and valuable references at pp. 204–5.

distinction, and hence of putting together dissimilar things.[14] But no ancient Greek text appears to have survived in which the term is mentioned, still less defined.[15] For a definition, and for an attempt to illustrate the precise rhetorical technique to which the term refers, we need to shift our attention from Greece to Rome.[16] Specifically, we need to turn to the earliest Roman adaptations of the hellenistic theory of rhetoric within which the word seems initially to have been coined.[17]

The earliest surviving attempt at a definition is provided by Publius Rutilius Lupus, a near contemporary of Cicero's, in his glossary of rhetorical *schemata* entitled *De figuris sententiarum ac verborum*.[18] The entry under 'paradiastole' reads as follows: 'This figure of speech serves to separate out two or more things that appear to have the same meaning, and teaches us how far they are distinct from each other, so that each can be assigned to its proper sentence.'[19]

Although Rutilius's account has left its mark on a number of modern Latin dictionaries,[20] it can scarcely be described as very illuminating. No examples are given of paradiastolic utterances, and no sense is conveyed of the rhetorical advantage to be gained from mastering this particular *schema* or figure of speech. It was left to Quintilian, over a century later, to make good both these omissions in the brief but highly influential analysis of paradiastole in Book IX of his *Institutio Oratoria*. Quintilian begins by suggesting that, rather than merely transliterating the word Παραδιαστολή, as Rutilius had done, the figure ought to be assigned a Latin name. The term he suggests as an equivalent is *Distinctio*, which he defines in turn as 'the means by which we are able to note the differences between similar

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[14] This is the phrase used in the attempted definition *sub* Παραδιαστολή in Liddell & Scott (1986), p. 1308. The *O.E.D.* simply repeats it. See *The Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. 7 (1933), *sub* Paradiastole, pp. 448–9. Note that the *O.E.D.* is mistaken in dating the first occurrence of the word in English to the 1580s. It already occurs in Peacham (1577). See fn. 86, *infra*.

[15] This I infer from the absence of any citations from Greek texts in the standard Lexicons.

[16] This being so, it seems ironic that the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* refuses to accept the word as Latin at all.

[17] That the term is hellenistic in origin is suggested by the fact that its first occurrence postdates Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, in which it makes no appearance. On the other hand the concept, even if not the word, was certainly well-known to Thucydides. See *infra*, fn. 142.

[18] For the suggested dating see Murphy (1981), pp. 262–3.

[19] 'Hoc schema plures, aut duas res, quae videntur unam vim habere disiungit: & quantum distent, docet: suam cuique propriam sententiarum subiungendo'. See Rutilius Lupus (1533), fo. 2ᵛ.

[20] For example the definition given by Lewis & Short appears to be a partial translation of it. See Lewis & Short (1879), *sub* 'Paradiastole', p. 1300.

things.[21] As it stands, this definition is hardly less enigmatic than Rutilius's; but Quintilian characteristically adds a number of examples that serve at once to bring out the rhetorical force of the figure and at the same time to disclose its essential character. As he explains, we have an instance of speaking paradiastolically 'whenever you call yourself wise rather than cunning, or courageous rather than overconfident, or careful rather than parsimonious'.[22]

This 'nalysis was by no means universally accepted among later Roman writers on the rhetorical arts. Iulius Rufinianus, for example, whose influential glossary *De Figuris Sententiarum & Elocutionis* appeared in the course of the fourth century,[23] offers a strongly contrasting account. It is true that he begins with a definition which, in so far as it is possible to follow it at all, seems to echo Quintilian's to some degree. 'We have a case of paradiastole', he maintains, 'when similar things are disclosed after there has been a reversion to their contraries'.[24] But the exemplary quotation he adds—a well-known passage from Virgil's *Eclogues*—makes it clear that he thinks of the device as essentially concerned with balancing synonyms and antonyms antithetically, and not in the least with challenging the evaluative description of actions in the way that Quintilian's examples had implied.[25]

To a large extent, however, it was Quintilian's understanding of the concept that prevailed. This was doubtless due in no small measure to the fact that Isidore of Seville adopted it in his *Etymologiarum sive Originum Libri XX*, perhaps the most widely-read encyclopaedia of late antiquity. Isidore opens his treatise with a survey of the liberal arts, devoting Book I to Grammar and Book II to Rhetoric and Dialectic. His discussion of Rhetoric includes an analysis of the figures of speech, and among these he duly classifies the *schema* of paradiastole. He begins by putting forward a new definition, declaring that 'we have an instance of paradiastole whenever we have to grasp what we say by interpretation'.[26] But when he turns to illustrate this somewhat vague claim, he draws his examples almost

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[21] 'Huic [i.e., to the figure of Coniunctio] diversam volunt esse distinctionem, cui dant nomen Παραδιαστολήν, qua similia discernuntur' (Quintilian, 1920–2, IX.III.65, vol. 3, p. 482).

[22] '*Cum te pro astuto sapientem appelles, pro confidente fortem, pro illiberali diligentem*' (Quintilian, 1920–2, IX.III.65, vol. 3, p. 482).

[23] For the suggested dating see Murphy (1981), p. 262.

[24] 'Paradiastole Est, cum similes res disceruntur [sic; recte *discernuntur*], contrariis redditis' (Rufinianus, 1533, fo.31ʳ).

[25] The passage Rufinianus cites ('Triste lupus stabulis ...' etc.) is from Virgil (1898), lines 80–3, p. 51. Cf. Rufinianus (1533), fo.31ʳ.

[26] 'Paradiastole est, quoties id, quod dicimus, interpretatione discernimus' (Isidore, 1911, vol. 1, I.21.9, Sig. H 1ʳ).

word-for-word[27] (though without acknowledgement) from Quintilian's account. 'It is a case of paradiastole', he maintains, 'when you call yourself wise rather than cunning, or courageous rather than heedless, or careful rather than parsimonious'.[28]

As well as trying to define the meaning of the term, a number of Roman rhetoricians sought to illustrate how the technique of paradiastole can be put to effective use in moral or forensic argument. The earliest surviving attempt to carry the discussion forward in this way can be found in the treatise generally known as the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. The author of this work—who seems to have been a near contemporary of Cicero's—has never been conclusively identified.[29] But his treatise appears to have been widely used as a textbook of rhetoric, and there is no doubt that his analysis of paradiastole had a marked influence on subsequent discussions of the concept, including that of Quintilian himself.

The author of the *Ad Herennium* describes the technique at the start of Book III, the opening sections of which are devoted to the theme of deliberative oratory. A deliberative speech, we are first reminded, has as its characteristic aim the procuring of some *utilitas* or advantage.[30] The main problem in deliberative oratory is accordingly that of finding the best means to establish that we are in the right, while at the same time placing our opponents at a disadvantage. One of the principal techniques the author of the *Ad Herennium* recommends for achieving these results is that of paradiastole. We must seek to ensure that the virtues—those qualities of action which will show us to be in the right—'are amplified if we are recommending them, but attenuated if we are proposing that they be ignored'.[31] For example, 'we must try if possible to show that what our opponent designates as justice is really cowardice, and a lazy and corrupt form of liberality; what he calls prudence we shall speak of as foolish, indiscreet and offensive cleverness; what he speaks of as temperance we

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[27] The only difference is that Isidore says *inconsiderato* where Quintilian had said *confidente*.

[28] 'Paradiastole est . . . cum te pro astuto sapientem appellas, pro inconsiderato fortem, pro inliberali diligentem' (Isidore, 1911, vol. 1, I.21.9, Sig. H 1ʳ).

[29] Until Raphael Regius convinced the learned to the contrary in the 1490s, however, the *Ad Herennium* was generally believed to be by Cicero himself. For a discussion of its date and authorship see [Cicero] (1954), pp. vii–xiv.

[30] 'Omnem orationem eorum qui sententiam dicent finem sibi conveniet utilitas proponere' ([Cicero] 1954, III.II.3, p. 160).

[31] 'partes sunt virtutis amplificandae is [sic; recte *si*] suadebimus, adtenuandae si ab his dehortabimur' ([Cicero] 1954, III.III.6, p. 166).

shall speak of as lazy and dissolute negligence; what he names courage we shall call the heedless temerity of a gladiator'.[32]

By the time the author of the *Ad Herennium* was writing, the technique of speaking paradiastolically had clearly come to occupy a prominent place in Roman public debate. This is attested by most of the leading historians of the period. Almost all of them point to the extreme potency of the device in moral and political argument, while a number of them also display an interest in analysing and further exploring the rhetorical technique itself.

The first major Roman historian to concern himself with paradiastole is Sallust in his *Bellum Catilinae*. The main passage in which he illustrates the device in action is the one in which he describes the debate in the Senate following the first discovery of Catiline's plot. According to Sallust's account, most speakers concentrated on what should be done with those already arrested. But Marcus Cato instead called for strong measures to forestall any further extortion or violence. Cato is represented as conceding that 'at this point someone is sure to ask instead for mildness and clemency'.[33] But such a response, he is made to say, will simply be an instance of the pervasive corruption already introduced into public affairs by the use of paradiastolic speech. 'The truth is that by now we have lost the true names of things. It is due to the fact that the squandering of other people's goods is nowadays called liberality, while audacity in wrong-doing is called courage, that the republic has been reduced to its present extremity.'[34]

Slightly later in date, but very similar in tone, is Livy's invocation of paradiastole in the *History*. This occurs in the course of his celebrated description in Book XXII of the delaying tactics adopted by the Roman dictator, Quintus Fabius Maximus, in the face of Hannibal's advance on Rome. According to Livy's narrative, Fabius's campaign was almost undermined by his own master of horse, who was 'more enraged even than

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[32] 'si quo pacto poterimus, quam is qui contra dicet iustitiam vocabit, nos demonstrabimus ignaviam esse et inertiam ac pravam liberalitatem; quam prudentiam appellarit, ineptam et garrulam et odiosam scientiam esse dicemus; quam ille modestiam dicet esse, eam nos inertiam et dissolutam neglegentiam esse dicemus; quam ille fortitudinem nominarit, eam nos gladiatoriam et inconsideratam appellabimus temeritatem' ([Cicero] 1954, III.III.6, pp. 166–8).
[33] 'Hic mihi quisquam mansuetudinem et misericordiam nominat' (Sallust [1921], LII. 11, p. 102).
[34] 'Iam pridem equidem nos vera vocabula rerum amisimus: quia bona aliena largiri liberalitas, malarum rerum audacia fortitudo vocatur, eo res publica in extremo sita est' (Sallust [1921], LII, 11, p. 102).

Hannibal by these prudent measures'.[35] Evidently a rhetorician as well as a soldier, the master of horse is represented as seeking to discredit his commander-in-chief by way of offering a paradiastolic redescription of his dogged refusal to join battle. As Livy puts it, 'fierce and hasty in his judgments, and with an ungovernable tongue, he spoke of his superior, at first among a few, and then openly among the troops, not as a man of deliberation but simply as lacking in energy, and not as cautious but rather as timorous'.[36]

To this account Livy adds an observation about the nature of paradiastole which was later to be much repeated, and which certainly offers a clearer explication of the concept than most of the rhetoricians had managed to provide. He points out—in a manner somewhat reminiscent of Aristotle's doctrine of the mean—that the capacity to speak paradiastolically depends on the fact that some of the vices must be acknowledged to be 'neighbours' or close relations of the virtues.[37] This in turn gives rise to the perpetual possibility of 'exalting' or 'disparaging' particular actions by way of redescribing them. On the one hand, as Ovid was later to put it in a phrase that became proverbial, 'vice is often able to hide itself by its proximity to virtue'.[38] And on the other hand, as Livy himself remarks in the case of Fabius's subordinate, even the most virtuous lines of conduct can always be disparaged 'by fabricating vices that lie in the neighbourhood of the person's virtues'.[39]

Of all the Roman historians, however, it is Tacitus who shows himself most interested in the phenomenon of paradiastole. As he remarks at the beginning of the *Agricola*, he felt himself to be living 'in times harsh and inimical to the virtues'.[40] He was, moreover, a man of sceptical and even cynical temperament, someone who delighted in showing that—in the words of the *Historiae*—leading political figures can generally expect to

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[35] 'Sed non Hannibalem magis infestum tam sanis consiliis habebat quam magistrum equitum' (Livy, 1929, XXII.XII.11, p.240).

[36] 'Ferox rapidusque in consiliis ac lingua immodicus primo inter paucos, dein propalam in volgus pro cunctatore segnem pro cauto timidum' (Livy, 1929, XXII.XII.12, pp. 240–2).

[37] See Livy (1929), XXII.XII.12, p. 242 on how some vices are *vicina* to some virtues.

[38] 'Et lateat vitium proximitate boni' (Ovid, 1979, II.662, p. 110). Among English rhetorical theorists of the Renaissance, both Sir Francis Bacon and Sir Philip Sidney treat Ovid's sentiment as proverbial. See Bacon (1857), p. 677 and Sidney (1973), p. 121.

[39] 'adfingens vicina virtutibus vitia' (Livy, 1929, XXII.XII.12, p. 242).

[40] 'saeva et infesta virtutibus tempora' (Tacitus, 1970, I.4, p. 28).

find their vices reinterpreted as virtues.[41] So it is perhaps not surprising to find him offering so many instances of the rhetorical technique by which these reinterpretations were generally carried out.

There are two moments in particular in the *Historiae* where, with a characteristic shrug, Tacitus points to the technique in play. The first is in recounting the death of the emperor Galba in AD 69. Tacitus makes it painfully clear that he wholly dissents from the high opinions voiced at the time about Galba's capacities. 'Everyone', as he puts it in a famous epigram, 'would have judged him worthy to rule if only he had not ruled.'[42] 'Nevertheless', he adds, 'Galba's high birth, together with the general terror of the times, served to guarantee that his sheer inertia was hailed as wisdom'.[43] The other point at which Tacitus speaks in similar vein is in recording the ignominious end of Vitellius, Galba's immediate successor. Of this emperor, whom Tacitus views with unmitigated contempt, he first observes that 'without restraint and without judgment he not only gave away his own property but also squandered that of others'.[44] But in spite of this, he adds in a formula strikingly reminiscent of Sallust, 'his vices were duly reinterpreted as virtues', and 'his partisans redescribed his conduct as an example of good fellowship and generosity'.[45]

By this stage, the prevalence of paradiastolic speech had begun to attract the attention of the moralists, who tended to underline the sense of unease with which the historians had already described the technique. This disquiet is especially evident in Seneca, who speaks with grave concern at a number of points in his *Epistulae Morales* about the subversive implications of paradiastolic speech. In Letter XCII he laments the fact that, prone as we are to measure the standards of virtue by our own natures, we end up (as Sallust had already remarked) 'by imposing the name of virtue upon our vices'.[46] But it is in Letter XLV, in which he discusses the sophistries of rhetoric, that he particularly insists on the need to ensure that we 'stamp everything with identifying marks that cannot possibly be

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[41] On the propensity 'vitia pro virtutibus interpretabantur', see Tacitus (1925–31), I.52, p. 90. Tacitus also recognizes that the device has potentially wider uses. For example, something closely akin to paradiastole is at work in the famous epigram from *Agricola*: 'auferre trucidare rapere falsis nominibus imperium, atque ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant'. See Tacitus (1970), 30.5, p. 80.

[42] 'omnium consensu capax imperii nisi imperasset' (Tacitus, 1925–31. I.49, p. 82).

[43] 'Sed claritas natalium et metus temporum obtentui, ut, quod segnitia erat, sapientia vocaretur' (Tacitus, 1925–31, I.49, p. 82).

[44] 'sine modo, sine iudicio donaret sua, largiretur aliena' (Tacitus, 1925–31, I.52, pp. 88–90).

[45] 'ipsa vitia pro virtutibus interpretabantur' (Tacitus, 1925–31, I.52, p. 90); 'ita comitatem bonitatemque faventes vocabant' (Tacitus, 1925–31, I.52, p. 88).

[46] 'vitiis nostris nomen virtutis inponimus' (Seneca [1917–25], Epistola XCII. 25, vol. 2, p. 462). Cf. Sallust (1921), LII, 11, p. 102.

disputed'.[47] Unless we do so, we shall find that 'we embrace evil things in the place of good'.[48] Above all, we shall find that 'vices creep up on us under the name of virtues, with temerity hiding under the title of courage, moderation being called cowardice, and timidity being accepted as cautiousness'.[49] 'And once this happens', Seneca concludes, 'we are straying into great danger'.[50]

At the same time Seneca is greatly interested in understanding the basis of paradiastolic speech, and especially in understanding how it comes about that a paradiastolic redescription of a good or evil action can often be made to look so plausible. He addresses the question directly in Letter CXX, the theme of which is how we acquire our knowledge of the good, and arrives at precisely the same answer as Livy had done. The explanation is simply that 'there are as you know a number of vices that are close neighbours of virtues'.[51] This is why, 'extraordinary as it may seem', we sometimes find that 'evil things present themselves to us in the guise of virtue, while the good shines forth out of its opposite'.[52] One example Seneca cites is that 'a prodigal man can deceive us into thinking him liberal'.[53] A second is that 'negligence can be made to look like sheer good nature'.[54] And a third (already mentioned in the *Ad Herennium*) is that 'temerity can be made to look like courage'.[55]

With these allusions to Livy and Sallust as well as to the *Ad Herennium*, Seneca may be said to offer a summary of how the concept of paradiastole had by that stage come to be understood. This is not to say that a completely unambiguous concept had by then been acquired. Sometimes the technique was still described as a matter not of offering redescriptions but rather of proposing new meanings for the terms denoting virtue and vice. This still appears, for example, to be part of Quintilian's understanding of the concept in his *Institutio Oratoria*. After putting forward his

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[47] 'His certas notas inprime' (Seneca, 1917–25, Epistola XLV.7, vol. 1, p. 294).

[48] 'Pro bonis mala amplectimur' (Seneca, 1917–25, Epistola XLV.6, vol. 1, p. 294).

[49] 'Vitia nobis sub virtutum nomine obrepunt, temeritas sub titulo fortitudinis latet, moderatio vocatur ignavia, pro cauto timidus accipitur' (Seneca, 1917–25, Epistola XLV. 7, vol. 1, p. 294). Note that the last of these formulae ('pro cauto timidus accipitur') quotes—while reversing—the formula in Livy (1929), XXII.XII.12, p. 242. Cf. fn. 36, *supra*.

[50] 'in his magno periculo erramus' (Seneca, 1917–25, XLV.7, vol. 1, p. 294).

[51] 'Sunt enim, ut scis, virtutibus vitia confinia' (Seneca, 1917–25, Epistola CXX.8, vol. 3, pp. 384–6). Cf. Livy (1929), XXII.XII.12, p. 242.

[52] 'quod mirum fortasse videatur: mala interdum speciem honesti optulere et optimum ex contrario enituit' (Seneca, 1917–25, Epistola CXX.8, vol. 3, p. 384).

[53] 'sic mentitur prodigus liberalem' (Seneca, 1917–25, Epistola CXX.8, vol. 3, p. 386).

[54] 'Imitatur neglegentia facilitatem' (Seneca, 1917–25, Epistola CXX.8, vol. 3, p. 386).

[55] 'Imitatur ... temeritas fortitudinem' (Seneca, 1917–25, Epistola CXX.8, vol. 3, p. 386). Cf. [Cicero] (1954), III.III.6, pp. 166–8 on the capacity to make *fortitudo* appear as *temeritas*.

definition and examples in Book IX, he adds that 'I am not sure that this device can really be classified as a figure of speech'.[56] His reason is that, instead of using language in a non-standard way, the technique is such that 'everything is made to depend on the definition of terms'.[57]

As a number of earlier writers had pointed out, however, the technique of arguing paradiastolically is not in the least dependent on suggesting new definitions of familiar terms. Rather it takes the form of claiming that a given evaluative term, in virtue of its agreed meaning, can properly be applied as a description of a given action or state of affairs in a case where this may not at first sight seem conceivable.[58] That this is the character of the rhetorical technique is brought out with admirable clarity in the discussion of definition in Book IV of the *Ad Herennium*.[59] The author considers how one might try to establish of a given action that, although it may have been described (and hence commended) as an instance of carefulness, it ought to be redescribed (and hence condemned) as an instance of avarice. The speaker begins by referring to commonly accepted definitions, observing that 'carefulness takes the form of an earnest conservation of one's own goods, whereas avarice involves the wrongful covetousness of the goods of others'.[60] He then seeks to show that, although the action in question may have been classified as carefulness, it ought instead to be acknowledged that it involved an element of wrongful covetousness, and thus that 'it is not in truth an instance of carefulness, but rather of avarice'.[61]

A second example given in the same passage makes the same point even more clearly. We are asked to consider how an act which has been described as courageous might be redescribed as mere temerity. Again, the first step is to cite the ordinary definitions of the evaluative terms involved. 'Courage is contempt for labour and danger in a case where the purpose is useful and the advantages have been duly weighed, whereas temerity

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[56] 'an figura sit dubito' (Quintilian, 1920–2, IX.III.65, vol. 3, p.482).

[57] 'Quod totum pendet ex finitione' (Quintilian, 1920–2, IX.III.65, vol. 3, p. 482).

[58] Cf. the understanding of the concept in Whigham (1984), p. 40: 'The basic function of the trope is the ongoing adjustment of public information by redescribing an utterance or action in such a way as to reverse the polarity of its meaning'. Cf. Whigham (1984), p. 205: the 'logic' of the device 'amounts to describing something as its opposite'. Since Whigham's is the main attempt in recent scholarship to explicate the concept, it is worth mentioning that I know of no Renaissance rhetorician who classifies paradiastole as a trope, or supposes it to be concerned with offering new meanings, or argues that it can be used to describe something as its opposite.

[59] See the discussion of *Definitio* in [Cicero] (1954), IV.XXV.35, p. 316.

[60] 'diligentia est adcurata conservatio suorum, avaritia iniuriosa appetitio alienorum' ([Cicero] 1954, IV.XXV.35, p. 316).

[61] 'Non est ista diligentia, sed avaritia' ([Cicero] 1954, IV.XXV.35, p. 316).

involves incurring dangers with a gladiatorial kind of endurance and without any consideration of the risks.'[62] The suggestion is that, by insisting on 'temerity' rather than 'courage' as the more perspicuous description of the action concerned, we can hope to persuade our audience that there may indeed have been something heedless about it after all, and thus that the less favourable term ought indeed to be applied—in virtue of its ordinary and accepted meaning—as a way of describing and hence condemning the action previously praised.

As the author of the *Ad Herennium* also recognizes, this understanding of what is meant by speaking paradiastolically further implies that the technique can always be used in one of two contrasting ways. On the one hand there is the use that mainly preoccupies Sallust and Seneca: that of seeking to excuse or justify disgraceful actions by covering them with the names of neighbouring virtues. As the *Ad Herennium* expresses it, in these cases we seek to 'amplify' the character of the action involved.[63] But on the other hand there is the use Livy prefers to emphasize: that of seeking to discountenance virtuous actions by arguing that they are really instances of some neighbouring vice. In these cases, as the *Ad Herennium* adds, we seek to 'attenuate' the action by claiming that 'the virtue in question consists in qualities other than those exhibited by the action under review'.[64]

III

Of all the ancient rhetoricians, it was undoubtedly Quintilian who furnished the fullest and most authoritative survey of the figures and tropes of speech. But the sections of the *Institutio Oratoria* in which Quintilian dealt with this topic were lost at some point in late antiquity, and only returned to circulation after Poggio Bracciolini unearthed a complete copy of the *Institutio* at St Gallen in 1416.[65] As a result, it was only in the course of the *quattrocento* that some of the more arcane *figurae* explicated by

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[62] 'fortitudo est contemptio laboris et periculi cum ratione utilitatis et conpensatione commodorum, temeritas est cum inconsiderata dolorum perpessione gladiatoria periculorum susceptio' ([Cicero] 1954, IV.XXV.35, p.316).

[63] The verb is *amplificare*. See [Cicero] (1954), III.III.6, p. 166.

[64] One way in which we can hope *adtenuare* is by claiming 'in contrariis potius rebus quam in his virtus constare quae ostendantur' ([Cicero] 1954, III.III.6, p. 166).

[65] For Poggio's rediscovery of the complete text see Sabbadini (1967), I, p. 78. For the lacunae in other MSS, esp. in bks VIII to XII, see Sabbadini (1967), I, p. 13 and n. On the general theme of the Renaissance 'recovery' of rhetoric see Vickers (1990).

Quintilian, including that of paradiastole, began to resurface once again in textbooks on the rhetorical arts.

One of the earliest treatises on *Elocutio* to make full use of Quintilian's rediscovered text was Antonio Mancinelli's *Carmen de Figuris*, which was first printed in 1493.[66] Mancinelli's impressive survey begins by describing a number of purely grammatical *Schemata*, after which he turns to the *Tropi* and finally the *Schemata* or figures of speech. His discussion of paradiastole, which is placed almost at the end of his book, is presented mainly in the form of illustrative examples. One of these we have already encountered in Seneca: the case of a prodigal man who seeks to redescribe himself as liberal.[67] A second had made an even earlier appearance in the *Ad Herennium*, and had subsequently been much repeated: the case of someone seeking to have their sheer temerity recognized as courage.[68] But the rest of Mancinelli's analysis, as he himself admits,[69] is drawn entirely from Book IX of Quintilian, including both his other examples of paradiastolic speech. One is 'when you call yourself wise rather than cunning'; the other is 'when you call yourself courageous rather than overconfident'.[70]

For the fullest discussion of paradiastole in a Renaissance rhetorical text, however, we need to turn to the work of Joannes Susenbrotus, whose *Epitome Troporum ac Schematum*, first published in 1535,[71] quickly established itself as one of the most popular textbooks on *Elocutio* of the sixteenth century.[72] Although Susenbrotus explicitly refers to Mancinelli,[73] the definition of paradiastole he offers at the outset of his discussion appears to be all his own. 'It is a case of paradiastole', he explains, 'when, by means of a courteous interpretation, we give a favourable representation either to our own vices or to the vices of others by speaking of them in a flattering style'.[74] 'In short', he later adds, we have a case of paradiastole 'whenever vices display themselves under the guise of virtue'.[75]

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[66] On Antonio Mancinelli (1452–1515) see Murphy (1981), pp. 198–9.

[67] 'sic prodigum dicam liberalem' (Mancinelli, 1493, Sig. H. 1ʳ).

[68] 'sic . . . temerarium fortem et similia' (Mancinelli, 1493, Sig. H. 1ʳ).

[69] Mancinelli begins: 'Paradiastole sit teste Fabio libro nono [est] quum . . .' See Mancinelli (1493), Sig. H. 1ʳ.

[70] 'quum te pro astuto sapientem appellas: pro confidente fortem' (Mancinelli, 1493, Sig. H. 1ʳ).

[71] See Murphy (1981), p. 280 on the probable date of the *editio princeps*. According to Murphy, the first English printing (London, 1562—the edition I use) was the fifth to appear. See Murphy (1981), p. 280. On Susenbrotus's text see also Brennan (1960).

[72] For its extensive use in English schools during the latter part of the sixteenth century see Baldwin (1944), esp. vol. 1, pp. 356, 382, 405–6, 413, 664–5.

[73] See the reference to 'Mancin.' in Susenbrotus (1562), p. 46.

[74] 'Paradiastole, Παραδιαστολή, est cum civili interpretatione nostris aut aliorum vitiis assentando blandimur' (Susenbrotus, 1562, p. 46).

[75] 'Breviter, cum vitia sub virtutis specie sese ostendant' (Susenbrotus, 1562, p. 46).

It is perhaps unfortunate that this definition came to be so widely adopted, especially among English rhetoricians of the Renaissance. For Susenbrotus's understanding of paradiastole is obviously somewhat one-sided. Relying as he evidently does on Mancinelli's examples, all of which happen to be instances of using the device to excuse rather than denigrate, Susenbrotus infers that the figure can actually be defined by its concern 'with mitigation or extenuation'.[76] This not only excluded the possibility— which most Roman rhetoricians had emphasized—that the figure can equally well be used to display virtue under the guise of vice;[77] it also led to some confusion between the concept of paradiastole and that of *Diminutio* or meiosis, the 'understating' figure of speech.[78]

Despite this weakness, Susenbrotus's analysis proved to be extremely valuable. One of its strengths lay in the fact that it offered a clear restatement of the classical explanation of how it comes about that paradiastolic redescriptions can often be made to look so plausible. Susenbrotus stresses in particular the kinship between a number of the virtues and their seeming opposites, in consequence of which 'we are often able to elevate a vice by placing it under the name of a neighbouring virtue'.[79] But the main value of his analysis stemmed from its unusually wide range of examples. After laying out his definition, Susenbrotus goes on to offer no fewer than nine instances of paradiastolic speech. The first three are familiar from Quintilian: 'when you call yourself wise rather than cunning, or courageous rather than overconfident, or careful rather than parsimonious'.[80] The next two appear to be taken from Seneca: 'when we say of a prodigal man that he is liberal, or of a man of sheer temerity that he is courageous'.[81] But the last four, although partly reminiscent of the *Ad Herennium*, are largely new: 'when we say of an avaricious man that he is merely frugal, or of a haughty man that he is magnanimous, or describe a

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[76] 'huic pertinet mitigandi sive extenuandi locutiones' (Susenbrotus, 1562, p. 78). By drawing on the explications furnished by Susenbrotus and his English followers, the *O.E.D.* is led to suggest a similarly one-sided definition. See *The Oxford English Dictionary*, VII (1933), p. 448, *sub* 'Paradiastole': 'A figure in which a favourable turn is given to something unfavourable'.

[77] In Book III of the *Ad Herennium*, for instance, all the examples are of attempts to denigrate virtue. Cf. fn. 32, *supra*.

[78] Susenbrotus mentions some of his examples of paradiastole *sub Diminutio* (meiosis). See Susenbrotus (1562), pp. 77–8. But most are given *sub Paradiastole*. See Susenbrotus (1562), p. 46.

[79] 'Quoties vitium nomine vicinae virtutis elevamus' (Susenbrotus, 1562, p. 78).

[80] 'Ut cum pro astuto sapientem appellas: pro confidente, fortem: pro illiberali, diligentem' (Susenbrotus, 1562, p. 46).

[81] 'cum item prodigum dicimus liberalem, temerarium fortem' (Susenbrotus, 1562, p. 46).

sycophant as a companion, or a dependant as a friend'.[82] Finally, in his later and partly overlapping discussion of meiosis, Susenbrotus adds several more examples that again appear to be all his own. These include 'describing a cruel man as somewhat too severe', 'describing an imprudent man as somewhat ingenuous' and 'describing a city corrupted by licence as enjoying liberty'.[83]

It was largely from these continental textbooks, and from the Roman authorities on which they relied, that the analysis of paradiastolic speech in turn passed into the vernacular treatises on *Elocutio* that first began to appear in England during the second half of the sixteenth century. The earliest English work in which the concept of paradiastole is distinguished from meiosis and separately defined is Henry Peacham's *The Garden of Eloquence*, the original version of which was published in 1577.[84] The rector of a parish in Lincolnshire, Peacham was much concerned, as Thomas Wilson had been before him, with employing the *ars rhetorica* to improve the quality of preaching and more generally to assist in the cause of reformation.[85] One way in which this ambition is reflected is in Peacham's choice of examples, several of which have a distinctly puritanical cast. Apart from details of this character, however, Peacham's analysis of paradiastole is largely taken (though without acknowledgment) from Susenbrotus's account.[86] 'Paradiastole', he declares, is 'nye kin' to meiosis, and occurs 'when by a mannerly interpretation, we doe excuse our own vices, or other mens whom we doe defend, by calling them vertues, as when we call him that is craftye, wyse: a covetous man, a good husband: murder a manly deede: deepe dissimulation, singuler wisdome: pryde cleanlynesse: covetousnesse, a worldly or necessarye carefulnesse: whore-dome, youthful delight & dalyance: Idolatry, pure religion: glotony and dronkennesse, good fellowship: cruelty severity. This figure is used, when vices are excused' (Peacham, 1954, Sig. H. 5ᵛ).

This is basically a translation of Susenbrotus's list, with the addition of

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[82] '[cum dicimus] avarum frugalem, fastidiosum magnanimum, adulatorem comem, assertorem amicum' (Susenbrotus, 1562, p. 46).

[83] 'cum crudelem appellamus paulo severiorem: imprudentem simpliciorem: ... corruptam licentia civitatem liberam' (Susenbrotus, 1562, p. 78).

[84] Although Wilson (1553) gives examples of what Susenbrotus had already classified as paradiastole, he still treats the phenomenon under the heading of meiosis or 'diminution'. See Wilson (1962), p. 145. For the date of the original edition of Peacham's work see Peacham (1954), pp. 5–6. Cf. also Murphy (1981), p. 220.

[85] For this aspiration, especially in Wilson's *Arte of Rhetorique* (1553), see Wildermuth (1989).

[86] This is rightly emphasized by W. G. Crane, Peacham's modern editor. See Peacham (1954), pp. 9–10. Note, however, that Peacham is the first writer in English to use the term. See Peacham (1954), Sig. H, 5ᵛ.

some puritan asides—notably the mention of how readily the vices of pride and whoredom tend to be excused. There is one further addition, however, which can hardly fail to catch the attention of any reader of Shakespeare: the suggestion that someone might try to excuse an act of murder by redescribing it as a manly deed. 'When you durst do it then you were a man' is exactly the redescription that Lady Macbeth offers Macbeth in her speech encouraging him to kill Duncan (I.vii.49).

After Peacham's *Garden of Eloquence*, the next important discussion of paradiastole by an English rhetorician can be found in *The Arte of English Poesie*, the final section of which contains a more sophisticated survey of *Elocutio* than any that had hitherto appeared.[87] The *Arte* has generally been attributed to George Puttenham, a nephew of Sir Thomas Elyot, and was first published in 1589.[88] Puttenham's discussion of para-diastole is notable for introducing a new way of describing the technique, one that was later to be frequently invoked. When our words 'tend to flattery, or soothing, or excusing', he explains, 'it is by the figure *Paradiastole*, which therefore nothing improperly we call the *Curry-favell*, as when we make the best of a bad thing, or turne a signification to the more plausible sence' (1936, pp. 184–5).

Puttenham's definition invokes a metaphor drawn from the grooming of horses: 'favell' appears to be a corruption of *cheval*,[89] while to 'curry' means to smoothe or comb out.[90] After this preliminary flourish, however, his examples are almost entirely derivative, most of them being taken directly from Susenbrotus's and Peacham's accounts.[91] It is a case of paradiastole, he explains, when we 'call an unthrift, a liberall Gentleman: the foolish-hardy, valiant or couragious: the niggard, thriftie: a great riot, or outrage, an youthfull pranke, and such like termes: moderating and abating the force of the matter by craft, and for a pleasing purpose' (1936, p. 185).

By the end of the sixteenth century, as a result of the wide availability of Susenbrotus's writings and those of his English followers, the concept of

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[87] For this section, entitled 'Of Ornament', see Puttenham (1936), pp. 137–308.

[88] For a discussion of the problem of authorship see Puttenham (1936), xi–xliv.

[89] Or perhaps of *faveau*, a chestnut horse. (This is the suggestion put forward, along with much other fascinating information, in the *O.E.D. sub* 'favel'.)

[90] By an easily-understood corruption, this mutated at an early stage into 'curry favour'. Hobbes makes use of this phrase on at least one occasion. See Hobbes (1680), p. 9.

[91] Although, in two of the classical examples he gives (those of alleged liberality and thrift), Puttenham uses the same phraseology as Wilson in citing the same examples. See Puttenham (1936), pp. 184–5 and cf. Wilson (1962), p. 145. The point is worth making since Willcock and Walker, Puttenham's modern editors, fail to mention Wilson in their Appendix on 'The Sources of the *Arte*', although they rightly emphasize Susenbrotus and Peacham. Cf. Puttenham (1936), pp. 319–22.

paradiastole had come to be thoroughly assimilated into English discus-
sions of the rhetorical arts. Almost every textbook of the period refers
familiarly to the concept, usually defining it in the way that Susenbrotus
had originally proposed.[92] A similar definition can be found, for example,
in the new and much expanded edition of *The Garden of Eloquence* that
Peacham issued in 1593,[93] while an even closer adaptation of Susenbrotus's
analysis appears in the treatise on tropes and figures appended by Angel
Day to the 1592 edition of his letter-book, *The English Secretary*.[94]

The English rhetoricians of this period also refer in a familiar way to the
question of how paradiastolic speech is possible. They generally make the
point by way of a brief allusion to the idea that certain virtues and vices are
'neighbours' of each other.[95] But in some cases they examine the question
at greater length. Perhaps the most interesting examination is that of
Francis Bacon, who discusses the issue in the fragment on 'Coulers of good
and evil' which he drafted in 1597[96] and eventually incorporated into the
section on the foundations of rhetoric in the *De Augmentis* of 1623.[97]
Bacon's discussion is couched in the form of a set of answers to various
rhetorical 'sophisms', the fourth of which states that 'what is remote from
good is evil, and what is remote from evil is good'.[98] In repudiating this

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[92] But this generalization only applies to rhetorical writings of broadly neo-Ciceronian
allegiances. Although a number of Ramist rhetorics—especially those of Dudley Fenner
(1584), Abraham Fraunce (1588) and Charles Butler (1599)—circulated in England during
the closing decades of the sixteenth century, none made any references to paradiastole. Cf.
Fenner (1584); Fraunce (1950); Butler (1629).

[93] For a comparison of the two editions see Peacham (1954), pp. 10–23. For the discussion of
paradiastole in the second edition see Peacham (1954), pp. 168–9.

[94] Day's account is in fact a partial translation of Susenbrotus. See Day (1967), p. 84 (second
pagination) and cf. Susenbrotus (1562), p. 46. For the many editions of Day's book, which
first appeared in 1586, see Murphy (1981), pp. 108–9.

[95] See for example Peacham (1954), p. 169 on the capacity to cover vices 'with the mantles of
vertues' and cf. Day (1967), p. 84 (second pagination) on how to 'colour faults with a milde
interpretation'.

[96] For the date of this fragment (which was printed in the first ed. of Bacon's *Essays* in 1597)
see Bacon (1859), p. 67. Jardine (1974), p. 219 notes that Bacon thought of his 'colours' as a
contribution specifically to deliberative rhetoric. This suggests a close connection between his
discussion and the use of paradiastole in the essentially deliberative genre of advice-books for
princes.

[97] See Appendix I (pp. 674–88) to the chapter (Book VI chap. 3) 'De Fundamentis, et
Officio Rhetoricae' in Bacon (1857). For the *De Augmentis* Bacon revised his earlier account
as well as translating it into Latin. Jardine (1974), p. 221 notes that Bacon pointed to Aristotle
as the inspiration for his discussion of 'colours'. Hobbes, in publishing *A Briefe of the Art of
Rhetorique* in 1637 (the earliest English translation of Aristotle's *Art of Rhetoric*) chose to
render the title of Book I, Chapter 6 as '*Of the* Colours, *or* common opinions *concerning*
Good *and* Evill'. See Hobbes (1986), p. 45. That Hobbes was jointly influenced at this point
by Aristotle and Bacon seems probable.

[98] 'quod vero remotum est a bono, malum; quod a malo, bonum' (Bacon, 1857, p. 676).

contention, Bacon not only reiterates the classical explanation of what makes paradiastolic redescription plausible, but also quotes the formula that Ovid had made proverbial. 'It is not merely because of their partnership and similarity of nature', Bacon writes, 'that things come together and congregate. For evil also—especially in civil affairs—takes refuge in good in order to hide and be protected by it. Just as malefactors seek sanctuaries, so vice seeks admission under the shadow of virtue. "Vice is often able to hide itself by its proximity to virtue".'[99]

IV

From the time when the rhetoricians of ancient Rome first began to analyse the concept of paradiastole, the enormous rhetorical power of the device had always been recognized. The point is one that their Renaissance followers make with even greater emphasis. By this means, Susenbrotus remarks in an allusion to 2 Corinthians, 'even Satan himself can be transformed into an angel of light'.[100] Among English rhetoricians, George Puttenham similarly stresses the indispensable value of the device as a means of 'moderating' and hence 'abating' the statement of hard truths.[101] He particularly notes that in many cases 'it may commendably be used by Courtiers', who are especially liable to find themselves speaking and acting in circumstances in which—as a contemporary advice-book delicately put it—they 'must sometimes use, as they say, words of silke'.[102] Faced with such a predicament, Puttenham suggests, an ability to speak paradiastolically may amount to nothing less than a condition of survival.

Given the recognized power and usefulness of the device, it is not surprising that, as soon as it came to be properly understood, it also began to be widely put to work. We find this happening above all in two characteristic genres of Renaissance moral and political theory, in each case with challenging and increasingly alarming results.

One group of writers who became especially interested in paradiastole

[99] 'nam non solum res coeunt et congregatur propter consortium et naturae similitudinem, sed etiam malum (praesertim in civilibus) confugit ad bonum, ut lateat et protegatur. Itaque scelerati homines petunt asyla Divorum, et vitium ipsum se in virtutis umbram recipit: Saepe latet [sic; recte *lateat*] vitium proximitate boni' (Bacon [1857], p. 677). The final phrase quotes Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*, II.662. Cf. fn. 38, *supra*.
[100] 'Nam & ipse Satanas transfiguratur in Angelum lucis' (Susenbrotus [1562], p. 46). The allusion is to 2 Corinthians 11: 14.
[101] See Puttenham (1936), p. 184 on the use of paradiastole in 'moderating and abating the force of the matter by craft, and for a pleasing purpose'.
[102] See Puttenham (1936), p. 184 and cf. [Béthune] (1634), p. 73.

were those concerned with the so-called rhetorical paradoxes. These formed a part of epideictic or demonstrative oratory, the aim of which was to induce an audience to share an attitude either of admiration or contempt for some particular subject.[103] As Hobbes was to put it in discussing these 'orations of praise or invective' in Chapter VIII of *Leviathan*, their goal 'is not truth, but to honour or dishonour' (1985, p. 136). One of the standard exercises in speaking demonstratively was consequently the *Laudatio*, in which the speaker was expected to put together everything that could possibly be said in favour of some chosen theme.[104] It was this exercise— together with its contrary, the *Vituperatio*[105]—which lent itself so readily to paradoxical treatment. A speaker or writer who aspired to produce a paradoxical *Laudatio* sought to develop a case in favour of something not generally thought to be commendable at all.[106]

Sometimes the resulting *encomia* simply dealt with states of affairs normally felt to be disagreeable or unfortunate.[107] The classic example in the rhetorical literature of the English Renaissance is Anthony Munday's translation of Ortensio Lando's *Paradossi*, which Munday issued in 1593 under the title *The Defence of Contraries*. Munday undertakes to vindicate such propositions as that 'it is better to be poore than Rich', 'it is better to be fowle than fair', and so forth.[108] But in some cases—and it was here that the technique of paradiastole came into play—a more daring attempt was instead made to plead for the reconsideration of some widely criticized vice, the most celebrated instance in Renaissance moral theory being Poggio Bracciolini's early *quattrocento* dialogue in defence of avarice.[109]

The first part of Poggio's *De Avaritia* takes the form not of a

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[103] See for example the characterization of Epideictic oratory in [Cicero] (1954), III.VI.10 to III.VIII.15, pp. 172–84. For further discussion see Hardison (1962), chap. 2, pp. 24–42.

[104] See [Cicero] (1954), III.VI.10, pp. 172–4 and cf. Quintilian (1920–2), III.VII.1–18, vol. 2, pp. 464–72.

[105] For a discussion of these exercises in the rhetorical literature of the English Renaissance see Rainolde (1945), who describes them as 'Eulogy' and 'Defamation'.

[106] As Renaissance rhetorical theorists recognized, however, to concede that unpraiseworthy actions can be praised is to concede that rhetorical paradoxes are not strictly paradoxes. If such actions can be praised, then they were not unpraiseworthy in the first place. On this point cf. Colie (1966), pp. 5–6.

[107] For this characterization of the rhetorical paradoxes see Colie (1966), pp. 1–4. Note that there is no implication that the device of paradox could not be used in wholly serious ways. On the contrary, a standard motive for speaking paradoxically was to uncover some allegedly deeper truth. For an exemplification of this point see Vickers (1968).

[108] Munday (1593), 1,17,23. Although the title-page does not carry the translator's name, the Dedication is signed 'Anthony Mundy'. See Munday (1593), Sig. A 2^r. Cf. Sidney 1973, p. 121 on how 'a playing wit' can succeed in praising such misfortunes as 'the jolly commodity of being sick of the plague'.

[109] Bec (1967), p. 379 gives November 1428 as the date of completion of Poggio's dialogue.

paradiastolic but rather a directly paradoxical *apologia* for avaricious behaviour. This is put into the mouth of the humanist Antonio Loschi, who speaks in particular of those 'who desire more than enough' and accumulate money 'far beyond their needs'.[110] He concedes that such behaviour must be described as avaricious, but he then seeks to prove 'that such avarice ought not to be condemned'.[111] If we dispassionately consider the conduct of such avaricious persons, we are forced to recognize that they alone are in a position 'to exercise some of the most splendid virtues'.[112] Without their desire for gain, 'ordinary people would find themselves deprived of mercy and charity, for no one would be able to serve as a benefactor or to act with liberality'.[113] Moreover, their avarice frequently brings 'great ornament and elegance to their communities', since 'it is their money that builds magnificent houses, outstanding villas, temples, colonnades and hospitals'.[114]

Antonio's oration is succeeded, in accordance with the rhetorical convention of arguing *in utramque partem*, by a *Vituperatio* or denunciation of avarice. This is pronounced by a theologian, Andrea of Constantinople, who mainly devotes himself to a point-by-point refutation of Antonio's case. Andrea prefaces his attack, however, with a very different line of argument. He first suggests that, while avarice is undoubtedly a detestable sin, the forms of behaviour described by Antonio ought not to be viewed as instances of avarice. The sin of avarice, Andrea begins by reminding us—in a passage strongly reminiscent of the *Ad Herennium*—involves 'a greed for gain that goes beyond anything decent or just' and 'a vehement cupidity which is at once inordinate and includes a thirst for stealing other people's goods'.[115] But the behaviour of those who greatly value money, and seek to accumulate more than they strictly require, does not necessarily involve them in such theft or injustice at all. They are simply displaying 'one of the natural forms of desire that are free of blame'.[116] So their behaviour, Andrea concludes, ought not to be condemned as avaricious; it ought rather to be accepted as an instance of 'the sort of moderate and temperate desire that no one holds to be

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[110] 'quin cupiat plus quam sit satis ... [et] ultra quam existat satis' (Poggio [1964], p. 13).

[111] 'non est avaritia vituperanda' (Poggio, 1964, p. 12).

[112] See Poggio (1964), p. 13 on their 'usus gratissimarum virtutum'.

[113] 'Tollet ... populo misericordiae videlicet, & charitas, nullus erit neque beneficus, neque liberalis' (Poggio, 1964, p. 13).

[114] 'magnum ornamentum & decorum suis civitatibus ... magnificae domus, egregiae villae, templa, porticus, hospitalia avarorum pecuniis constructa' (Poggio, 1964, p. 15).

[115] 'cupiditas habendi ultra quam deceat, plus quam oporteat. Cupiditas vehemens quae excedit modum, & est cum siti auferendi' (Poggio, 1964, p. 18). Cf. [Cicero] (1954), IV.XXV.35, p. 316.

[116] 'Sunt enim qu[a]edam naturales cupiditates ... quae absunt a culpa' (Poggio, 1964, p. 18).

reprehensible'.[117] It is essential to the ironic ambiguity of Poggio's dialogue that, by means of this paradiastolic redescription of the avaricious behaviour discussed by Antonio, Andrea is made to support a large part of Antonio's case while appearing to reject it.[118]

By the end of the sixteenth century, we encounter a similar treatment of the rhetorical paradoxes in English moral thought. The most remarkable instance is Lazarus Piot's *The Orator*, a version of Alexander Sitvayn's collection of 'a hundred several discourses in form of Declamations' that Piot issued in 1596.[119] Most of Piot's examples are concerned in a relatively straightforward fashion with the question of what can be said for and against some particular judgment. His ninety-fifth Declamation, for instance, examines the striking case of 'a Jew, who would for his debt have a pound of the flesh of a Christian' (1596, p. 400). The judge pronounces that, if he takes more or less than exactly a pound, his own life shall be forfeit. We first hear the Jew's declamation against the justice of this sentence, and then a rival speech from the Christian in which the Jew's arguments are overturned (1596, pp. 400–6).

In a number of cases, however, Piot relies less on the presentation of arguments for and against some particular action, and more on a para-diastolic redescription of the action itself. This is the method he adopts, for example, in his second Declamation, in which he examines the conduct of one of the Earls of Flanders. The Earl's son bought fruit from a woman who came to his palace, but he kept her waiting so long for her payment that, when she returned home, 'she found her child dead for want of the teat' (1596, p. 9). The woman appealed to the Earl, who caused his son to be hanged. The people thereupon complained to the king that the Earl had exhibited 'very cruelty', and that he ought to be punished for his 'detestable' and 'very odious' deed, since 'there is no vice thought more unbeseeming a man then crueltie' (1596, pp. 9–10). But the Earl is represented as managing to defend himself by insisting that his behaviour ought rather to be described as an act of 'justice joined with wisdom', and thus that he cannot 'be taxed of crueltie' at all (1596, p. 13). To have spared his son, he declares, would have been an instance of 'pittie without

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[117] 'Nil habet haec reprehensionis cupiditas modica & temperata' (Poggio, 1964, p. 18).

[118] This is not to say that Poggio directly endorses Antonio's case, as Bec (1967), pp. 379–82 implies in describing the dialogue as 'libelle en faveur de l'esprit de lucre'. See Bec (1967), p. 379. The effect of the use of paradiastole is, rather, to leave the reader with two contrasting ways of thinking about what Antonio has said.

[119] Piot stresses in his Epistle 'To the Reader' that his concern is with demonstrative oratory: with 'Rhetoricke to inforce a good cause, and art to impugne an ill'. See Piot (1596), Sig. A iv[r].

justice', and this would in turn have been 'follie or rather iniquitie', a manifest danger to the commonwealth (1596, p. 15).

Of even greater importance was the other body of literature in which the possibilities of paradiastolic redescription were similarly explored in the course of the Renaissance. This was the literature of advice-books for princes and other public figures in which they were counselled on how to discharge their duties in the most effective way. This genre was also linked with classical rhetoric, and especially with the ideal of deliberative oratory, the aim of which was to persuade an audience of the expediency of acting in some particular way. The results in this case were even more unsettling, especially as the genre was one in which the lines of demarcation between *honestas* and *utilitas*, virtue and 'policy', were increasingly held up for scrutiny in a self-consciously rhetorical and questioning style.

Of all those who published such handbooks of 'counsel' in the course of the sixteenth century, it was Machiavelli in *Il Principe* who succeeded in putting the technique of paradiastolic redescription to the most sensational use. Among modern commentators on *Il Principe*, Machiavelli's account of the code of conduct that any ruler needs to follow if he wishes 'to maintain his state' has of course been intensively analysed.[120] But the extent to which he employs the techniques of classical rhetoric in order to persuade his readers of his novel and subversive conclusions seems scarcely to have been recognized.[121] It is evident, however, that he makes use of a number of standard rhetorical devices, among which that of paradiastole is given a crucial role.

Machiavelli resorts to the technique throughout his notorious sequence of chapters on 'how a prince should conduct himself towards his subjects or allies'.[122] His investigation involves him first of all in reconsidering the ideal of princely liberality, the subject of Chapter XVI. Machiavelli prefaces his discussion by conceding that liberality is undeniably 'one of the most laudable' of the virtues; a ruler who is miserly will always be blamed.[123] But he then declares that much of the conduct of 'those who are usually held to be liberal' ought rather to be redescribed as

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[120] For a survey of this literature see Machiavelli (1988), xxix–xxxi.

[121] There are some general observations, however, in Garver (1980), and a valuable analysis in Tinckler (1988), who argues that *Il Principe* should in part be seen as an attack on conventional uses of the rhetorical *genus demonstrativum*. See Tinckler (1988), esp. pp. 189–201.

[122] 'quali debbano essere e' modi e governi di uno principe con sudditi o con li amici' (Machiavelli, 1960, p. 64).

[123] See Machiavelli (1960), p. 65 acknowledging that it is 'laudabilissima' to possess this quality.

ostentatiousness.[124] To this he adds—closely echoing Sallust—that those who seek to uphold a reputation for liberality will inevitably find themselves driven into 'doing everything they possibly can to gain money for themselves'.[125] With these redescriptions, Machiavelli paves the way for the basic argument of his chapter: that princes ought not to worry so much about being described as miserly or parsimonious.

His next chapter reconsiders the ideal of clemency in a similar way. He begins by acknowledging that cruelty is of course a vice. 'Every prince ought to want to be viewed as merciful and not as cruel.'[126] But he then insists that many of the actions usually celebrated as instances of clemency ought rather to be redescribed in far less favourable terms. For example, the avoidance of cruelty for which the Florentines congratulated themselves when they refused to punish the leaders of the uprising at Pistoia ought really to be seen as an instance of overindulgence.[127] Likewise, the clemency for which Scipio Africanus became famous in his campaigns against Hannibal was really an example of laxity.[128] As before, these redescriptions pave the way for the main argument of the chapter: that 'a prince ought not to worry too much about acquiring a reputation for being a cruel man'.[129]

Finally, Machiavelli develops a comparable argument in Chapter XVIII, in the course of which he discusses how far princes should honour their word. Again he begins by acknowledging the conventional point of view. 'Everyone agrees how laudable it is for a prince to uphold his promises, and to live a life of integrity rather than deceit.'[130] But he then argues that much of what is normally described as deceit is indispensable if princes are to defend themselves in advance against the treachery of others. Picking up one of Quintilian's examples, he concludes that such *astuzia* ought therefore to be redescribed as prudence, and recognized without demur as one of the forms of behaviour to be expected of any wise

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[124] See Machiavelli (1960), p. 66 on the 'suntuosità' of those who are generally 'tenuto liberale'.

[125] 'sarà necessitato alla fine, se si vorrà mantenere el nome del liberale . . . fare tutte quelle cose che si possono fare per avere danari' (Machiavelli, 1960, p. 66).

[126] 'ciascuno principe debbe desiderare di esser tenuto pietoso e non crudele' (Machiavelli, 1960, p. 68).

[127] See Machiavelli (1960), p. 69, claiming that it was really a case of 'troppa pietà'.

[128] See Machiavelli (1960), p. 71, claiming that it was really a case of a 'natura facile'.

[129] 'Debbe per tanto uno principe non si curare della infamia di crudele' (Machiavelli, 1960, p. 69).

[130] 'Quanto sia laudabile in uno principe mantenere la fede, e vivere con integrità e non con astuzia, ciascuno lo intende' (Machiavelli, 1960, p. 72).

prince.[131] Once again, the subversive conclusion depends on the use of the same rhetorical technique, that of paradiastolically redescribing the apparently disgraceful action in such a way as to exhibit it as worthy of being commended or at least excused.

These conclusions immediately caused Machiavelli to be hailed as a figure of diabolical wickedness. The point is pressed with the greatest intensity in the most famous 'anti-Machiavel' treatise of the sixteenth century, that of Innocent Gentillet. First issued in 1576, Gentillet's diatribe appeared in English as *A Discourse* 'against Nicholas Machiavell the Florentine' in 1602.[132] Gentillet specifically denounces Machiavelli's attempts to redescribe the forms of behaviour for which princes are usually condemned, claiming that Machiavelli's entire argument rests on nothing more than an attempt 'to call injustice by the name of justice', 'crueltie by the name of clemencie', 'night by the name of light' and other paradiastolic sleights of hand (Gentillet, 1602, p. 215).

Despite such fulminations, the same period also witnessed the publication of a number of humanist works of 'counsel' in which the technique of paradiastolic redescription was put to work in a broadly Machiavellian style. Perhaps the most important was Justus Lipsius's treatise on the political virtues, first published in Latin in 1589 and issued in English as *Six Bookes of Politickes or Civil Doctrine* in 1594.[133] One crucial point at which Lipsius employs the device is in his chapter on 'mixed prudence' in Book IV, the chapter in which he specifically remarks that 'some kinde of persons rage too much against Machiavell' (Lipsius, 1594, p. 114). Lipsius admits that mixed prudence—'where there is deceipt'—has usually been described and condemned as an instance of dishonest guile (1594, p. 112). He points out, however, that although such actions are 'commonly reputed dishonest', they still have as their goal 'the societie and benefit of men' (1594, p. 113). But if this is so, they ought to be redescribed and commended as instances of genuine prudence. 'So doth prudence not change her name, albeit a fewe drops of deceit be mingled therewith' (1594, p. 114). Later, Lipsius employs the same device in the course of discussing what he calls 'military prudence' in Book V. The question he raises at this point—much discussed by humanists ever since Erasmus and More[134]—is whether we ought to seek victory in war by trickery and deceit. As Lipsius notes, it is commonly said that we ought to 'abhorre

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[131] See Machiavelli (1960), p. 72 for the claim that 'astuzia' will inevitably form part of the conduct of 'uno signore prudente'.

[132] On the original edition see Skinner (1978), vol. 1, pp. 250–1. For the translation see Gentillet (1602).

[133] The translation was the work of William Jones. See Lipsius (1594).

[134] For a full analysis of the issue see Adams (1962).

from these subtilties', since we owe it to our enemies to meet them in open fight (1594, p. 175). But this again, he complains, is to describe the issue in the wrong way. Like the ancient Romans, we ought to recognize that such alleged 'subtiltie' is better described 'under the name of pollicie', a name which in turn helps us to see that the behaviour in question seems 'rather to deserve commendation then blame' (1594, pp. 175, 177).

If we turn to the English political literature of the same period, we encounter several instances of a similar willingness to view the device of paradiastole as an indispensable weapon of 'politic' government. One exceptionally forthright treatment of the issue can be found in Richard Beacon's dialogue of 1594, *Solon his Follie*.[135] Beacon devotes much of his second Book to investigating 'the art and skill of perswading', focusing in particular on the question of 'how to winne, moove and dispose the affections of the people' (1594, pp. 29–31). The character of Epimendes in the dialogue praises Solon for having seen so clearly that one of the most efficacious techniques of persuasion will always be that of paradiastole. As Epimendes reminds Solon in the course of praising his achievement as a lawgiver, 'you clothed things bitter and unpleasant with pleasing names; calling taxes, contributions; garrisons, gardes; prisons, houses; and such like: by the which pollicie, you made even things odious pleasing and acceptable to the people, and easily thereby persuaded the embracing thereof' (Beacon, 1594, p. 32).

The most important English writer of the period to experiment with paradiastole in this 'politic' vein was Francis Bacon, whose main observations about the technique occur in the course of the second Appendix to his account of the *ars rhetorica* in the *De Augmentis*.[136] Bacon's Appendix takes the form of a long list of concepts—including a large number of the virtues and vices—which he discusses *pro* and *contra* in such a way as to produce 'Examples of Antitheses' (Bacon, 1857, p. 689). The resulting arguments are mainly of a straightforwardly paradoxical kind. For example, he shows how one might directly commend the vice of ingratitude by suggesting that it merely recognizes the true motives for which benefits are conferred; by contrast, he shows how one might directly criticize the virtue of temperance by arguing that it reflects a state of innocence rather than any positive qualities (1857, pp. 694, 697). In several instances, however, he relies not on paradox but on paradiastole. For example, one of his arguments in favour of cruelty is that, if an action condemned as

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[135] I am much indebted to Markku Peltonen for drawing my attention to Beacon's work. Canny (1987) discusses the 'Machiavellian' context in which his work appeared. See Canny (1987), esp. pp. 167–73.

[136] For a discussion of this Appendix see Jardine (1974), pp. 219–24.

cruel can be shown to have proceeded from a sense of danger, then it ought to be redescribed (and hence commended) as an instance of prudence (1857, p. 695). By contrast, one of his arguments against courage is that the alleged virtue ought really to be redescribed (and hence condemned) as a species of prodigality, since it presupposes a willingness at once to be careless of one's own life and at the same time to endanger the lives of others (1857, p. 697).

Of all the moralists of this period, however, it is Montaigne in his *Essais* who makes the most daring use of paradiastole as a means of probing and questioning the conventional moral assumptions of the age. With the publication of John Florio's magnificent translation of the *Essais* in 1603, Montaigne's observations in turn entered the mainstream of English moral thought, with consequences for the understanding of paradiastole that proved to be of lasting importance.[137]

Montaigne makes his most significant use of the device in his longest and perhaps most famous essay, his 'Apology' for the Spanish theologian Raymond Sebond. Sebond had argued in his *Natural Theology* that all the truths of Christianity are susceptible of being demonstrated from the evidence of nature. Montaigne's 'defence' takes the paradoxical form of insisting that human reason is too weak a guide to lead us to any such definite conclusions about anything.[138] One way in which he presses the point is by emphasizing the extraordinary variety and changeability of human customs and laws. This is so extreme that we cannot possibly think of our own society or its laws as embodiments of any absolute standards of goodness or truth. To do so would be to accept as goodness 'that which but yesterday I saw in credit and esteeme, and to morrow, to have lost all reputation'; similarly, it would be to accept as truth 'that which these Mountaines bound, and is a lie in the world beyond them' (Montaigne, 1892–3, vol. 2, p. 303). To underline his scepticism, Montaigne examines a number of our own most cherished customs and observances, adopting the novel tactic of considering how they might be viewed from the perspective of an alien culture or a different historical period. The effect is to suggest that even our most exalted religious and social practices can always be redescribed in such a way as to challenge the evaluations we unhesitatingly place on them.

Montaigne's first example is that of the behaviour we think proper in the face of a father's death. We think it essential that our fathers

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[137] All my quotations are taken from this translation. See Montaigne (1892–3). For general observations about the role of rhetoric in the presentation of Montaigne's moral outlook, see Kritzman (1980), esp. pp. 21–33, 95–105 and Kahn (1985), chap. 5, pp. 115–51.
[138] On Montaigne and Sebond's text see Skinner (1978), vol. 2, pp. 279–80. For an attempt to dispel the paradoxical air of Montaigne's defence see Gray (1974).

should receive Christian burial. To this commitment, however, Montaigne opposes the outlook of those ancient tribes who instead regarded it as an act of 'abomination and cruelty' to 'cast the carcases of their parents into the corruption of the earth' (1892–3, vol. 2, p. 304). He proceeds to examine their reasons for redescribing the act of burial in such unfamiliar terms. They believed that their most important duty was in some way to preserve their fathers among them. They believed in consequence that they ought to eat their fathers, thereby giving them 'the worthiest and most honourable sepulchre' (1892–3, vol. 2, p. 304). We are left confronting the fact that an action of which we are bound to say that 'nothing can be imagined so horrible' can nevertheless be redescribed and commended as 'a testimonie of pietie and good affection' (1892–3, vol. 2, p. 304). By contrast, we are forced to recognize that Christian burial, which we take to be a sacred duty, can nevertheless be redescribed and condemned as an indication of cruelty and disrespect.

The other example Montaigne considers in the same passage relates to our ideal of 'civility'. He first notes that, as part of the 'ceremonies' we associate with this ideal, we seek to restrain the public pursuit of various forms of behaviour—especially sexual behaviour—which we nevertheless regard as 'both lawful and honest, being done in secret' (1892–3, vol. 2, p. 308). We describe these forms of concealment as instances of 'reservation and circumspection', and thereby hold them up as 'parts of estimation', commendable elements in a civilized way of life (1892–3, vol. 2, p. 308). Montaigne contrasts this emphasis on gravity and decorum with the attitude of those ancient philosophers who followed 'Nature's first image as a pattern', rather than 'the common-beaten path' (1892–3, vol. 2, p. 307). These sages took the view that any attempt at 'concealing and disclaiming what nature, custome and our desire publish and proclame' must be regarded as a form of deceit, and in consequence 'deemed to be a vice' (1892–3, vol. 2, p. 308). It follows that, if we were to confront these philosophers with the very forms of behaviour we commend as *honnesteté*, they would be certain to condemn them as *sottise*.[139] As Florio's translation puts it, they would dismiss the very actions we admire for their 'civility' as instances of mere 'folly' or stupidity (1892–3, vol. 2, p. 308).

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As the technique of paradiastole was put to these increasingly provocative uses in the course of the sixteenth century, there was a corresponding

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[139] For Montaigne's use of these terms see Montaigne (1939), p. 570.

revival among conservative moralists of the fears that the use of the device had always aroused. It seemed to conjure up a world of complete moral arbitrariness, a world in which there would be no possibility of agreeing about the application of moral terms, and no possibility in consequence of avoiding a state of unending confusion and mutual hostility.

This anxiety was as old as the art of rhetoric itself. As we have seen, the historians and moralists of ancient Rome had viewed the technique with unmixed hostility, Livy going so far as to denounce it as 'the most infamous of all the arts'.[140] But similar anxieties had already been voiced at an even earlier date. Thucydides includes a withering attack on the evils of paradiastolic speech in Book III of his *History*, although he makes no mention of the rhetorical technique involved. This may well have been one of the aspects of his political outlook that encouraged Hobbes to decide, when brooding about the impending political crisis of his own age, that the best way to instruct his fellow-countrymen would be to issue an English translation of Thucydides's *History*. Hobbes's version, originally published in 1629,[141] provides an unsurpassable rendering of the passage in which Thucydides describes how the cities of Greece fell into sedition, in the course of which 'the received value of names imposed for signification of things was changed into arbitrary'.[142] As a result, 'inconsiderate boldness was counted true-hearted manliness: provident deliberation, a handsome fear: modesty, the cloak of cowardice: to be wise in every thing, to be lazy in every thing'. So great was the resulting corruption of public life that anyone who 'could outstrip another in the doing of an evil act, or that could persuade another thereto that never meant it, was commended' (Hobbes, 1975, pp. 222–3).

With the revival of the *Ars rhetorica* in the Renaissance, these ancient fears about the dangers of paradiastole burst forth with renewed vehemence. In England this happened almost as soon as the theory of *Elocutio* began to be widely taught in the latter part of the sixteenth century. When Humfrey Braham, for example, published his somewhat nostalgic account of *The Institucion of a Gentleman* in 1555, he drew particular attention to 'the sayinge of the wyse Romayne Salust', who took note of 'the mysgovernaunce of many yonge gentylmen in Rome, whiche used to wrest the names of good thinges into the names of vices' (Braham, 1555, Sig. B iii^v). We too, according to Braham, are losing 'the trew names

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[140] 'pessima ars'. See Livy (1929), XXII.XII.12, p. 242.

[141] For the date of publication see Macdonald & Hargreaves (1952), p. 1. It was Hobbes's first published work.

[142] Hobbes (1975), p. 222. The passage was frequently invoked by Renaissance writers interested in paradiastole. Montaigne cites it in his essay 'Of Custom'. See Montaigne (1892–3), vol. 1, p. 118. Lipsius refers to it in his *Politickes*. See Lipsius (1594), p. 69.

of thinges', for with us too 'the givyng away of other mens goodes is called liberalitie, & unshamefastnes in noughty thinges, is called high or gentle courage' (1555, Sig. B iv^r).

Six years later, Sir Thomas Hoby's translation of Castiglione's *Il libro del cortegiano* lent weighty support to these anxieties. Speaking at the outset of the debate about the qualities of the perfect courtier in Book I, the figure of the Count is made to complain that it is becoming 'almoste unpossible' to gain agreement about what sort of a person should be admired, 'and that by reason of the varietie of judgementes' (Castiglione, 1900, p. 43). Drawing specifically on the characterization of paradiastole that Livy had originally put into currency, the Count goes on to explain that the problem arises because everyone is ready to 'prayse or dysprayse accordynge to hys fansye, alwayes coverynge a vyce with the name of the next vertue to it, and a vertue with the name of the nexte vice' (1900, p. 44). The Count underlines his point with a number of examples, two of which suggest that he may have been a student of Quintilian. Nowadays, he observes, we find people calling 'him that is sawcye, bolde: hym that is sober, drie: hym that is seelye, good: hym that is unhappye, wittie, and lykewyse in the reste' (1900, p. 44).

The same complaint was carried a step further when George Pettie and Bartholomew Young issued their translation of Stefano Guazzo's *La civile conversatione* of 1574 in the course of the early 1580s. According to the character of Guazzo in the dialogue, the technique of denigrating people's behaviour by redescribing it in unfavourable terms has not only corrupted public life, but is undermining the pleasure of civil conversation itself. 'The malice of men', Guazzo laments, has of late become 'so great that they spare not the honour of whosoever it bee, whether Prince or private person, and thinke sinisterly and preposterously of all the good deedes which are wrought' (Guazzo, 1925, vol. 1, p. 38). He specifically alludes to the technique of paradiastole as one of the means by which this malice is expressed. 'If you addict your selfe to devotion, and the exercise of charitie, you are taken for an hypocrite'; similarly, 'if you be affable and courteous, you shalbe called a flatterer' (1925, vol. 1, p. 38).

In the generation immediately following, even fiercer denunciations of paradiastole began to appear. It was during this period that the subversive implications of the technique, as practised in particular by Machiavelli and his disciples, first began to be widely recognized. The effect upon the more conservative moralists of late Elizabethan and early Stuart England was at once to revive their interest in the device, and at the same time to give them an even stronger sense of the need to counsel against its use.

A striking example can be found in the writings of Henry Peacham. As we have seen, Peacham issued his *Garden of Eloquence* in two very

different forms, the first in 1577 and the second in 1593.[143] In the original edition he contents himself with a conventional definition of paradiastole. But in the revised version he instead attacks the use of the figure in the most violent terms. He now describes it simply as a 'vice of speech' (1954, p. 169). It 'calls dronkennesse good fellowship, insatiable avarice good husbandrie, craft and deceit wisdome and pollicie' (1954, p. 168). It is thus no better than an 'instrument of excuse, serving to selfe-love, partiall favour, blinde affection, and a shamelesse person, which for the better maintenance of wickednesse useth to cover vices with the mantles of vertues' (1954, p. 169).

A similar though immeasurably more eloquent denunciation of the technique can be found in Ben Jonson's *Catiline*, which was first performed and published in 1611.[144] The figure of the Chorus brings Act IV to a close with an attack on Cicero's detractors which ends by calling on Rome— exactly as Cato had done in Sallust's *Bellum Catilinae*—to abandon the disgraceful and dangerous practice of paradiastole in favour of calling things by their proper names:

> What age is this, where honest men,
>   Plac'd at the helme,
> A sea of some foule mouth, or pen,
>   Shall over-whelme?
> And call their diligence, deceipt;
>   Their vertue, vice;
> Their watchfulnesse, but lying in wait;
>   And bloud, the price.
> O, let us plucke this evill seede
>   Out of our spirits;
> And give, to every noble deede,
>   The name it merits   (Jonson, 1937, p. 526).

Of all the English moralists of this period, however, it is Thomas Hobbes who offers by far the fullest and most systematic critique of paradiastole, and it is within this context that his analysis needs to be placed if its significance is to be understood. Hobbes first discusses the device in Chapter 5 of *The Elements of Law*, where he treats it as one of the two major sources of confusion bedevilling the use of evaluative terms. It is worth beginning, as Hobbes himself does, by making a sharp distinction between the two types of ambiguity he singles out, if only

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[143] Cf. fns. 84 and 93, *supra*. The edition I use (Peacham, 1954) contains much of the 1577 version as well as the whole of the 1593 edition. Javitch (1972), pp. 876–7 remarks on the difference between the two editions in their handling of paradiastole.

[144] For the date of the original performance and publication see Barton (1984), p. 154. See also Barton 1984 esp. pp. 157–9 on Jonson's use of Sallust.

because they have so often been conflated by his modern commentators, with the result that the importance of paradiastole in his moral and political theory has remained unrecognized.

One source of moral confusion stems from the fact that so many evaluative terms lack a univocal meaning. Hobbes examines this problem at the start of Chapter 5, the main topic of which is the application of names. Many names 'are not of constant signification, but bring into our minds other thoughts than those for which they were ordained' (1969, p. 20). Indeed, 'there is scarce any word that is not made equivocal by divers contextures of speech' (1969, p. 21). By way of example, Hobbes considers the case of the word *faith*. This 'sometimes signifieth the same with belief'. But sometimes it 'signifieth particularly that belief which maketh a Christian'. And sometimes it instead 'signifieth the keeping of a promise'.[145]

In the final section of the chapter Hobbes turns to the other source of confusion, which he explicitly contrasts with the problems resulting from the 'unconstant' definition of terms (1969, p. 23). This further difficulty stems from the fact that the application of all evaluative terms will always be 'diversified by passion'.[146] Due to their varying temperaments, different individuals will always be prone to assess particular actions and states of affairs from disparate points of view. As a result, they will tend to apply different evaluative terms—whose meaning need not be in dispute—as rival descriptions of one and the same set of circumstances.[147] The upshot is that we can hardly hope to find 'scarce two men agreeing what is to be called good and what evil' (1969, p. 23). Hobbes goes on to offer two specific examples to underline his point. Both are classic instances of paradiastolic redesciption, and both had already been singled out by a number of earlier writers—especially Susenbrotus and his English disciples[148]—as standard examples of the technique. One is that of someone redescribing a liberal action as a case of prodigality; the other is that of someone similarly redescribing an act of valour as a case of temerity (1969, p. 23).

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[145] Hobbes (1969), p. 20. Hobbes gives other examples at pp. 38 and 83.

[146] Hobbes (1969), p. 23. Hobbes enlarges on the point in chap. 7 (p. 29) and repeats it in chap. 17 (pp. 93–4).

[147] For the fact that some moral disputes are not about the meanings of the names used to describe good and bad actions, but rather about what range of actions can properly be described by the use of such names, see also *The Elements* chap. 17, p. 90 (noting that 'circumstances of actions' are sometimes in dispute), and Pt II, chap. 10, p. 188 (noting that some disputes about 'right' are about 'what is to be called right').

[148] The same examples can already be found in Susenbrotus (1562), p. 45; Puttenham (1936), pp. 184–5; Day (1967), p. 84 (second pagination).

Hobbes's chief purpose in identifying these two sources of linguistic confusion is to emphasize the social conflicts that inevitably flow from them.[149] He initially speaks of these dangers in purely general terms, stressing the 'incommodities' that derive from the fact that 'the invention of names' has so often 'precipitated men into error' (1969, p. 22). But when he comes to the political section of his argument he mainly concentrates on the dangers of paradiastolic speech. He first makes the point in the course of analysing the laws of nature in Chapter 17. Even if men agree about the content of these laws, and hence about the range of the moral virtues, their differing passions will make it difficult for them 'to understand by what actions, and circumstances of actions, those laws are broken' (1969, p. 90). But if people cannot agree about the actions that ought and ought not to be characterized as virtuous, then 'there must needs arise many great controversies about the interpretation thereof, by which the peace must needs be dissolved' (1969, p. 90). The final chapter on the dissolution of commonwealths puts the same point even more bluntly. 'Where every man is his own judge, and differeth from other concerning the names and appellations of things', we shall inevitably find that 'from those differences arise quarrels and breach of peace' (1969, p. 188).

Soon after circulating *The Elements of Law*, Hobbes revised and greatly expanded the political sections of his manuscript, issuing the resulting treatise in Latin under the title *De Cive* in 1642.[150] One of the many concepts he examines more fully in this first published version of his political science is that of paradiastole. Not only does the *De Cive* offer a more extensive explanation of how the phenomenon of paradiastolic speech arises; it also expresses an even keener sense of anxiety about the dangers attending its use.

Hobbes presents his new analysis in the course of Chapter III, the main aim of which is to demonstrate that the laws of nature and the traditional moral virtues are one and the same. Towards the end of his discussion he addresses the question of how we can hope to persuade someone that a

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[149] On the connection between linguistic confusion and social conflict in Hobbes see the valuable discussion in Whelan (1981). Even Whelan, however, assumes that Hobbes is simply talking about 'meanings', and thus fails to register Hobbes's additional anxieties about paradiastole. See Whelan (1981), esp. pp. 73–4.

[150] Despite claims to the contrary made by Howard Warrender, the latest editor of *De Cive*, it is inconceivable that the English version of this text (published in 1651 as *Philosophicall Rudiments Concerning Government and Society*) is by Hobbes himself. Since the translation has no standing—and offers ignorant renderings of Hobbes's philosophical terminology in a number of important cases—I have preferred to make my own translations directly from Hobbes's Latin text. For scepticism about Hobbes's authorship of the translation, see the articles by Goldsmith (1981), Malcolm (1984) and Tuck (1985) for which references are given in Skinner (1990), p. 122n.

given action ought to be described with the name of a virtue. He concedes that this raises a serious difficulty, the source of which he begins by identifying in terms that recall and extend the argument of the *Elements of Law*. 'The words *good* and *evil* are names imposed on things in order to indicate either the desire or the aversion of those by whom the things in question are named. However, the desires of men are diverse, depending as they do on the diversity of their temperaments, their customs and their attitudes. This is particularly so, moreover, in the things that pertain to life's public activities, where we not only find one person commending (that is, calling good) something that another person denounces (that is, calls evil); in many cases we even find the same person at different times praising and censuring the very same thing.'[151]

Hobbes next examines the resulting difficulty, again echoing and elaborating his earlier account. 'It may be that everyone agrees to speak in praise of the virtues of which we have spoken'.[152] It may be, that is, that everyone agrees about the meanings, and hence the evaluative uses, of such terms as 'modesty, equity, good faith, humanity, pity' and so forth.[153] 'Nevertheless', Hobbes goes on, 'people may still disagree about their nature, and about the sort of thing in which each of these qualities may be said to reside'.[154] They may disagree, that is, as to whether or not some particular action or state of affairs deserves to be described by the name of one of the virtues.

Hobbes later enlarges on the same point, with rather greater clarity, in the course of discussing the concept of civil law in Chapter XIV. 'There may be general agreement that certain forms of behaviour, such as theft, adultery and the like, are to be described as sins'.[155] We may agree, that is, about the meanings of those particular terms, and hence agree 'that they can only be taken in a bad sense'[156] in order to censure whatever courses of actions they are used to describe. As Hobbes stresses, however, 'we are

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[151] '*bonum & malum* nomina esse rebus imposita ad significandum appetitum, vel aversionem eorum a quibus sic nominantur. Appetitus autem hominum pro diversis eorum temperamentis, consuetudinibus, opinionibusque, diversi sunt … multo magis, in iis rebus quae pertinet ad actiones vitae communes, ubi quod hic *laudat*, id est, appellat *bonum*, alter *vituperat* ut *malum*; immo saepissime idem homo diversis temporibus idem & *laudat & culpat*' (Hobbes [1983], p. 119). Hobbes repeats the point at the start of Chapter VII (1983, p. 150) and again in Chapter XIV (1983, pp. 213–4).

[152] 'consentiant omnes in laude dictarum virtutum' (Hobbes, 1983, p. 120).

[153] See Hobbes (1983), p. 120, listing *modestia, aequitas, fides, humanitas, misericordia*.

[154] 'tamen dissentiant adhuc de earum natura, in quo nempe unaquaeque earum consistat' (Hobbes, 1983, p. 120).

[155] 'Possunt quidem convenire in generalia quaedam, veluti *furtum, adulterium*, & similia, esse *peccata*' (Hobbes, 1983, p. 214).

[156] Hobbes's phrase is 'in malam partem accipi' (Hobbes, 1983, p. 214).

not asking whether theft is a sin; we are asking what is to count as a case of theft'.[157] Even if we agree, that is, about the meaning and evaluative use of the term, we may still disagree as to whether it is legitimate to apply it in some particular case in order to describe (and hence condemn) the action involved.

It is when Hobbes turns in Chapter III to explain why this problem is ineliminable that he specifically alludes to the device of paradiastole. He considers the case of 'a good action performed by someone which is displeasing to someone else'.[158] Citing the precondition of paradiastolic redescription which, as we have seen, Livy had originally emphasized, he points out that it will always be open to such a critic 'to impose upon the action in question the name of some neighbouring vice'.[159] By the same token, 'disgraceful actions which please people can similarly be redescribed with the name of a virtue'.[160] It is because of this 'neighbourly' relationship between so many of the virtues and the vices, Hobbes concludes, 'that one and the same action can always be praised by some, and described as a virtue, while others censure it and convert it into a vice'.[161]

Hobbes's discussion in Chapter III culminates in a demonstration of the intense danger of employing the device. As we have seen, his chief purpose in this chapter is to show that the traditional list of the moral virtues can be equated with the laws of nature. But the laws of nature, he has already argued, are the names of those theorems that must indispensably be accepted if we are to succeed in preserving civic peace (Hobbes, 1983, pp. 98–100). It follows that, if we cannot agree about the lines of conduct that are properly to be described as virtuous, civic peace will inevitably be jeopardized. Hobbes draws the inference even more grimly than in *The Elements of Law*. 'Wherever *good* and *evil* are measured by the mere diversity of present desires, and hence by a corresponding diversity of yardsticks, those who act in this way will find themselves still in a state of war.'[162]

When Hobbes reverts to the problem of paradiastole in *Leviathan* in

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[157] 'Sed non quaerimus an furtum sit peccatum; quaerimus quid furtum dicendum sit' (Hobbes, 1983, p. 214).

[158] Hobbes speaks (1983, p. 120) of a *bona actio* which *cuiquam displicit*.

[159] 'ei actioni imponitur nomen alicuius vitii vicini' (Hobbes, 1983, p. 120).

[160] 'similiter nequitiae quae placent, ad virtutem aliquam referuntur' (Hobbes, 1983, p. 120).

[161] 'Unde evenit eandem actionem ab his laudari & virtutem appellari, ab illis culpari & vitio verti' (Hobbes, 1983, p. 120).

[162] 'Sunt igitur tamdiu in statu belli, quam *bonum & malum* prae appetituum praesentium diversitate, diversis mensuris metiuntur' (Hobbes, 1983, p. 119).

1651, he largely reiterates—and at some points even abridges[163]—these earlier accounts. His discussion in *Leviathan* is notable, however, for introducing a new range of examples. As in *The Elements of Law*, Hobbes places his account of paradiastole at the end of his chapter on speech and its abuses. As before, he begins by noting that the problem of 'different naming' can arise even when 'the nature of that we conceive be the same' (Hobbes, 1985, p. 109). The basic reason, he again stresses, lies in the fact that we all have 'different constitutions of body and prejudices of opinion' (1985, p. 109). These in turn are bound to affect our sense of how best to describe any given action or state of affairs. The moral is that 'in reasoning, a man must take heed of words; which besides the signification of what we imagine of their nature, have a signification also of the nature, disposition and interest of the speaker' (1985, p. 109). This is particularly evident in the case of 'the names of Vertues and Vices'. For 'one man calleth *Wisdome*, what another calleth *Feare*; and one *cruelty*, what another *justice*; one *prodigality*, what another *magnanimity*; and one *gravity*, what another *stupidity*' (1985, p. 109).

Of these examples, two had already been widely cited as paradigm cases of paradiastolic speech. The possibility of excusing a cruel action by redescribing it as strict justice or mere severity had been one of Susenbrotus's leading illustrations, and had already been taken up by several of his English followers, including both Wilson and Peacham.[164] The example of excusing a prodigal action by redescribing it as liberal or magnanimous was even more familiar. We find it in Seneca and Tacitus; we find it again in Susenbrotus and in several of his English admirers, including both Puttenham and Day; and we find it yet again in Hobbes's own earlier discussion of paradiastolic speech in *The Elements of Law*.[165]

These examples indicate Hobbes's familiarity with the standard rhetorical literature of his age. But his other two instances are of even greater interest, for in each of these cases it seems possible to identify a specific source. First he takes the example of someone redescribing, and hence dismissing, an act of wisdom or prudence as an instance of mere timorousness or fear. This is not an illustration to be found in any of the

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[163] In particular, there is no mention in *Leviathan* of the 'neighbourly' relationship between certain vices and virtues invoked in *De Cive* to explain the phenomenon of paradiastolic speech. The Latin version of *Leviathan* abridges even further, while in the final statement of his philosophy of language in *De Corpore* Hobbes makes no mention of the problems posed by paradiastole at all.

[164] See Susenbrotus (1562), p. 45; Wilson (1962), p. 145; Peacham (1954), Sig. H. 5ᵛ.

[165] For Seneca see fn. 53, *supra*; for Tacitus, see fns. 44 and 45, *supra*; for Susenbrotus, see fn. 81, *supra*; for Puttenham see 1936, pp. 184–5; for Day see 1967, p. 84 (second pagination); for Hobbes see 1969, p. 23.

Renaissance discussions of paradiastole, nor in any of the classical guides to the *Ars rhetorica* from which they were largely derived. As we have seen, however, it is exactly this example that Livy uses in describing how Fabius Maximus's own master of horse sought to challenge his tactics in the war against Hannibal. The implication is that Hobbes's illustration may well be taken directly from Livy, especially as he alludes to the same passage from the *History* in discussing the concept of paradiastole in *De Cive* (Hobbes, 1983, p. 157).

Hobbes's last example is that of someone redescribing a grave or measured form of behaviour as an instance of mere dullness or stupidity. This memorable illustration is without precedent in any of the rhetorical textbooks we have examined, whether from the classical or the Renaissance period. As we have seen, however, Montaigne considers it at length in the course of his celebrated remarks about the ambiguities of moral description in his *Apology* for Sebond. We are left with the fascinating possibility that, during his exile in France, at some point between the publication of *De Cive* in 1642 and *Leviathan* in 1651, Hobbes may have made a study of Montaigne's *Apology* for the first time.[166]

Finally, Hobbes's analysis of paradiastole in *Leviathan* is notable for the even greater pessimism with which he confronts the dangers of using the device. He makes the point in high rhetorical style in concluding his survey of the laws of nature in Chapter XV. 'Moral philosophy', he declares, 'is nothing else but the Science of what is *Good* and *Evil* in the conversation and society of mankind'. But this science is threatened by the fact that '*Good* and *Evil* are names that signify our Appetites and Aversions; which in different tempers, customs and doctrines of men are different'. The effect of such differences is as grave as possible. So long as 'private Appetite is the measure of Good and Evil', we shall find ourselves living 'in the condition of meer Nature' (Hobbes, 1985, p. 216). And this condition, Hobbes has already demonstrated in Chapter XIII, is nothing less than a state of war of all upon all (1985, p. 185).

Hobbes's engagement with the problem of paradiastole is one of the most extensive in the moral and political literature of the seventeenth century. Having first addressed the topic in his translation of Thucydides in 1629, he only says his final word on the subject in the Latin version of

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[166] There are independent reasons for thinking this plausible. On the one hand, there is no copy of any work by Montaigne in the Chatsworth library catalogue of the 1630s. (Chatsworth MSS E.1.A.) On the other hand, one of the new friends Hobbes made in the Mersenne-Gassendi circle in Paris during the 1640s was François de La Mothe-le-Vayer, whom it is hard to imagine conducting a philosophical conversation without mentioning Montaigne. Note also that La Mothe-le-Vayer published *La Rhetorique du prince* in 1651. On Hobbes's links with the Mersenne-Gassendi circle see Skinner (1966).

Leviathan in 1668.[167] Moreover, his analysis constitutes one of the last serious treatments of the issue in English moral thought. Towards the end of the seventeenth century the popularity of neo-classical rhetoric in England appears to have fallen into a sharp decline,[168] as a result of which the study of moral philosophy quickly lost any contact with the rhetorical assumptions and vocabulary in terms of which a number of meta-ethical issues, including that of paradiastole, had previously been discussed. By the early eighteenth century the word had fallen completely out of use, and most of the stock examples of the phenomenon had similarly passed into oblivion.[169] Among moral theorists of that period, we already find the topic of evaluative redescription being handled in an idiom far more reminiscent of modern debates about the so-called problem of 'moral realism'.[170]

During the last quarter of the seventeenth century, however, there was one further English writer who made a contribution of major importance to the analysis of paradiastolic speech. This was Dr Robert South, Canon of Christ Church and Prebend of Westminster, who delivered and subsequently published an entire series of sermons on the subject in 1686.[171] A writer of deeply conservative temperament,[172] South declares at the outset that the danger which concerns him—that of 'the fatal imposture and force of words'—has of late become more threatening than ever before (1823a, p. 108). This is due to the popularity of two contrasting ways of thinking about the issue of paradiastolic speech, both of which South begins by

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[167] Hobbes's own Latin translation (and extensive revision) of *Leviathan* was first published in the collected edition of his Latin works issued by Johannes Blaeu (Amsterdam, 1668). See Hobbes (1668) and cf. Macdonald & Hargreaves (1952), pp. 77–8. It was first issued as a separate work by the same firm in 1670. See Macdonald & Hargreaves (1952), p. 34.

[168] Although historians of rhetoric have yet to investigate the reasons for this decline, the printing-histories of the leading English rhetorical text-books of the second half of the seventeenth century leave little doubt that there was a sudden loss of popularity after the 1680s. Consider, for example, Blount (1971), originally published in 1656, or Smith (1969) originally published in 1657. The first reached a sixth edition by 1683, the second a fifth edition by 1688, but neither was republished thereafter until the present century. Similarly with Farnaby (1970) which first appeared in 1625. Its fifteenth edition, which appeared in 1696, was also its last until the present century. For these details see Murphy (1981), pp. 50, 143–4, 271–2.

[169] Here I rely on the authority of the *O.E.D.*, which treats the word as obsolete, giving 1706 as the last point at which a definition was attempted.

[170] For an excellent survey of types of 'realism' in contemporary moral philosophy see Railton (1986).

[171] South (1634–1716) delivered four sermons on what he called 'this vast and even immense subject' (1823b, p. 285). For the first see South (1823a). The other three are collected in South (1823b) at pp. 103–34, 235–64 and 265–88.

[172] It was he who delivered the oration denouncing the Royal Society at the dedication of the Sheldonian Theatre in July 1669. See Skinner (1969), p. 224.

stigmatizing as false and absurd. The first he evidently associates with Montaigne, since his exposition includes a number of disapproving allusions to the *Apology* for Sebond (1823a, pp. 113–14). The other he definitely associates with Hobbes, whom he singles out as 'the infamous author of the *Leviathan*' and denounces for his 'lewd, scandalous and immoral' views about the relationship between virtue and vice (1823a, p. 115).

South then turns to consider the phenomenon of paradiastole anew. He begins by stressing the peculiarity which, as we have seen, practically every writer on the topic had emphasized: the fact that there is a 'similitude, neighbourhood and affinity' between 'vice and virtue, good and evil, in several notable instances of each' (1823a, p. 129). He then mentions a range of cases in which a danger of 'promiscuous confusion' can easily arise from these misleading similarities (1823a, p. 130). Most of his examples are familiar, indeed hackneyed: they include the difficulty of distinguishing 'between liberality and prodigality'; between 'an act of courage and an act of recklessness'; and between 'an act of pusillanimity and an act of great modesty or humility' (1823a, p. 130). More interestingly, however, he rounds off his list by repeating the example that Hobbes had taken from Montaigne. 'Nay, and some have had the good luck to have their very dullness dignified with the name of *gravity*, and to be no small gainers by the mistake' (1823a, p. 130).

South is not primarily interested, however, in offering a new analysis of paradiastolic speech. As the above account indicates, he is largely content to lay out the issues in conventional style. His main purpose is to emphasize the extraordinarily dangerous and subversive character of the device. Here at least he and Hobbes stand together. With a command of rhetoric not unworthy of the infamous author of *Leviathan*, South repeatedly inveighs against the 'verbal magic' of paradiastole and the 'enchantment' to which it gives rise (1823a, pp. 126, 128). The effect is that people are 'ushered to their destruction with panegyric and acclamation' in a shameful display 'of the absurd empire and usurpation of words over things'.[173] So seriously does South view the device that, by the end of his concluding sermon, he has managed to convince himself that 'most of the miseries and calamities which afflict mankind, and turn the world upside down, have been conceived in, and issue from, the fruitful womb of this one villainous artifice' (1823b, p. 286).

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[173] South (1823a), p. 128. Cf. also South (1823b), pp. 204–6 and 235–6 on the 'mischievous', 'direful' and even 'fatal' effects of employing the device.

VI

If the technique of paradiastole represented such a dangerous threat to the moral basis of political life, how could the threat be neutralized? How could the boundaries of moral description be fixed, and a stable moral order guaranteed? These were the questions to which the writers we have been considering next addressed themselves.

By way of an answer, they generally placed their faith in two connected strands of argument. They usually begin by appealing, implicitly or explicitly, to the fundamental principle that the moral order must be treated as an aspect of the order of nature. This is the basic assumption, for example, with which Gentillet confronts Machiavelli's attempt to redescribe the lines of conduct normally proscribed in public life. Gentillet puts the point most directly in the course of discussing Machiavelli's maxim that 'a prince neede not care to be accounted cruell' (Gentillet, 1602, p. 199). Gentillet responds that this is not just 'to praise that which is to be despised and detested'. It is 'to overthrow the order which God and nature have established in the distinction of good and evil things' (1602, p. 215). The same assumption underlies Robert South's denunciation of Montaigne and his disciples. We need to recognize, South replies, that 'good and evil, honest and dishonest' are not 'founded in the opinions of men concerning things'. They are 'qualities existing or inherent in things themselves' (1823a, p. 113). It follows that such actions as 'murder, adultery, theft, fraud' and the like are equally evil at all places and all times; no amount of redescription and approbation can possibly render them good (1823a, p. 116). The reason, South grandiloquently concludes, is that 'the nature of good and evil, as to the principal instances of both, spring from that essential habitude, or relation, which the nature of one thing bears to another by virtue of that order which they stand placed in, here in the world, by the very law and condition of their creation' (1823a, p. 121).

These writers recognize, however, that it is only half the battle to be able to insist that the terms denoting the virtues and vices are at the same time the names of inherently good and evil qualities. We still need to be able to establish, in the case of any action whose moral quality may be in doubt, that one or other of the terms we normally use to describe the virtues and vices can indisputably be applied as the right description of the action concerned. Unless we can somehow fasten our evaluative language unambiguously on to the world of social behaviour in this way, the threat of paradiastolic redescription will not have been overcome.

It was at this juncture that most of the writers we have been considering turned to the second strand of their argument. They went on to claim that

the question of whether it is justifiable to apply a particular appraisive term will always in effect be a factual one.

Among those who defended this thesis in detail—for example, Robert South—it is generally possible to distinguish two separate steps in their reasoning. First they insist on the need to clarify at the outset what South calls 'the general natures and definitions' of the terms we employ to mark off good and evil behaviour (1823a, p. 129). This is the initial and indispensable step we must take if we eventually wish to be able to say with confidence that a given action is properly to be described as liberal rather than prodigal, courageous rather than rash, and so forth. If we fail to grasp the correct definitions of such appraisive terms, and instead remain content to 'take names and words as they first come', we shall find ourselves unable to speak with any confidence about individual cases. Without a preliminary understanding of definition, we can never hope 'to draw the line nicely and exactly between vice and virtue, and to adjust the due limits of each' (South, 1823a, p. 130).

South's point had already been foreshadowed by a number of classical writers on paradiastole. Recall, for example, the discussion in the *Ad Herennium* about whether the behaviour of gladiators can be described as truly courageous.[174] To see the answer, according to the *Ad Herennium*, we must first remind ourselves of the full and exact definition of the term 'courage'. We need to recollect, that is, that the meaning of the word is such that it can only be applied in circumstances in which someone has faced a danger, and in which we feel confident in adding that 'the purpose is useful and the advantages have been duly weighed'.[175]

The second step, according to the writers we are considering, must then be to examine the exact circumstances of the action or state of affairs to be appraised. South makes this further point by way of invoking the visual metaphor that pervades so many of these discussions about how to make our moral language fit the world. We must learn 'to discern the real good and evil' that comes before our eyes. We must seek above all 'to consider and weigh circumstances, to scatter and look through the mists of error, and so separate appearances from realities' (South, 1823a, p. 130).

As before, the suggestion that we can hope to 'see' how any given action requires to be described is one that classical discussions of paradiastole had always emphasized. Consider again the example of the gladiators from the *Ad Herennium*. Does their behaviour deserve to be regarded as truly courageous? We begin by reminding ourselves that

[174] See fn. 62, *supra*.
[175] 'cum ratione utilitatis et conpensatione commodorum' ([Cicero], 1954, IV.XXV.35, p. 316. Cf. fn. 62, *supra*).

courage involves facing a danger where 'the purpose is useful and the advantages have been duly weighed'. We then ask ourselves whether the facts about gladiatorial contests answer to this definition. Reflecting on this question, we are bound to recognize that gladiators fight for no useful purpose, and 'without any consideration of the risks'.[176] This being so, we are bound to conclude that they cannot be said to exemplify genuine courage. They can only be described as exhibiting 'a form of reckless temerity'.[177]

By now it will be clear why this line of reasoning was widely held to neutralize the dangers of paradiastole. The implication is that any given action can always be truly described, and in consequence truly appraised. By lining up definitions with facts, we can always hope, as South insists, to arrive at 'a full discovery of the true goodness and evil of things' (1823a, p. 131). But if this can genuinely be done, then the possibility of a paradiastolic redescription will be automatically ruled out. If we now attempt, for example, to redescribe the behaviour of the gladiators as a case of genuine courage, we shall stand convicted of misapprehending and in consequence of falsely describing the facts of the case.

This conclusion was explicitly drawn by almost every English rhetorician who addressed the problem of paradiastole in the era of the Renaissance. Henry Peacham insists that any paradiastolic redescription simply 'opposeth the truth by false tearmes and wrong names' (1954, p. 168). George Puttenham agrees that the essence of the technique consists of describing an action with 'a terme more favorable and of lesse vehemencie then the troth requires' (1936, p. 220). Francis Bacon likewise admits that, whenever we engage in the exercise of producing 'antitheses', we always seek 'to exaggerate or depreciate the facts with the full force of human ingenuity in a fashion that is not only unfair but is altogether beyond the truth'.[178]

Among moral philosophers of the same period, the implications of the argument are usually stated in very similar terms. Consider, for example, the upshot of Gentillet's attack on Machiavelli for claiming that 'Crueltie which tendeth to a good end is not to be reprehended' (1602, p. 227). Gentillet concedes that cruel actions can often be 'coloured with some pretext or shew of good'; even murderers sometimes manage to 'call themselves abbreviators of justice' (1602, p. 228). But in spite of any such

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[176] 'cum inconsiderata dolorum' ([Cicero], 1954, IV.XXV.35, p. 316).

[177] See [Cicero] (1954), IV.XXV.35, p. 316 for the claim that exposing oneself to danger 'cum inconsiderata dolorum perpessione gladiatoria' can only be described as *temeritas*.

[178] 'eosque ultimis ingenii viribus, et tanquam improbe et prorsus praeter veritatem, attolli et deprimi' (Bacon, 1857, p. 688).

'pallations & shewes', we cannot doubt that, with 'their maske or visard taken from them, murder will alwayes bee found murder, and theft, theft' (1602, p. 228). To describe such actions in any other terms will simply be 'to call things with contrarie names' (1602, p. 215).

Robert South's attack on Montaigne and his followers issues in the same conclusion: paradiastolic redescriptions are simply untrue to the facts. They amount to 'a misrepresentation of the qualities of things and actions to the common apprehensions of men, abusing their minds with false notions, and so by this artifice making evil pass for good, and good for evil, in all the great concerns of life' (1823a, p. 108). Recurring in one of his later sermons to the image of 'seeing' moral truths, South adds that such redescriptions merely judge 'by a false light' (1823b, p. 204). As soon as we recognize that this is so, our duty becomes clear. 'Let strict, naked and undisguised truth take place in all things; and let not evil be dignified with the title of good, nor good libelled with the name of evil, by a false and fraudulent appellation of things' (1823b, p. 263).

Finally, it is worth noting that John Locke appears to endorse the same conclusion in Book III of the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Locke first acknowledges (in a passage remarkably reminiscent of *Leviathan*) that the difficulty of relating moral terms to their corresponding ideas will always be especially acute. 'Hence it comes to pass, that Men's Names, of very compound *Ideas*, such as for the most part are moral Words, have seldom, in two different Men, the same precise signification; since one Man's complex *Idea* seldom agrees with anothers, and often differs from his own, from that which he had yesterday, or will have tomorrow' (Locke, 1975, p. 478). But whereas Hobbes had emphasized the dangers of paradiastolic redescription to which this gives rise, Locke argues by contrast that the problem can easily be overcome. By way of illustration, he offers one of the standard examples of paradiastolic speech: the case in which 'I apply the Name *Frugality* to that *Idea* which others call and signify by this sound, *Covetousness*' (1975, p. 507). According to Locke, the right way to resolve such difficulties is simply to recognize that these are instances in which 'I may have the *Ideas* of Vertues, or Vices, and Names also', but in which I proceed to 'apply them amiss' (1975, p. 507).

VII

As a solution to the problem of paradiastole, the suggestion that we can always hope to 'see' whether our moral language has been applied

correctly or amiss was widely taken up.[179] Among the writers we have been
considering, however, by no means everyone admitted the force of the
argument. During the course of the sixteenth century, a number of the
more sceptically-minded humanists began to raise serious doubts about its
premises, thereby implying that the dangers of paradiastole remained
stubbornly unresolved.

Some of these writers went so far as to question the fundamental
assumption that the moral order forms an aspect of the order of nature.
This certainly appears to be an implication of Machiavelli's argument in the
notorious central chapters of *Il Principe*. It is true that Machiavelli usually
concentrates on the paradiastolic claim that, while cruelty and parsimony
are undoubtedly the names of vices, many of the actions we usually
condemn as cruel or parsimonious ought not to be described in such
unfavourable terms. Sometimes, however, he appears to mount a very
different and far more radical line of argument. He sometimes seems
willing to question whether the terms we employ to describe the vices are
really the names of actions that deserve to be condemned at all. What we
call liberality, he sometimes seems to suggest, may not in fact be the name
of a virtue; similarly, what we call cruelty may not be the name of a vice.[180]

If we turn to Montaigne, we find an even clearer willingness to
challenge the idea of eternal fitnesses. As we have seen, to a writer like
Gentillet it appears indisputable that, if an action can rightly be described
as theft, then it must automatically stand condemned. But Montaigne
disagrees. In his *Apology* for Sebond he examines the attitude of the
ancient Spartans towards 'taking other mens goods' (Montaigne, 1892–3,
vol. 2, p. 305). The Spartans are represented as acknowledging that such
behaviour can only be described as theft, and thus as an instance of
'disorder and injustice' (1892–3, vol. 2, p. 305). However, they preferred
to emphasize 'the vivacitie, diligence, courage, and nimblenesse that is
required in surprising or taking any thing from ones neighbour, and the
commodity which thereby redoundeth to the common wealth, that every
man heedeth more curiously the keeping of that which is his owne'
(1892–3, vol. 2, p. 304). They took these considerations to be of far greater
weight than the disorder and injustice resulting from the seizure of other
people's goods. As a consequence, they viewed such actions in an
unfamiliar moral light. While conceding that they amounted to theft, they

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[179] It can still be found in much current moral philosophy, especially of a Platonist stamp. For
a recent and unusually extended account of just this idea of moral 'vision', one that focuses in
particular on our capacity to offer evaluative redescriptions of actions by the manipulation of
'secondary moral terms', see Murdoch (1970), esp. pp. 16–24.
[180] For these suggestions see especially Machiavelli (1960) pp. 67, 68–9.

denied that they ought on that account to be condemned. For them, theft was not the name of a sin.

The premise on which these writers mainly concentrate, however, is the optimistic belief that there will always be a true way of 'seeing' any given action or state of affairs. We already find the figure of the Count in Castiglione's *Cortegiano* shaking his head over this assumption in a deeply sceptical way. As we have seen, the Count is more impressed by the fact that we live in a world in which it is all too easy to call 'him that is sawcye, bolde; him that is sober, drie', and so forth.[181] This makes it very hard to 'see' how people's behaviour ought best to be described and appraised. As the Count says of himself, although he likes to believe 'that eche thing hath his perfection', he is forced to admit that the truth 'is oftentimes hid', and is never easy to discern (Castiglione, 1900, p. 44). The same thing can so easily manifest itself in many different lights. 'Not onelye one thynge maie seme unto you, and an other to me, but also unto my self it may appere sometime one thing, sometime another' (1900, p. 44).

Montaigne—who includes several admiring references to the *Cortegiano* in his *Essais*[182]—announces a similar scepticism in his *Apology* for Sebond. He begins, like Castiglione, by placing a strong emphasis on the way in which our passions enter and affect our sense of how best to describe and appraise social behaviour. This explains why we cannot treat the laws of our country as a pattern of justice. Such laws amount to nothing more than a 'waveing sea of a peoples or of a Princes opinions, which shall paint me forth justice with as many colours, and reform the same into as many visages, as there are changes and alterations of passions in them' (Montaigne, 1892–3, vol. 2, p. 302). Of even greater importance in shaping our appraisals, however, are the customs and institutions by which our sensibilities are themselves formed. So powerful is the effect of custom that different nations frequently 'see' the same thing in a completely different light. 'One nation vieweth a subject with one visage, and thereon it staies; an other with an other' (1892–3, vol. 2, p. 304). Nor can we hope to appeal from custom to reason to gain a clearer sense of how the subject in question ought truly to be viewed. For even reason is affected by custom, and 'yeeldeth appearance to divers effects'. It is 'a pitcher with two eares, which a man may take hold on, either by the right or left hand' (1892–3, vol. 2, p. 305). There can be no end, in short, to arguing *in utramque partem*.

There is thus no possibility of appealing to incontestable facts as a

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[181] Castiglione (1900) p. 44. On paradox in Castiglione see Ossola (1987), esp. pp. 51–9. For Castiglione's views about the mutability of language see Rebhorn (1983).

[182] See for example Montaigne (1892–3), vol. 1, p. 338 and vol. 2, p. 373.

foundation for any of our moral arguments. To suppose otherwise is an illusion, Montaigne thinks, even in the case of the law. 'So infinite a science' can only give rise to 'an exceeding confusion of judgments'. Alluding to the Count's way of putting the point in the *Cortegiano*, Montaigne insists that 'what one company hath judged, another will adjudge the contrary, and the very same will another time change opinion' (1892–3, vol. 2, p. 306). The illusion merely becomes all the more obvious, Montaigne thinks, if we turn to 'philosophicall opinions concerning vice and vertue'. There our variations of judgment scarcely need any emphasis, and some of them are better not mentioned at all (1892–3, vol. 2, p. 306).

Montaigne does not of course give up the image of 'seeing' the truth, still less the ideal of truth itself. But what he emphasizes, with his constant references to the familiar visual metaphor, is that all 'seeing' takes place from a determinate perspective, and thus from a partial point of view. It follows that there can be no question of appraising any form of human behaviour in such a way as to command general assent. If we turn to the famous essay 'Of the Caniballes', we find this implication spelled out in a spirit of remarkable objectivity. 'We have no other ayme of truth and reason', Montaigne concludes, 'than the example and Idea of the opinions and customs of the countrie we live in'. The inevitable consequence is that everyone 'calls that barbarisme which is not common to them' (1892–3, vol. 1, p. 221).

Hobbes has sometimes been portrayed as in some way 'replying' to Montaigne and other exponents of Pyrrhonian scepticism.[183] While there may be something to be said for this interpretation of Hobbes's philosophy of nature, it is important to stress that, when he comes to the question of human custom and law, he appears to be in complete agreement with the lines of argument laid out by Montaigne in his *Apology*. Hobbes in fact represents a further example, and perhaps the most important, of a writer who is deeply troubled by the dangers of paradiastole, but who nevertheless insists that all existing attempts to neutralize the threat have fallen far short of their mark.

He is notorious in the first place for his denial of the claim that the moral order can be viewed as an aspect of the order of nature. In every version of his political science he goes out of his way to repudiate any suggestion that the virtues, and hence the laws of nature, can be treated as a part of the eternal fitness of things. A thorough-going voluntarist, he directly opposes any such conception of intrinsic essences.[184] The laws of

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[183] See for example Pacchi (1965), esp. pp. 63–9, 179–83; Tuck (1989), pp. 92–3.
[184] For Hobbes's voluntarism and its connections with anti-Platonist arguments about making and naming, see Malcolm (1983), esp. Pt. I, pp. 1–132, a discussion to which I am greatly indebted.

nature, as he states most forcefully in Chapter XV of *Leviathan*, are 'improperly' called laws. They are simply 'dictates of Reason', prudential maxims relating to the attainment and preservation of peace (Hobbes, 1985, p. 216). They amount to nothing more than the names of those qualities, and hence those lines of conduct, which men are directed by their reason to follow when considering 'what conduceth to the conservation and defence of themselves'.[185]

Of greater importance for the present argument, however, is the fact that Hobbes is no less emphatic about the impossibility of gaining any general agreement about the correct evaluative descriptions to be placed on individual actions or states of affairs. His philosophy of language is specifically directed against the belief that—as Robert South was to put it in restating the traditional theory—'words stand for things' (South, 1823a, p. 122). For Hobbes, words can only stand for our conceptions of things. He already makes the point in discussing 'the names or appellations of things' in Chapter 5 of *The Elements of Law* (1969, p. 18). All such names, he insists, consist of nothing more than 'the voice of a man, arbitrarily imposed, for a mark to bring to his mind some conception concerning the thing on which it is imposed'.[186] Later he relates the argument specifically to the question of evaluative 'naming',[187] his fullest consideration of this further issue appearing in the two main chapters on language in *Leviathan*. In Chapter IV he again declares that 'all names are imposed to signify our conceptions'; in Chapter VI he draws the strongly nominalist inference that 'these words of Good, Evill, and Contemptible, are ever usd with relation to the person that useth them: there being nothing simply and absolutely so; nor any common Rule of Good and Evill, to be taken from the nature of the objects themselves' (1985, pp. 109, 120).

Hobbes also seeks to explain why such variations in the use of evaluative terms are only to be expected. As we have already seen, he lays his main emphasis on the extent to which our individual passions and interests inevitably affect our sense of how to appraise particular actions and states of affairs. He advances the claim in every version of his political

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[185] Hobbes (1985), p. 217. For similar formulations in *The Elements* and in *De Cive* see respectively Hobbes (1969), p. 75 and Hobbes (1983), p. 122. It is of course true that, according to Warrender and Hood, Hobbes's moral theory possesses just the traditional character with which I am contrasting it. See Warrender (1957) and Hood (1964). For my response to Hood see Skinner (1964). For my response to Warrender see Skinner (1965) and (1988c).

[186] Hobbes (1969), p. 18. Cf. also pp. 21, 26, 64.

[187] Hobbes presents this application of his argument in Chapter 7 of *The Elements*, the source for his discussion in *Leviathan* Chapters IV and V. See Hobbes (1969), pp. 28–31. For an excellent discussion of Hobbes's claim that we can only name things as they appear to us, see Tuck (1988), esp. pp. 253–4.

theory, summarizing the argument in general terms at the end of Chapter IV of *Leviathan*. 'Seeing all names are imposed to signify our conceptions; and all our affections are but conceptions; when we conceive the same things differently, we can hardly avoid different naming of them.'[188]

Like Montaigne, however, Hobbes also believes that our affections are in turn determined by the shaping power of custom and habit. As a result, he sometimes seems to treat this further consideration as even more basic to explaining how it comes about that one and the same action can always be described in morally contrasting ways. He first puts forward the suggestion in *The Elements of Law*, where he expresses it in the form of a striking allusion to the terminology of the *Ars rhetorica*. '*Ratio*', he declares, 'now, is but *oratio*, for the most part', since 'custom hath so great a power, that the mind suggesteth only the first word, the rest follow habitually'.[189] Although he makes no further allusion to this way of putting the point, he reverts to the point itself in each of the later versions of his political science. His account of the laws of nature in Chapter III of *De Cive* strongly emphasizes that differences in custom as well as individual sensibility will always affect the use of evaluative language,[190] while his account of the same issues in *Leviathan* largely reiterates his earlier remarks. As he himself summarizes, '*Good* and *Evill* are names that signifie our Appetites and Aversions; which in different tempers, customes and doctrines of men are different' (1985, p. 216).

For Hobbes, accordingly, it is altogether vain to hope that the threat of paradiastole can be overcome by rigidly designating particular actions by means of corresponding evaluative terms. On the contrary, he seems to have experienced a growing conviction that this familiar response entirely misses the point. As a result, the discussion of paradiastole in *Leviathan* ends on a newly pessimistic note that is not sounded in either of his earlier accounts. He begins by repeating that, in the case of moral appraisal, the way in which we 'see' particular actions will always be coloured by 'a tincture of our different passions' (1985, p. 109). But he goes on to draw a new and almost nihilistic conclusion: that, in consequence of such disagreements, the names of the virtues and vices 'can never be the true grounds of any ratiocination' (1985, p. 109–10). He now appears to believe that, because of the unavoidability of paradiastolic redescription, genuine moral argument is actually impossible.

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[188] Hobbes (1985), p. 109. Cf. also p. 165. For earlier statements of the same point in *The Elements* and *De Cive*, see respectively Hobbes (1969), pp. 23, 29, 93–4 and Hobbes (1983), pp. 150, 213.
[189] Hobbes (1969), p. 23. On this passage and its implications see Johnson (1986), pp. 56–7.
[190] See Hobbes (1983), p. 119.

VIII

Hobbes is no less sceptical than Montaigne about the possibility of gaining any general agreement about the right way to 'see' normative questions and apply evaluative terms. But his attitude to the ineliminable variety of human customs and affections is a strongly contrasting one. For Montaigne, the moral is simply to accept and follow whatever may happen to be the local prejudices of one's tribe. As the essay 'Of Custome' insists, such acquiescence is the mark of a truly wise man. We must acknowledge the good sense of those who 'cast themselves headlong into the libertie or sanctuarie of custome' (Montaigne, 1892–3, vol. 1, p. 114). We must never allow ourselves to be distracted 'from following the common guise'. We must recognize that, while our thoughts remain our own, our duty in 'outward matters' is 'absolutely to follow the fashions and forme customarily received' (1892–3, vol. 1, p. 116).

For Hobbes, however, there can be no question of leaving our moral evaluations with no firmer foundations than those supplied by custom and prejudice. As he puts it in *Leviathan*, so long as 'private appetite is the measure of Good and Evill', we shall still be 'in the condition of meer nature' and not in a sociable condition at all (1985, p. 216). For Montaigne, of course, this implication held no terrors. As he makes clear in his essay 'Of the Caniballes', he finds deeply appealing the idea of a 'natural' society maintained with 'little art', a society in which there would be 'no kinde of traffike, no knowledge of Letters, no intelligence of numbers, no name of magistrate' (1892–3, vol. 1, p. 222). But for Hobbes this is simply a recipe for chaos. When he describes 'the natural condition of mankind' in Chapter XIII of *Leviathan*, he closely echoes Montaigne's account: it would be a condition in which there would be 'no Knowledge of the face of the Earth; no account of Time; no Arts; no Letters; no Society' (1985, p. 186). But such a condition, he immediately adds, would also be marked by 'continual feare, and danger of violent death'. The natural life of man would be 'solitary, poore, nasty, brutish and short' (1985, p. 186).

In explaining why the state of nature would inevitably be a state of war, Hobbes always places a strong emphasis on the conflicts that are bound to arise from differences in the application of evaluative terms.[191] As we have seen, he already draws this conclusion at the end of *The Elements of Law*, stressing that where each man 'differeth from other concerning the names

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[191] See Hobbes (1969), p. 188; Hobbes (1983), pp. 119–20, 132–3, 139–40; Hobbes (1985), p. 226. For the fullest discussion of this point see Whelan (1981). The point is also stressed in Krook (1956), p. 20; Shapiro (1983), p. 151; Missner (1983), pp. 410–11; Sorell (1986), pp. 127–33 and Tuck (1989), p. 55. For general observations see also Jones (1951), esp. pp. 80–1.

and appellations of things', this can only lead to 'quarrels and breach of peace' (1969, p. 188). Even more revealing, however, is the fact that, in reverting to the same issue in *De Cive*, he specifically denounces the practitioners of the *Ars rhetorica* as among the most natural and dangerous enemies of social stability. One reason why creatures such as ants and bees are capable of living sociably without government, whereas men can never hope to do so, is that 'such animals lack that art of words by means of which good can be represented to the mind as better, and evil as worse, than is truly the case'.[192] The corresponding passage in *Leviathan* is phrased even more bitterly. This 'art of words' is such that its adepts can 'augment or diminish the apparent greatnesse of Good and Evill' whenever they like, 'discontenting men and troubling their Peace at their pleasure' (1985, p. 226).

For Hobbes, accordingly, the question of how to resolve the problem of paradiastole remains one of the major tasks facing any political science worthy the name. As a first step towards a new solution, he begins by insisting on the crucial importance of the fact that the moral virtues are at the same time the names of those qualities that conduce to peace. He first hints at the equation in *The Elements of Law*, [193] but it is in Chapter III of *De Cive* that the claim is first stated unequivocally. 'Such qualities as modesty, equity, the keeping of promises, humanity and pity are not merely good customs or habits, that is to say virtues; we have shown that they are at the same time necessary means to peace.'[194] The corresponding passage in *Leviathan* reiterates and extends the argument. 'All men agree on this, that Peace is Good, and therefore also the way or means of peace, which (as I have shewed before) are *Justice, Gratitude, Modesty, Equity, Mercy* & the rest of the Laws of Nature, are good; that is to say, *Morall Vertues*; and their contrary *Vices*, Evill.'[195]

To this Hobbes adds, at first sight rather strangely, that the significance of this point has hitherto been entirely overlooked. 'The writers of Morall Philosophie, though they acknowledge the same Vertues and Vices', have

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[192] 'animantia bruta ... carent tamen illa verborum arte ... qua Bonum, Melius; Malum Peius repraesentatur animo, quam revera est' (Hobbes, 1983, p. 133). See Whelan (1981), p. 59 for further discussion.

[193] The equation is noted in effect in Chapter 17 of *The Elements of Law*. See Hobbes (1969), p. 94.

[194] 'ideoque *modestiam, aequitatem, fidem, humanitatem, misericordiam*, (quas demonstravimus ad pacem esse necessarias) *bonos* esse *mores*, sive habitus, hoc est, *virtutes*' (Hobbes, 1983, p. 120).

[195] Hobbes (1985), p. 216. Cf. also p. 314.

failed to see that they are at the same time 'the way or means of Peace'.[196] It is true that this might perhaps be regarded as a fair criticism of certain scholastic doctrines of virtue. Hobbes certainly seems to think so, for he specifically attacks those who instead identify the virtues as consisting in nothing more than 'a mediocrity of passions'.[197] It might seem, however, that Hobbes is simply reiterating an account of the virtues that practically every humanist had already emphasized. Ever since Petrarch, humanist writers on *virtus* had been arguing, in the manner of Cicero's *De Officiis*, that the term itself must be understood in two contrasting ways. They accepted of course that it denotes a set of praiseworthy qualities; but they also took it to refer to a form of social power. Specifically, they took it to refer to that form of power by 'virtue' of which the *bonum commune*, and especially the good of peace, can alone be secured.[198] By the time Hobbes was writing, this claim had become a commonplace, one that even the most 'politic' humanists continued to endorse. Lipsius, for example, still makes this view of *virtus* central to the argument of his *Politickes*, declaring with direct reference to Cicero's *De Officiis* that 'he which regardeth the societie and benefit of men, doth always that which he ought' (1594, p. 113).

As Hobbes makes clear, however, he thinks of himself as having a new and crucial insight to add to this familiar line of argument. His suggestion is that, if the implications of this way of thinking about the virtues are properly pursued, the problem of paradiastole can be finally resolved.

It cannot be said that he presents his new solution with complete clarity in *The Elements of Law*. If we turn to *De Cive*, however, we find him laying out the argument with full assurance, after which he largely repeats it in the corresponding chapters of *Leviathan*. The key passage occurs at the end of Chapter III of *De Cive*, at the point where Hobbes is rounding off his analysis of the moral virtues and vices. As we have already seen, it is at this juncture that he explicitly raises the issue of paradiastole. Because of the 'neighbourly' relationship between so many of the virtues and vices, 'a good action performed by someone which is displeasing to someone else' can always be redescribed with 'the name of some neighbouring vice', while 'disgraceful actions which please people can similarly be redescribed with the name of a virtue'.[199]

Hobbes insists that 'no philosopher has hitherto been able to discover

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[196] Hobbes (1985), p. 216. There are similar complaints in both *The Elements* and *De Cive*. See respectively Hobbes (1969), p. 94 and Hobbes (1983), pp. 119–20.

[197] Hobbes (1985), p. 216. Cf. the comparable account in Hobbes (1969), p. 94.

[198] For this theme see Skinner (1988a), esp. pp. 412–6.

[199] For these quotations cf. *supra*, fns. 158, 159, 160.

the means of remedying this difficulty'.[200] But the means, he adds, are in fact close at hand. They simply depend on recognizing that the virtues are not merely the names of qualities that conduce to peace, but that this is what constitutes their goodness. 'The goodness of any action resides in the fact that it constitutes a means to preserve peace, whereas the evil in any action resides in the fact that it constitutes a means to produce discord.'[201] At the end of Chapter XV of *Leviathan* the same crucial point is reiterated. While moral philosophers have always 'acknowledged' the virtues and vices, they have never properly understood 'wherein consisted their Goodnesse'. They have never recognized that their goodness actually resides in the fact that they form 'the meanes of peaceable, sociable and comfortable living' (1985, p. 216).

Hobbes's contention is that, once we grasp this point, the way is open to solving the problem of paradiastole. We need only ask, of a given action whose moral quality may be in dispute, whether the effect of the action will or will not be conducive to the preservation of peace. As *De Cive* expresses it, we need only enquire into the 'cause' or end towards which the action in question may be said to contribute.[202] If the end is that of peaceable and sociable living, then we cannot rightly withhold from the action the name of virtue. For as Hobbes has just told us, 'the goodness of any action resides in the fact that it constitutes a means to preserve peace'.

Hobbes underlines his conclusion by way of re-examining a number of classic instances in which the possibility of paradiastolic redescription had always seemed especially hard to block off. One is that of someone performing an act of 'extreme daring', where the question is whether the behaviour deserves to be commended as an instance of true courage. Another is that of someone making a gift, where the question is whether this is necessarily to be appraised as an act of genuine liberality (1983, p. 120). The problem can be solved in each of these and in all other such cases, Hobbes declares, if we merely apply his simple scientific test. 'An act of daring is to be commended, and under the name of courage is to be taken for a virtue—however extreme the daring may have been—in any case in which the cause is approved.'[203] So too with liberality. 'It is not the

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[200] 'Neque huic rei remedii quicquam a Philosophicis hactenus inventum est' (Hobbes, 1983, p. 120).

[201] What philosophers have failed to observe ('cum enim non observarent') is that 'bonitatem actionum in ea sitam esse, quod in ordine ad pacem; malitiam in eo quod in ordine ad discordiam essent' (Hobbes, 1983, p. 120).

[202] See Hobbes (1983), p. 120 on the dependence of the morality of actions upon our assessment of the *causa* for the sake of which they were performed.

[203] 'Nam audere, laudatur, & nomine *fortitudinis* pro virtute habetur, quamquam extremum sit, si causa approbetur' (Hobbes, 1983, p. 120).

quantity of anything offered as a gift—whether great, small or middling—
that constitutes liberality, but the cause for the sake of which the gift was
made.'[204] The cause, as Hobbes had already explained in sketching his
argument in *The Elements*, must of course be that of peace. It follows that
'the sum of virtue is to be sociable with them that will be sociable, and
formidable to them that will not' (1969, p. 95).

As with the virtues, so with the vices. Hobbes adds this further point in
the explanatory notes he appended to the second edition of *De Cive* in
1647.[205] He mentions the case of 'an act of revenge, in which there is no
consideration for the future good', and explains why such an act can only
be described as cruel and hence condemned as a vice.[206] The reason is that
one cannot imagine 'how it could possibly contribute to peace or to the
conservation of any individual man'.[207] The discussion in Chapter XV of
Leviathan subsequently generalizes the point. The reason why we are
justified in saying that 'the Lawes of Nature are Immutable and Eternal' is
that 'Injustice, Ingratitude, Arrogance, Pride, Iniquity, Acception of
persons, and the rest, can never be made lawful'. And the reason for this is
simply that 'it can never be that Warre shall preserve life, and Peace
destroy it' (1985, p. 215).

As Hobbes admits, however, the question of whether a given action
will in fact conduce to peace remains a judgment. Who, then, shall be
judge? As he notes in *The Elements*, and subsequently reiterates, it is
commonly said that such judgments must be made according to right
reason.[208] With this answer, he says, 'I should consent, if there were any
such thing to be found or known *in rerum natura*' (1969, p. 188). But the
difficulty is that 'commonly they that call for right reason to decide any
controversy do mean their own' (1969, p. 188). As he has already
emphasized, however, this is simply to restate the problem, not to
solve it. All reasoning depends on naming; but in moral reasoning all
naming depends on individual passion and prejudice. The implication, as
Leviathan points out with particular acerbity, is that those who call for the
settlement of moral disputes by reason are merely calling for 'every of their
passions, as it comes to bear sway in them, to be taken for right Reason,

[204] 'Quantitas item rei quae dono datur, sive magna, sive parva, sive media sit, non facit
liberalitatem, sed donandi causa' (Hobbes, 1983, p. 120).
[205] For details about these additions, see the Editor's Introduction in Hobbes (1983), p. 9.
[206] See Hobbes (1983), p. 118, claiming that any 'vindicta quae futurum bonum non respicit'
must be characterized as *crudelitas*.
[207] 'Nam quid ... ad pacem vel conservationem cuiusquam hominis conferre potest, non
intelligo' (Hobbes, 1983, p. 118).
[208] Hobbes (1969), p. 188. Cf. Hobbes (1983), pp. 213–4 and Hobbes (1985), pp. 111–12, 322.

and that in their own controversies: bewraying their want of right Reason, by the claym they lay to it' (1985, p. 112).

For Hobbes, accordingly, the only possible solution is to appoint someone to make our judgments for us. We must institute some person or body of persons—some juristic Person—whom we agree in advance to accept as our final 'Arbitrator or judge'.[209] As *The Elements* succinctly puts it, 'seeing right reason is not existent, the reason for some man, or men, must supply the place thereof'.[210] Hobbes is particularly insistent, more-over, that among the duties of such an Arbitrator must be the giving of ultimate judgments in all cases where the appropriate normative descrip-tion of some particular action or state of affairs may be in dispute, and where the dispute may be of such a kind as to endanger civic peace. The Arbitrator, as *The Elements* declares, must determine not merely the definitions but also the. proper uses 'of all names not agreed upon, and tending to controversy' (1969, p. 189).

By way of example, both in *The Elements* and later in *De Cive*, Hobbes considers the case of a 'strange and deformed birth'.[211] He notes that, when a deformed infant is born, a question may arise as to 'whether the same be a man or no'.[212] This is not of course a question about the definition of the term 'man'. 'No one doubts', as Hobbes later observes in *De Cive*, 'that a man is a rational animal'.[213] The question is whether the infant's deformation is such that it does or does not deserve to be described as a rational animal. As *De Cive* adds, much may depend upon whether this powerfully normative description is applied or withheld. For example, if it is decided that the infant is rightly to be described as a man, then it cannot lawfully be killed (1983, p. 261). How, then, is the question to be resolved?

Hobbes repeats his earlier answer as bluntly as possible. We must give up the traditional belief that the issue can somehow be decided in a rational

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[209] Hobbes uses both terms. See Hobbes (1969), pp. 90–1 and Hobbes (1985), pp. 111, 120. Note that Montaigne, at the end of his *Apology*, repudiates this solution *avant la lettre*. We cannot hope, he insists, to find 'a competent Judge' for our disputes. We should need someone 'that without any preoccupation of judgement might judge of the propositions as indifferent unto him'. But this would be to ask for 'a Judge that were no man'. See Montaigne (1892–3), vol. 2. p. 328.

[210] Hobbes (1969), p. 188. As Tuck (1989), p. 57 rightly observes, Hobbes's claim is thus that moral consensus can only be created politically.

[211] See Hobbes (1969), p. 189 and cf. Hobbes (1983), pp. 261–2. Although the example is one of Hobbes's most helpful ones, he makes no mention of it in *Leviathan*.

[212] Hobbes (1969), p. 189.

[213] 'Nemo dubitat ... quod, Homo sit Animale rationale' (Hobbes [1983], p. 261). Hobbes's point is that, although this is Aristotle's definition, the question of what falls under it must be determined not by Aristotle or any other philosopher but by an arbitrator or judge.

and non-arbitrary way. As he puts it in his last and gloomiest consideration of the issue in *Leviathan*, the truth is that all such arguments 'must either come to blows, or be undecided, for want of a right Reason constituted by Nature' (1985, p. 111). We must recognize instead that the appointment of an Arbitrator is the only possible way out. This is Hobbes's final word on the case of the 'strange birth' and all cases of a like character. The decision of the Arbitrator will of course, *ex hypothesi*, be arbitrary;[214] but we have no alternative but to agree in advance to treat it as beyond appeal if we wish to avoid coming to blows (1985, pp. 111–12).

To say, however, that the Arbitrator must be a unitary moral Person whose judgments must be accepted in advance as beyond appeal is to say that the Arbitrator must be the Sovereign. This is indeed Hobbes's view, as he first makes clear in *The Elements* and later confirms in both *De Cive* and *Leviathan*.[215] In the words of *The Elements*, the Person whose reason supplies the place of right reason must be 'he, or they, that hath the sovereign power' (1969, p. 188). It follows that 'the civil laws are to all subjects the measure of their actions, whereby to determine, whether they be right or wrong, profitable or unprofitable, virtuous or vicious; and by them the use and definition of all names not agreed upon, and tending to controversy, shall be established' (1969, p. 189). As Robert South was to observe with deep disgust, Hobbes's eventual answer to the problem of paradiastole may thus be said to take the simple and scandalous form of claiming that 'good and evil, honest and dishonest' are 'founded in the laws and constitutions of the sovereign civil power' (South, 1823a, p. 115).

It would not be too much to say that one of the main motives we possess, according to Hobbes, for establishing such a unitary and absolute Sovereign is to solve the problems raised by the fact that some names inevitably tend to controversy. It would be a mistake to think of Hobbes's Sovereign as instituted merely to terrify his subjects into obedience. Rather he keeps the peace in two distinct ways: by threatening them with punishment, but also by adjudicating in their disputes. It is true that, in the famous passage in *Leviathan* where Hobbes first speaks of the Mortal God, he lays all his emphasis on the fact that 'he hath the use of so much Power and Strength conferred on him, that by terror thereof', he is able to command 'Peace at home' and 'mutuall ayd' against enemies abroad (1985, pp. 227–8). But when he summarizes his theory of sovereignty at the end of *Leviathan*, he instead chooses to emphasize the strongly contrasting image

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[214] Although he does not of course mean capricious. It is crucial to Hobbes's argument that the sovereign will almost never have an interest in making capricious judgments.

[215] Hobbes (1969), pp. 112, 188–9; Hobbes (1983), pp. 119–20, 139–41, 213–14, 261–2; Hobbes (1985), pp. 111–12, 120, 322, 697.

of the Sovereign as Arbitrator. The state of nature, as he defines it in this later passage, is that condition in which 'there can be no generall Rule of Good and Evill Actions'. By contrast, the instituting of a Sovereign establishes just such a rule. The distinguishing feature of a Commonwealth is thus that 'not the Appetite of Private men, but the Law, which is the Will and Appetite of the State' becomes the measure of good and evil, of virtue and vice (1985, p. 697).

The position in which Hobbes ends up is thus a profoundly puzzling as well as an ironic one. As we saw at the outset, the ambition he announces is that of creating a science of virtue and vice. He makes it clear, moreover, that such a science will in part be defined by its refusal to rely on mere authority. And he declares that, with the publication of *De Cive*, he succeeded in laying out the principles of just such a science. Nevertheless, the very core of his argument, both in *De Cive* and in *Leviathan*, takes the form of an appeal to authority. Although Hobbes undoubtedly provides a solution to the problem of paradiastole, he appears to do so only at the expense of sacrificing his own scientific ideal.

At the same time, however, his solution has the great merit of confronting the problem in a uniquely uncompromising way. His final word is that, if we wish to overcome the threat of paradiastole by fixing our moral language unambiguously on to the world, we can only hope to do so in the end by fiat. His conclusion remains deeply sceptical, and does little to uphold the dignity of moral philosophy. For all that, however, he may well be right.

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