

The Ethics of Deception

Secrecy, Transparency and Deceit in the
Origins of Modern Political Thought



DPhil Thesis
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*To those who, like Eve in Paradise, sacrificed a
life of comfort, for a life of knowledge.*

And to Arco, for not knowing what falsehood is.

Basically, it was not a matter of discovering what was true and what was false but of understanding how mankind had gradually overcome its contradictions.

Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*

INCIPIT

The research presented here was conducted in the libraries and cafes of Oxford, Madrid, Rome, Paris, Lisbon and New York City between the autumn of 2012 and the winter of 2015. It pursues two main objectives. The first is to illustrate how the notion of lawful deception transformed moral and political thought in the West between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries, opening the way to some of the most important ideas of Modernity. The second objective is to encourage the reader to reflect on the roles that secrecy, transparency and deceit play in our lives and in the social and political structures around us. In an era when many seem to demand total transparency, we should remember that social harmony and essential rights such as privacy require a certain dose of secrecy or even falsehood. This is not a moral statement – it is a sociological one.

I will say nothing about the Hegelian influence that underlies the structure of my argument, nor will I comment on the method that I have used in its execution. With regard to the proceedings of a doctoral thesis is, in my opinion, a banal act, since it presupposes the author's ability to understand (and even control) what he has written. I suspect that almost no historian in the world has such a capacity. One starts the journey with the intention of describing the men and women of the past, but inevitably ends up describing himself.

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Finally, I wish to thank my family and Irene, without whose support and love I would not have finished this work.

SHORT ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to reflect on the importance that deception has had on the efficient functioning of societies and the development of individuals. I attempt to do so by adopting an historical perspective, analysing the development of the notion of lawful deception during the Middle Ages and, mainly, the Early Modern Age through theological and political discourses.

The scope of my investigation is pan-European. I examine sources from the major Western territories, but I pay special attention to those produced in the Spanish-Habsburg Empire, which was a major political and cultural entity during this period.

My claim is that between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries, the West witnessed the formation of what I call an “Ethics of Deception:” a trend of thought that, without challenging the Augustinian prohibition of lying, recognised deception as intrinsic to nature and mankind, thereby justifying its use from moral and political perspectives. I explain how this intellectual process was conducted, fostered by new social realities, and helped by the flourishing of casuistry, tacitism and neostoicism.

Furthermore, I argue that the acceptance of deception contributed to the creation of a new view of the world, language and human interaction. A view that is in the very basis of some of the most characteristic features of Baroque art and that opened the door to some of the most transcendental cultural changes of the period, such as the creation of politics governed by reason rather than faith, the secularisation of social behaviour, and the emergence of the notions of individualism, privacy and freedom of thought. For these reasons, I claim that deception played an important role in the shaping of Modernity.

Keywords: Deception, lying, secrecy, privacy, transparency, dissimulation, simulation, mental restriction, equivocation, hypocrisy, tacitism, neostoicism, reason of state, Machiavellianism, political thought, realpolitik, early modern statecraft, casuistry, moral theology, prudence.

LONG ABSTRACT

Deception is woven into the very fabric of nature. The world is rife with viruses, plants and animals that use mimicry, camouflage, and other tactical tricks as part of their evolutionarily stable strategies (ESS) to survive. People are no exception. Psychological and sociological studies reveal that deception is an inherent attribute of human communication, and as such it is ubiquitous in our social interactions and culture. We deceive each other daily. And, interestingly enough, surveys suggest that in most cases we do not do it for self interested reason, but to benefit other members of our group (i.e. to avoid the unnecessary suffering of a friend, to comfort the sick, to educate a child.). As the French scholar Marcel Eck observed: ‘a society in which all truths were bluntly exposed would be more like a hell than a paradise.’ Deception is part of many positive forms of everyday social life (such as tactfulness, politeness, and excuses) performed to avoid potential conflicts and protect social harmony. It is also an effective way for individuals to protect their privacy. Erving Goffman placed deception at the very heart of his thesis on the everyday game of strategic impression management and considered dissimulation one of the main mechanisms that we have to build and protect our identity. Hannah Arendt went one step further and proclaimed ‘our ability to deceive belongs among the few obvious, demonstrable data that confirm human freedom.’ For these and other reasons, deception is, for modern sociology, one of the foundations of social life.

And yet, despite its ubiquity and importance (or perhaps because of them) deception as a social strategy has received little attention from the humanities. From the 1970s on, social scientists conducted a great deal of research on the function of deception in different living cultures, thereby developing new and interesting theoretical frameworks. By contrast, very few studies have been undertaken from a historical perspective, so some fundamental questions remain unanswered. How did the societies of the past conceptualise deception? When did they accept it as a necessary evil? And perhaps most importantly: how did this idea shape the ethical systems, political theories, social habits, artistic practices and, ultimately, the culture of the West?

This thesis attempts to answer some of these questions by analysing the development of the notion of lawful deception in medieval and early modern Western Europe. My approach encompasses the methods of cultural and intellectual history with conceptual frameworks taken from the social sciences, such as sociology and anthropology. I have attempted not to commit a common mistake among historians of ideas, who often limit their research to a chronological list of the views held by more or less canonical authors. Rather than analysing the ideas of certain famous thinkers, I intend to examine and explain the opinions of the intelligentsia of the period, placing it in a broad political, social and cultural context.

The subject of deception was intensively debated in Europe in a number of different contexts, ranging from courtly treatises to medical practice. Here I focus on what I consider the most important and revealing arenas: the theological and political discourses. To do so, I have examined more than 300 primary sources of different kinds: mirrors for princes, treatises on statecraft, political memos, private correspondences,

jurisprudential texts, theological treatises, manuals of confession, literary works, emblem books, collections of aphorisms, and other works.

The scope of my investigation is pan-European. I examine sources from a number of Western countries, although I pay special attention to those produced in the Spanish-Habsburg Empire, which was the major political and cultural entity during this period, comprising the territories of the Iberian Peninsula, the Low Countries, the southern half of Italy, and certain parts of Germany and France. My claim is that between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries the West emerged what I call the “Ethics of Deception.” A trend of thought that, without challenging the Augustinian prohibition of lying, recognised deception as intrinsic to nature and mankind, thereby justifying its use from moral and political perspectives and leading to some of the major cultural changes of the Modernity.

I have divided the thesis into three sections. In the first section (Chapters I and II) I analyse how deception was discussed in the field of moral theology. The scholars who have studied this issue have held that medieval and modern cultures were dominated by a total prohibition of deception, which they claim began with the Augustinian condemnation of lying in the fifth century and allegedly remained the reigning orthodoxy until at least the nineteenth century. I argue that this view is incomplete and, therefore, incorrect, since the story of deception goes far beyond the concept of the *lie*. If we expand the scope of our analysis to other forms of deception and read alternative sources, we discover a very different account. Namely, the existence of a less rigorous moral current that, without challenging the stigma against lying, legitimised the use of deception in many areas of political life through the ideas of verbal equivocation and truth-omission (secrecy and mental restriction). I believe that this alternative current began to develop in the thirteenth century, following the establishment of the Sacramental Seal and the inquisitorial process, and reached its zenith between the 1550s and 1660s in the context of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. Some of the most influential theologians of the time, such as Raymond of Penafort, Erasmus of Rotterdam, and Martín de Azpilcueta engaged in this radical change in approach towards deception. Together, they developed what I call an “Ethics of Deception” that exerted a decisive influence on moral literature, as it was closely related to issues such as the salvation of the soul, freedom of worship, and the relationship between the individual and the community.

In the second part, I examine how this “Ethics of Deception” exerted a major influence on the birth of modern political thought and statecraft. Between the 1510s and 1580s, deception went from being despised as a vice of tyrants to being praised as an essential virtue for all prudent rulers. I explain how this change occurred, first attending to the contributions of Italian, Flemish, French and English thinkers (Chapter III) to focus later on Iberian authors (chapters IV-VII). Scholars have usually relegated the Iberian’s contributions to European political thought to the background, merely recognising the importance of authors such as Pedro de Rivadeneira and Baltasar Gracián. In my study I intend to show that this is only a small part of a much larger phenomenon. Between 1595 and 1700, more than 70 treatises appeared in the Iberian Peninsula that legitimated the political use of deception, explored its limits and the best ways to perform it. Many of these treatises were translated into numerous European languages (from English to Russian) and were widely read across the continent, exerting a decisive influence on the formation of modern political thought. I argue that this success is mainly due to Iberian authors’ ability to harmonise the political realism of

Machiavelli with the flexible morality of casuistry, something that allowed them to justify deception within the margins of Catholic orthodoxy. Furthermore, this also shows that during this period Spain was not an intellectually moribund and culturally isolated empire as some historians suggest.

The final conclusion I reach is that early modern society did not invent deception, but it did popularise certain forms of it by recognising them as an intrinsic part of the world, language and human relations. The theorists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries understood and argued that deception was a necessary evil in society. To do so, they used the same arguments that contemporary social scientists systematised and tested four hundred years later: the defence of deception as a necessary evil in society, its essential role in the development of individualism and complex social structures, and the convenience of using truth-omissions and equivocations as alternatives to lying.

Furthermore, I argue that the acceptance of the ubiquity and lawfulness of deception led to some of the most characteristic features of Baroque culture and opened the door to some of the most transcendental changes of 16th and 17th century Europe, such as the creation of a new politic governed by reason rather than faith, the secularisation of social behaviours, and the emergence of the notions of individualism, privacy and freedom of thought. For all these reasons, I claim that deception played an important role in the shaping of Modernity.

Keywords: Deception, lie, secrecy, privacy, transparency, dissimulation, simulation, mental restriction, equivocation, hypocrisy, tacitism, neostoicism, reason of state, machiavellianism, political thought, realpolitik, early modern statecraft, casuistry, moral theology, prudence.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	21
I. Deception in the Middle Ages: from Strict Adherence to Exceptions	47
II. The Early Modern view: a Spiral of Deceit	79
III. Deception in European Political Thought	109
IV. Deception in Early Modern Iberian Political Thought	151
V. Reasons to Deceive	175
VI. Ways to Deceive	211
VII. The Sources of Deception	229
Conclusions and Further Research	241
Bibliography	247

INTRODUCTION

HOMO LIBER, HOMO MENDAX

The first liar certainly was the true
founder of social intercourse.

OSCAR WILDE

This thesis aims to present and prove a hypothesis. My claim is that between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries, Europeans recognised deception as intrinsic to nature and mankind, and that this led to major changes in the way they conceived social interactions, morality, and politics. To my knowledge, no scholar has sought to advance this argument before.

THE WIDER PICTURE

At first thought, this research topic may seem strange or banal. Nothing, however, could be further from the truth. Deception is woven into the very fabric of nature and plays an essential role in social life. The world is rife with viruses, parasites, plants and animals that use mimicry, camouflage, and other tactical tricks as part of their evolutionarily stable strategies (ESS) to improve their chances of eating, reproducing, and surviving.¹ Primates are no exception. In fact, many sociobiologists believe that it was our ability to

¹ On this topic see, for example: Angier, Natalie, 'The Art of Deception: Sometimes Survival Means Lying, Stealing or Vanishing in Place,' *National Geographic*, August 2009, pp. 70-87; Forbes, Peter, *Dazzled and Deceived: Mimicry and Camouflage*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009; Livingstone Smith, David, *Why We Lie: The Evolutionary Roots of Deception and the Unconscious Mind*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004, pp. 29-78; Mitchell, Robert W., & Nicholas S. Thompson, *Deception: Perspectives on Human and Nonhuman Deceit*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986, part 2; Searcy, William A., & Stephen Nowicki, *The Evolution of Animal Communication Reliability and Deception in Signalling Systems*. Princeton: University Press, 2005.

deceive that triggered our neural evolution.² As many researchers have pointed out, deception is an inherent attribute of human communication,³ and as such is ubiquitous in social interactions and culture.⁴ From the fairy tales our parents told us to the propaganda our media and advertising agencies provide us, we spend our lives surrounded by pretence. We deceive from the very moment we arise from our beds in the morning, with words, silences and gestures, but also with makeup that modifies our faces, deodorants and perfumes that disguise our scent, and the clothes and high-heeled shoes that artfully transform our bodies. One study reveals that, when meeting someone new, people lie three times during every ten minutes of conversation, and even more when they use e-mail and text messaging.⁵ Around 33% of job applicants lie on their resumes⁶ and about 92% of adults deceive their sexual partners in some way.⁷ In the psychological surveys conducted by Bella DePaulo and her team, college students reported telling at least two lies a day and said they would tell about 75% of them again if given a second chance, a decision that suggests their generally high success rate.⁸ It should be noted that, in many cases, these lies are not the cynical, selfish and evil acts

²On the so called 'Machiavellian intelligence hypothesis' see: Byrne, Richard W., & Andrew Whiten (eds.), *Machiavellian intelligence: Social expertise and the evolution of intellect in monkeys, apes, and humans*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1988; Idem, *Machiavellian intelligence II: Extensions and evaluations*. Cambridge: University Press, 1997; Erdal, David, & Andrew Whiten, 'Egalitarianism and Machiavellian intelligence in human evolution,' in *Modelling the Early Human Mind*, ed. by Paul Mellars & Kathleen Rita Gibson, Cambridge: McDonnell Institute, 1996, pp. 139-150; Kummer, H. L., Daston G., Gigerenzer, and J. Silk, 1997, 'The social intelligence hypothesis,' in *Human By Nature: Between Biology and the Social Sciences*, ed. by Peter Weingart, Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, pp. 157-179; Parker & McKinney, *Origins of Intelligence*.

³Buller, David B., et al., 'Testing Interpersonal Deception Theory: The Language of Interpersonal Deception,' *Communication Theory* 6 (3), 1996, pp. 203-242; Burgoon, Judee K., & Tiantian Qin, 'The Dynamic Nature of Deceptive Verbal Communication,' *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 25, no. 1, 2006, pp. 76-96; DeTurck, Mark A., & Miller, Gerald R. 'Deception and Arousal: Isolating the Behavioral Correlates of Deception,' *Human Communication Research* 12, no. 2, 1985, pp. 181-201; Shiffrin, Seana V., *Speech Matters: On Lying, Morality, and the Law: On Lying, Morality, and the Law*, Princeton: University Press, 2014; Stiff, James P, 'Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Deceptive Communication: Comments on Interpersonal Deception Theory,' *Communication Theory* 6 (3), pp. 289-296.

⁴There is an extensive literature on this topic. I have found especially interesting the following works: Bonnier, Charles, *Monographie du mensonge: essai sur la casuistique*, Liverpool, Lyceum Press, 1913; Castelfranchi, Cristiano, & Isabella Poggi, *Bugie, finzioni, sotterfugi. Per una scienza dell'inganno*, Rome: Carocci, 1998; Ford, Charles V., *Lies! Lies!! Lies!!!: The Psychology of Deceit*, Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press, 1996; Lewis, Michael & Carolyn Saarni (eds.), *Lying and Deception in Everyday Life*, New-York: The Guilford Press, 1993; Livingstone Smith, David, *Why We Lie: The Evolutionary Roots of Deception and the Unconscious Mind*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2007; Martin, Clancy W., *The Philosophy of Deception*, Oxford: University Press, 2009.

⁵Robert Feldman, *The liar in your life: the way to truthful relationships*, New York: Twelve/Grand Central Publications, 2009. pp. 14-15.

⁶John Underwood, 'Truth, lies and resumes,' *The Birmingham News*, 22 August 1993, D1, D10.

⁷David Knox, et al., 'Sexual lies among university students,' *College Student Journal* 27, 1993, pp. 269-272. See also Susan Cochran & Vickie M. Mays, 'Sex, Lies and HIV,' *New England Journal of Medicine* 322, 1990, pp. 774-775.

⁸Bella M. DePaulo et al., 'Lying in Everyday Life,' *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 70 (5), 1998, pp. 979-995.

that we usually imagine. On the contrary, they are often indicative of generous behaviour that plays an essential role in the smooth functioning of human society.

Deception enables artistic creation. As Anatole France noted, 'Without lies, humanity would perish of despair and boredom.'⁹ Moreover, deception prevents society from collapsing under the weight of total honesty. As Marcel Eck pointed out: 'a society in which all truths were bluntly exposed would be more like a hell than a paradise.'¹⁰ Deception is a constituent of many positive forms of everyday social life (such as tactful conduct, politeness, and excuses) performed to protect social harmony.¹¹ A number of studies conducted by psychologists and psychiatrists suggest that deception is often targeted at relatives and friends rather than enemies, and that in many cases they do not pursue a selfish end (i.e. obtain a benefit for oneself) but a good for others (i.e. avoiding the unnecessary suffering of a friend, comforting the sick, educating a child, etc.)¹²

Similarly, sociologists and anthropologists have highlighted the essential role that deception plays in the development of community life.¹³ On the one hand, deception makes possible political action and statecraft.¹⁴ As Michael Gilsenan has noted: 'the lie is

⁹ 'Sans mensonges, l'humanité périrait de désespoir et d'ennui.' Anatole France, *La vie en fleur*, 1922, Paris: Calmann-Lévy, p. 364.

¹⁰ Marcel Eck, *Lies and Truth*, London: Macmillan, 1970, p. 69

¹¹ Annette Baier, 'Why Honesty Is a Hard Virtue,' in *Identity, Character, and Morality*, ed. by Owen Flanagan & Amélie Oksenberg, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993; Nyberg, David, *The varnished Truth: Truth Telling and Deceiving in Ordinary Life*, Chicago: University Press, 1991.

¹² *Vid.*: DePaulo, 'Lying in Everyday Life,' pp. 979-995; Chisholm, Roderick M., & Thomas D. Feehan, 'The intent to deceive,' *Journal of Psychology* 74, 1977, pp. 143-159; Ford, Charles V., *et al.* 'Lies and liars: psychiatric aspects of prevarication,' *American Journal of Psychiatry* 145, 1988, pp. 554-562; Kintz, B. L. 'College students' attitudes about telling lies,' *Bulletin of the Psychonomic Society* 10, 1977, pp. 490-492; Ludwig, Arnold M., *The importance of lying*, Springfield: C.C. Thomas, 1965; Richard Alexander, 'The search for a general theory of behavior,' *Behavioral Science* 20, 1975, pp. 77-100.

¹³ Alexander, Larry, & Emily Sherwin, 'Deception in Morality and Law,' *Cornell Law Faculty Publications*, Paper 854, 2004, URL: <http://scholarship.law.cornell.edu/facpub/854>; Anderson, Myrdene, 'Cultural Concatenation of Deceit and Secrecy,' in *Deception: Perspectives on Human and Nonhuman Deceit*, pp. 323-348; Barnes, John A., *A Pack of Lies. Towards a Sociology of Lying*, Cambridge: University Press, 1994; Durandin, Guy, *Les Fondements du mensonge*, Paris: Flammarion, 1972; Latouche, Serge (ed.), *Les Raisons de la ruse. Une perspective anthropologique et psychanalytique*, Paris: La Découverte, 2004; Mack, Arien (ed.), *Truth-Telling, Lying and Self-Deception*, *Social Research* 63, no. 3, 1996; Sacks, Harvey, 'Everyone has to lie,' in *Sociocultural dimensions of language use*, ed. by Mary Sanches & Ben G. Blount, New York: Academic Press, 1975, pp. 57-80.

¹⁴ Alterman, Eric, *When Presidents Lie. A History of Official Deception and its consequences*, New York: Viking, 2004; Arendt, Hannah, 'Truth and Politics,' in *Between past and future*, New-York: Penguin, 1968, chap. 7; Idem, *Crises of the republic: Lying in Politics*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972; Bailey, Frederick George, *The prevalence of deceit*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991; Duverger, Maurice, *Sociologie politique*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968; Jay, Martin, *The Virtues of Mendacity: On Lying in Politics*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010; John J.

a technique for the restriction of the social distribution of knowledge over time, and is thus ultimately woven into the system of power and control in society.¹⁵ On the other hand, deception can help individuals to develop their own consciousness and protect their privacy. Erving Goffman placed deception at the very heart of his thesis on the everyday game of strategic impression management and considered dissimulation an essential mechanism to building identity.¹⁶ Hannah Arendt went one step further and proclaimed ‘our ability to deceive belongs among the few obvious, demonstrable data that confirm human freedom.’¹⁷

Yet, despite its ubiquity and importance (or perhaps because of them) deception has been condemned by virtually every culture around the world. As David Livingstone pointed out: ‘Deceit is the Cinderella of human nature; essential to our humanity but disowned by its perpetrators at every turn.’¹⁸ I call this phenomenon “the false-honesty paradox.” Its rationale is simple: societies are aware that they need a certain level of deception to function properly. However, they also know that an excessive level of dishonesty would become counter-productive. If everyone deceived everyone else all the time, individuals would stop trusting one another and social life would be impossible. In order to avoid this situation, mitigate the natural or instinctive use of deception, and try to reach equilibrium between honesty and falsehood, societies create a stigma attached to lying, which is the most aggressive and explicit form of deception. Yet at the same time, they allow other kinds of deceit.

This stigma acquires various different formulations in different cultures, but it is usually based on a combination of religious prohibitions and civic norms. Lying is

Mearsheimer, *Why Leaders Lie: The Truth about Lying in International Politics*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011; Koyré, Alexandre, ‘La fonction politique du mensonge moderne,’ *Mensonge et image, Rue Descartes* 8/9, 1993, pp. 179-194; Lenain, Pierre, *Le Mensonge politique*, Paris: Economica, 1988; Rabaté, Jean-Michel, *The ethics of the lie*, New York: Other Press, 2007; Sorrentino, Vincenzo, *Il potere invisibile. Il segreto e la menzogna nella politica contemporanea*, Bari: Dedalo, 2011; Wise, David, *The Politics of Lying: Government Deception, Secrecy and Power*, New York: Vintage, 1973.

¹⁵ Gilsenan, Michael, ‘Lying, honor, and contradiction,’ in *Transaction and meaning: directions in the anthropology of exchange and symbolic behavior*, ed. by Bruce Kapferer, Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, pp. 191-219. The quote on p. 191.

¹⁶ Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday life*, New York: Doubleday, 1959.

¹⁷ Arendt, ‘Truth and Politics,’ p. 250.

¹⁸ Livingstone, *Op. cit.*, p. 2.

conceptualised as a crime against the divine and society and is prevented by threats of both legal and supernatural sanctions. If we consider the case of Western Europe, we see that the moral absolute against lying is deeply rooted in the very origins of its culture. The founding myth of the Judeo-Christian tradition, the story of Adam and Eve, revolves around a lie ('The serpent deceived me, and I ate,' Genesis 3. 13) and the terrible consequences that followed. Since then, theologians, philosophers, and jurists have condemned 'false assertions' as sinful and unlawful acts and threatened both legal and supernatural punishments for those who practiced them, such as eternity in Hell, not receiving presents from Father Christmas, or the growth of one's nose like Pinocchio.¹⁹ Our ethical systems promote honesty and transparency as essential values in individuals and institutions and treat lying as a despicable act. According to some surveys conducted in Europe, most adults consider lying almost never justifiable. When asked about the qualities they wished to pass on to their children, most respondents ranked honesty first, despite the fact that, as we saw, many people admit to lying several times a day.²⁰

HYPOTHESIS & RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

As we can see, Western culture is trapped in a deep contradiction (some would call it hypocrisy) between an ethical system that demands total honesty and social dynamics

¹⁹ There is an extensive literature on this topic. See, among others: Bok, Sissela, *Lying: moral choice in public and private life*, New York: Pantheon, 1978; Carson, Thomas L., *Lying and Deception: Theory and Practice*, Oxford: University Press, 2010, part 2; Catalán, Miguel, *Antropología de la mentira: Seudología II*, Madrid: Mario Muchnik, 2005; Isenberg, Arnold, 'Deontology and the Ethics of Lying,' in *Aesthetics and the Theory of Criticism; Selected Essays*, ed. William Callahan, Chicago: University Press, 1973; Kupfer, Joseph, 'The Moral Presumption against Lying,' *Review of Metaphysics* 36, n. 1, 1982, pp. 103-126; Primoratz, Igor, 'Lying and the Methods of Ethics,' *International Studies in Philosophy* 16, no. 3, 1984, pp. 35-57; Tollefsen, Christopher O., *Lying and Christian Ethics*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

²⁰ Harding, Stephen, & David R. Phillips, *Contrasting values in Western Europe: unity, diversity and change*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986, pp. 8-9 and 19-21.

that often require deception.²¹ The question is: how can this contradiction be resolved? How do individuals reconcile moral with practical life? The answer lies in what we could call the “third way”: an ethical current that does not legitimise lying, but allows the use of other forms of deception. Many contemporary philosophers establish a clear distinction between lying and other forms of deception.²² Both actions aim for the receiver to believe false claims are true, but only lying does so by asserting what the speaker or sender believes to be false. This makes it a worse offense and, in contrast, makes other deceptive forms less serious and even permissible under certain circumstances. What could these “permissible” forms be? Generally speaking, we can distinguish between two, which at the same time encompass many others: truth-omission and equivocation.

Withholding the truth is probably the most common form of deception practiced by humans and one of the cornerstones of social life. As Georg Simmel observed in 1909, if everything were known (if we could know what everyone is thinking at every moment), coexistence would probably be impossible.²³ Hiding information from the people around us is one of the main mechanisms we have to engage in social interactions and build and protect our identities; after all, we are nothing more or less than what we choose to reveal. It is also an essential part of trade, politics, and justice.²⁴ Our

²¹ Birchall, Clare, ‘Secrecy and Transparency Introduction to Secrecy and Transparency: The Politics of Opacity and Openness Theory,’ *Culture & Society* 28, 2011, pp. 7-25; Catalán, Miguel, *Antropología de la mentira*, Madrid: Taller de Mario Muchnik, 2005; Hood, Christopher & David Heald (eds.), *Transparency: The Key to Better Governance?*, Oxford: University Press, 2006; Ricciardi, Mario, ‘Appunti su segreto di Stato e principio di trasparenza,’ *Politica del diritto* 24, no. 1, 1993, pp. 35-50; Ricoeur, Paul, ‘Vérité et mensonge,’ *Esprit* 19, 1951, pp. 753-778; *Transparence et secret*, *Pouvoirs* 97, 2001. URL: <http://www.cairn.info/revue-pouvoirs-2001-2.htm>.

²² See, for example: Adler, Jonathan E., ‘Lying, deceiving, or falsely implicating,’ *The Journal of Philosophy* 94, no. 9, 1997, pp. 435-452; Chisholm, Roderick M., & Thomas D. Feehan, ‘The Intent to Deceive,’ *Journal of Philosophy* 74, 1977, pp. 143-153; Green, Stuart P., ‘Lying, Misleading, and Falsely Denying: How Moral Concepts Inform the Law of Perjury, Fraud, and False Statements,’ *Hastings Law Journal* 53, 2001, pp. 162-168; Sidgwick, Henry, *The Methods of Ethics*, Chicago: University Press, 1962; Siegler, Frederick A., ‘Lying,’ *American Philosophical Quarterly* III, 1966, pp. 128-136.

²³ Georg Simmel, ‘The Sociology of Secrecy and of Secret Societies,’ *American Journal of Sociology* 11, no. 4, 1906, pp. 441-498.

²⁴ Bodei, Remo, ‘From secrecy to transparency. Reason of state and democracy,’ *Philosophy Social Criticism* 37, no. 8, 2011, pp. 889-898; Bok, Sissela, *Secrets: On the Ethics of Concealment and Revelation*, New York: Pantheon Book, 1982; Boutang, Pierre, *Ontologie du secret*, Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1973; Coüetoux, Michel, *La Justice et les fonctions sociales du secret: rapport général et conclusions*, Paris: La Documentation française, 1981; Dujardin, Philippe (ed.), *Le*

companies, governments, and courts engage in secrets and non-disclosure agreements without which they could not function. Humanity may be defined in part by our ability to speak, but what makes society possible is our ability to be quiet.

Of course, silence is not always a choice. Community life is full of situations in which the logic of interest (the so called 'avoidance-avoidance conflict') recommends avoiding silence as much as the expression of a plain truth or a plain lie. In such circumstances, psychological studies show that individuals often resort to 'equivocation,' which is neither a false message nor a clear truth, but rather an alternative mode of ambiguity.²⁵ Politicians constantly use this form of deception, when their possible voters ask them to reveal their commitments for the future. In order to gain their support, they need to say what they want to hear without committing themselves so strongly to a false position that they later would find impossible to retreat from. To do this, they often employ devious messages, full of vagueness, amphibologies, and euphemisms.

Deception by truth-omission and equivocation has several advantages over plain lying. On the one hand, it allows one to overcome the cultural stigma against lying, reducing the moral pressure on the individual (remorse, guilt, fear of punishment, etc.). On the other, it allows one to obtain the benefits of cheating while shedding its negative social consequences (possible retaliation of the victim, mistrust, exclusion from the group, etc.). It is not surprising, therefore, that Western culture promotes these two

Secret. Usages et fonctions du secret: approches comparées, Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1987; Kelly, Anita E., *The Psychology of Secrets*, New York: Kluwer Academic, 2002; Labourdette, Sergio, 'Secreto y poder en la vida social,' *Orientación y sociedad* 5, no. 5, 2005, pp. 59-80; Parker, James H., 'The Social Functions of Secrecy,' *International Journal of Contemporary Sociology* 23, no. 3/4, 1986, pp. 229-236; Petitat, André (ed.), *Secret et lien social*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2000; Pilch, John J., 'Secrecy in the Mediterranean World: an Anthropological Perspective,' *Biblical Theology Bulletin: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 28, 1998, pp. 75-83; Scheppele, Kim L., *Legal Secrets: Equality and Efficiency in Common Law*, Chicago: University Press, 1988; Tefft, Stanton K., *Secrecy: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*, New York: Human Sciences Press, 1980; Temprano, Emilio, *El poder del Secreto*, Barcelona: Ariel, 2002; Wuillème, Tanguy (ed.), *Autour des secrets, Actes du colloque organisé les 2, 3 et 4 mai 2002 à Nancy*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005.

²⁵ Bavelas, Janet B., et al., *Equivocal Communication*, Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1990; Bilmes, Jack, 'Misinformation and ambiguity in verbal interaction,' *International Journal for the Sociology of Language* 2, 1975, pp. 63-75; Bowers, John, et al., 'Exploiting pragmatic rules: Devious messages,' *Human Communication Research* 3, Issue 3, 1977, pp. 235-242; Miller, Gerald R., & James B. Stiff, *Deceptive communication*, Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1993.

forms of conduct, making them the most common forms of deception and, as such, one of the foundations of society.

The question is: when were these practices theorised and legitimised? Despite its ubiquity and importance (or perhaps because of them) this topic has received little attention from the humanities. As we have seen, from the 1970s on a great deal of research has been conducted by social scientists on the practical and ethical issues of real-life deception. By contrast, very few studies have been undertaken from a historical perspective, so some fundamental questions remain unanswered. How did the societies of the past conceptualise this “third way”? When and how did Europeans accept deception as a necessary evil? And perhaps most importantly: how did this acceptance shape the ethical systems, political thought, social behaviours, artistic practices and, ultimately, the culture of the West?

This thesis attempts to answer some of these questions by analysing the development of the notion of lawful deception in medieval and early modern Western Europe. As we shall see, the subject of deception was intensively debated in a number of different contexts, ranging from courtly treatises to medical practice. Here I focus on what I consider the most important and revealing arenas: the theological/moral and political discourses. The scope of my investigation is Pan-European. I examine sources from a number of Western countries, although I focus my attention in those produced in the Iberian Peninsula.

SOURCES

This wide-ranging study is built on the consideration of more than 300 texts, many of which (especially those from the seventeenth century Iberian Peninsula) have drawn little or no attention hitherto. To identify them, I first analysed a number of bibliographic catalogues and academic works and I made a list of all the moral and

political treatises published in Spain and Portugal during the Early Modern Age. Then I examined these sources one by one, in search for references to the issue of deception in any of its forms; for example, lying, dissimulation, simulation, fraud, hypocrisy, and others. Many of these treatises have been republished in modern editions. Others have been digitised and are available on the Internet. Finally, there are some that have attracted little or no attention from other scholars and that I read in the national libraries and historical archives where they are kept. I spent two months in Madrid, working at the *Biblioteca Nacional de España*. I also spent some weeks at the *Biblioteca nazionale centrale di Roma* and the *Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal* in Lisbon.

In total, I examined more than 450 primary texts. Many of them did not address deception at all. Others simply condemned it on the same grounds that medieval authorities used. However, to my surprise, I found many treatises (more than 200) that justified the lawfulness of deception from different perspectives. These texts became the corpus of my thesis. The nature and degree of dissemination of these sources varies greatly. There are mirrors for princes, treatises on statecraft, political memos, private correspondences, jurisprudential texts, theological treatises, manuals of confession, emblem books, collections of aphorisms, and even some literary works. Some of these texts achieved great success upon their publication; they were reprinted on several occasions and translated into a number of European languages. Others, on the contrary, were barely read and have gone unnoticed by scholars for too long.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK & METHODOLOGY

My approach encompasses the methods of the history of political ideas and the history of mentalities, also drawing on conceptual frameworks taken from sociology and anthropology. In some chapters, especially those related to medieval and sixteenth century Western Europe, I focus my analysis on the chronological study of a reduced number of authors, often considered “classic” or “canonical,” and I explore how the

idea of deception “evolved” in their works. However, in other chapters (those addressing seventeenth century Iberia) I take a much broader approach and, rather than analysing the ideas of a few canonical thinkers, I try to identify and explain the mind-set of the intelligentsia of the period.

I am aware that this methodology may seem problematic for some academics, but it should be noted that there are powerful reasons and a long and fruitful historiographical tradition to support this wide-ranging approach. Experience shows that by restricting ourselves to the study of only these canonical texts and authors, we often miss other revealing ideas that are essential to expanding our knowledge and understanding of the linguistic context and cultural frameworks in which more familiar thinkers are embedded. That is why, in recent decades, a number of scholars have argued that the history of political thought should not be limited to the analysis and commentary of a few works – even if they can be rightly considered the nodes where major concerns of an era converged. On the contrary, as they have claimed, scholarship should cover the largest possible number of authors and texts (within a thematic, chronological and geographical framework). Only then will we be able to know the moral and political culture of an era.

The French historian Pierre Rosanvallon defended this idea in an important article published in 1986:

We could not, for example, explain the relationship between liberalism and democracy during the French Revolution as if it consisted of a kind of debate at the summit between Rousseau and Montesquieu. Rather the focus should fall upon all those authors that expressed an opinion on it, we should study all the petitions sent to the Assembly, analyse the brochures and pamphlets, reread the parliamentary debates, penetrate into the clubs and committees.

Only then we could 1) understand the *culture politique* of an era and 2) explain from the right perspective the contributions of the main revolutionary thinkers.²⁶

²⁶ Pierre Rosanvallon, ‘Pour une histoire conceptuelle du politique (note de travail),’ *Revue de synthèse* 107, 1–2, 1986, pp. 93–105. The quotation in pp. 100–101.

I agree with this view. To determine what British citizens think about democracy today it would not be enough to ask ministers and scholars. On the contrary, we would have to conduct interviews to ask what people understand by “democracy” and to conduct surveys to determine the views of the larger social spectrum. I have applied the same principle in my research. Rather than analysing only the ideas of certain famous thinkers, I wanted to gather and articulate as many testimonies as I could find on deception (regardless to whether they belonged to canonical thinkers or not) placing them in a broad political, social and cultural context. By doing so, I wanted to determine the linguistic context and mentality (the cultural mind-set) of Early Modern Iberia.

This approach is neither new nor unorthodox; on the contrary, it is based on the methodological principles of some of the most important historiographical currents of the twentieth century. From the 1930s on, a number of historians and philosophers argued that political thought existed beyond the texts of canonical authors, acquiring its form and full meaning in the speeches, concepts and symbols created by whole societies. According to the influential political philosopher Günther Holstein: political philosophy depends on the political reality of its era and, at the same time, political philosophy transforms political reality. It is not possible to achieve a knowledge of political philosophy without paying attention to the political background from which it came.²⁷ According to the same line of thinking, Michael Oakeshott, another well-respected political philosopher, defended the need to analyse the ‘circumstantial context’ of a period to understand its political thought. The refined political ideas developed by *major* thinkers were not made in a vacuum.²⁸ On the contrary, they were based on the political beliefs and ways of thinking (often simplified) held by broad sectors of society. In order to be understood, both levels should be studied together.

In the 1970s, the members of the so-called *Cambridge School* resumed and transformed this idea into the foundation of their historiographical renewal. John G.

²⁷ Günther Holstein, *Historia de la filosofía política*. Madrid: Instituto de Estudios Políticos, 1950, p. 21.

²⁸ Michael Oakeshott, *Morality and Politics in Modern Europe*, Avon: Bath Press, 1993, p. 4.

Agard Pocock and Quentin Skinner were the main representatives of this movement. These historians postulated the need to overcome the antagonism, particularly marked in England, between the detailed reading of canonical texts (considered as a closed and self-sufficient artefact), and the Marxist reading that tended to see those texts as mere ideological products derived from socio-economic circumstances and determined by them. In their seminal works on Modern Political Thought, Pocock and Skinner questioned the validity of history based on the study of the 'private and personal intentions' of the canonical authors (intentions that, ultimately, are unknowable to the researcher) and draw historians' attention to the 'languages' of political thought and the contextual focus.²⁹ Influenced by the linguistic theories of John Austin and Wittgenstein, Skinner and Pocock argued that, in order to understand the 'speech acts' embedded in the writing works of specific individuals such as Machiavelli, Thomas More, and Thomas Hobbes, it was necessary to establish first the linguistic relationships in which they were inserted. Only by knowing the intellectual and semantic context in which they originally occurred would it be possible to understand the author's 'locutionary' or propositional meaning and his 'illocutionary force' (what did he do when saying what he said, in the context in which he did it). The understanding of this intellectual and semantic context could only be achieved by studying the works of less well-known political writers. Only like this it would be possible to recreate the context in which a text was created and shed light on the thought of canonical authors.³⁰ Skinner and Pocock implemented their theory with great success. For instance, when analysing Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*, Skinner paid great attention to Hobbes's education, but also to the humanist environment and the debates on *Scientia Civilis* that took place in the 1640s, when the treaty was written. Similarly, when studying the

²⁹ Quentin Skinner, 'Meaning and understanding in the history of ideas,' *History and Theory* 7, 1, 1969, pp. 3-53; *Idem*, 'Some problems in the analysis of political thought and action,' *Political theory* 2, 3, 1974, pp. 277-303; John G. Agard Pocock, 'The History of Political Thought: A Methodological Enquiry,' in *Philosophy, Politics and Society*: Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1962; *Idem*, 'Languages and Their Implications: The Transformation of the Study of Political Thought,' in *Politics, Language and Time*: London: Methuen, 1972.

³⁰ The same methodological approach was defended in the 1960s by the German historian Reinhart Koselleck, who defended the need to study the linguistic context in which a political concept is created and used (*Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1979).

political thought of the Renaissance and the Reformation, he analysed the legacy of the Roman Stoicism and the views of many scholastic moralists and Roman jurists beyond the major figures.³¹

Another historiographical influence on my work is the so-called *histoire des mentalités*, which might be translated as “history of attitudes,” “mind-sets” or “world-views.”³² This methodological current was developed in the second third of the twentieth century, mainly by French medievalists and modernists, associated with the *tournant critique*. Some may consider it old-fashioned or obsolete. Certainly, as every methodology, it has its limitations.³³ However, I strongly believe that its principles are still valid and very much appropriate to the study of topics like this one. I argue this claim based on three reasons: 1) it expands its focus of study to the majority of men of an era, and not only to a few thinkers considered canonical; 2) it focuses on those forms of moral and political beliefs that are not explicit but latent, non-discursive but attitudinal, not individual but collective, generally ignored by the traditional history of ideas; 3) it adopts an interdisciplinary and *longue durée* approach.

Indeed, in opposition to the traditional history of ideas, the history of mentalities focuses not on the great men but on the wider mind-sets of past cultural and social groups, trying to understand what Emile Durkheim called the ‘collective consciousness.’ As Roger Chartier explained, the object of study was no longer the ‘idea,’ understood as ‘a conscious construction of an individualised spirit,’ but the ‘collective mentality that regulates, without being explained, the representations and judgments of the individuals in society.’³⁴ According to this point of view, the value of the individual as a historical agent changes. There are no political thinkers more

³¹ Quentin Skinner, *The foundations of Modern political thought*, Cambridge: University Press, 1978; Pocock did something similar in his famous study of Machiavelli, exploring the intellectual context and republican thought of sixteenth century Florence (*The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republic Tradition*: Princeton, University Press, 1975).

³² Georges Duby, ‘Histoire des mentalités,’ in *L’histoire et ses méthodes*, ed. by Charles Samaran, Paris: Gallimard, 1961, pp. 937-966.

³³ The main one: ‘its tendency to homogenize all the components of a given culture, by accentuating the weight of consensus over dissent.’ (Alessandro Arcangeli, *Cultural History: A Concise Introduction*, London: Routledge, 2013, p. 38.

³⁴ Chartier Roger, ‘Le monde comme représentation,’ *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 44, no. 6, 1989. pp. 1505-1520.

important than others. The testimony of all men is equally worthy to understanding the mentality of an era. In this sense, the *histoire des mentalités* represents the intellectual side of historiographical rediscovery and an appreciation of subaltern classes in opposition to the predominance of the elite, which is a goal pursued by social history. The French medievalist Jacques Le Goff explained it as follows: “The history of mentalities must be distinguished from the history of ideas, out of opposition to which it also grew. It was not the ideas of Thomas Aquinas or Saint Bonaventura which, from the thirteenth century on, governed people’s minds, but mental *nebulæ* in which such ideas only played a part as deformed echoes, devalued fragments and words taken out of context.”³⁵ For the supporters of this historiographical movement, the main goal was not to explain in detail the ideas held by the “canonical” authors, but to explain the mentality of a society and an era; the aim was to understand what Napoleon had in common with the most miserable of his soldiers. This principle was successfully implemented by a number of historians, such as Marc Bloch, Lucien Febvre, Michel Vovelle, Philippe Ariès, Jean Delumeau and Georges Duby, who in their seminal works went beyond the ideas of individuals to present the epoch’s typical mental structures, always against a background of influential environmental and cultural circumstances.

My aim in this thesis is to combine the study of the ideas of the main authors following the model of intellectual history with the study of mentalities (the beliefs, values and certainties shared by the majority of the members of a society). In order to do so, I have analysed in detail the contributions of some of the main European and Spanish intellectuals of the period (Machiavelli, Botero, Lipsius, Rivadeneira, Saavedra Fajardo, and others) but I have complemented that with a broad study of the works of those considered minor authors, many of whom we know only their names. I strongly believe

³⁵ Jacques Le Goff, ‘Mentalities: a history of ambiguities,’ in *Constructing the Past: Essays in Historical Methodology*, ed. by Jacques Le Goff and Pierre Nora, Cambridge: University Press, pp. 166- 180. The quote in p. 176.

that it is only through this combination of micro and macro perspectives that researchers could get a complete and accurate image of the phenomenon.

To fully understand the ideas and proposals of major authors we need to know first what Early Modern people meant when using words like *deception*, *dissimulation*, *lying* or *fraud*. Furthermore, we need to know what were the most popular (most commonly held) opinions on these issues. This can only be accomplished through systematic study of the majority of the works published at the time. Such wide-ranging study will help us to complete, and often redefine, the initial image that could be inferred from the exclusive reading of canonical texts.

This was demonstrated, for instance, by the Italian scholar Rosario Villari, in his seminal work entitled *Elogio della dissimulazione: la lotta politica nel Seicento*. Villari realized that to understand the moral and political thought of dissimulation that existed in seventeenth century Italy, it was necessary to go beyond the opinions of Guicciardini and Machiavelli (opinions which, although very influential, were not very detailed on the matter of dissimulation) and consider the set of beliefs stated by the remaining “minor” thinkers, even if most of them were barely read and had no publishing success. Thus, Villari paid great attention, for example, to the short treatise written by an unknown author named Torquato Accetto. This treatise was published in Naples in 1641. It was not widely read. It was quickly forgotten and never reprinted. But that does not change the fact that it contains a number of essential observations on dissimulation that cannot be found in the writings of Machiavelli or another major Italian thinker of the period. I have applied the same approach in my research.

The excess citations and footnotes in this thesis are necessary. When a scholar addresses a topic like deception, of which very little has been written, is important to provide as many direct testimonies as possible, allowing the sources ‘to talk by themselves,’ as Márquez Villanueva would have said. Others may lament the lack of details about the lives and circumstances of the authors examined. It is undeniable that this study would

have benefited from a closer analysis of the intellectual circumstances and purposes of the authors. However, my research is based on the reading of more than 130 thinkers; it would have been impossible to devote a paragraph to each of them. History, wrote Steven Runciman, is the art of omission. When one has to explain a historical process that extends over ten centuries across half of the European continent in 100,000 words, sacrifices and omissions are unavoidable. I chose to prioritise the description of the forest instead of the trees. It seems a legitimate decision to me, based on the historiographical and methodological principles stated above.

In keeping with the demands of twenty-first century scholarship, I wanted to complete a thesis in which the interdisciplinary approach was not just an ideal, but also a reality. Therefore, I tried to combine my historical analysis with the use of concepts and theories drawn from the social sciences, mainly sociology, anthropology and political science. In the pages that follow, the reader will find the explicit influence of the hermeneutic theories by Leo Strauss³⁶ and the notion of “impression management” created by the American sociologist Erving Goffman.³⁷ I also rely on the works of two of the most important German sociologists of the early twentieth century: George Simmel, whose work allowed me to conceptualise and explain the power of secrecy in political thought³⁸; and Norbert Elias, whose ‘civilising process’ is intimately linked to the acceptance of deception in Early Modern society.³⁹

LITERATURE REVIEW

To my knowledge, there are no monographs that study deception from a historical perspective and that test the hypothesis of my thesis. There are, however, a number of

³⁶ Strauss, Leo, ‘Persecution and the Art of Writing,’ *Social Research*, 1941, pp. 488-504.

³⁷ Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday life*, New York: Doubleday, 1959.

³⁸ Georg Simmel, ‘The Sociology of Secrecy and of Secret Societies,’ *American Journal of Sociology* 11, no. 4, 1906, pp. 441-498.

³⁹ Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process. Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, Revised edition, Oxford: Blackwells, 2000.

important works on related issues that helped me to determine my areas of study and lay the foundation for my research. We have, for instance, some “histories of lying” aimed at the general public. They are valuable contributions to create the wider picture of the matter, but they limit their analyses to very few sources (always the same ones) and barely scratch the surface of the problem for scholarly standards.⁴⁰ There are also some valuable academic studies on the importance of secrecy in medieval and early modern Europe like those by Jacques Chiffolleau, François Laroque, and Daniel Jütte.⁴¹ Finally, there is an important and growing body of scholarship on Early Modern dissimulation. This body can be divided into two. We have, on the one hand, the works on courtly and political dissimulation; among them can be highlighted the seminal contributions by Jean-Pierre Cavaillé, Jon R. Snyder, Rosario Villari, and José Antonio Fernandez-Santamaría.⁴² On the other hand, we have the research on religious

⁴⁰ See, among others: Bettetini, Maria, *Breve storia della bugia: da Ulisse a Pinocchio*, Milan: Raffaello Cortina, 2001; Campbell, Jeremy, *The Liar's Tale. A history of falsehood*, New York: Norton, 2001; Denery, Dallas G., *The Devil Wins: A History of Lying from the Garden of Eden to the Enlightenment*, Princeton: University Press, 2015; Gonzalvez, François, *La réalité du mensonge. De Saint-Augustin aux modifications apportées à sa sanction par le Code pénal*, Aix-en-Provence: Presses Universitaires d'Aix-Marseille, 1996.

⁴¹ See, for example: Chiffolleau, Jacques, *La Chiesa, il segreto e l'obbedienza: La costruzione del soggetto politico nel medioevo*, Bologna: Il Mulino, 2010; Jütte, Daniel, *The Age of Secrecy. Jews, Christians, and the Economy of Secrets, 1400–1800*, New Heaven: Yale University Press, 2015; Kaiser, Wolfgang (ed.), *Pratiques du secret xve-xviie siècles, Rives-Nord-Méditerranéennes 17*, 2004; Lamarche-Vadel, Gaëtane, *De la duplicité. Les figures du secret au xviiie siècle*, Paris: La Différence, 1994; Laroque, François (ed.), *Histoire et secret à la Renaissance*, Paris: Presses de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1997; Lochrie, Karma, *Covert Operations: The Medieval Uses of Secrecy*, Philadelphia: University Press, 1999; Micolani, Antonella, ‘Il segreto nel Medioevo,’ *Quaderni medievali* 55, 2003, pp. 245-250; Rankin, Alisha, & Elaine Leong, *Secrets and Knowledge in Medicine and Science, 1500-1800*, Surrey: Ashgate, 2011; *States of Secrecy*, *The British Journal for the History of Science* 45, Special Issue 02, June 2012.

⁴² On the topic of dissimulation among courtiers and politicians see primarily the works by: Cavaillé, Jean-Pierre, ‘*Simulatio/dissimulatio*, notes sur feinte et occultation, xvie-xviiiie siècle,’ in *Il Vocabolario della République des Lettres. Terminologia filosofica e storia della filosofia. Problemi di metodo, Atti del Convegno Internazionale in Memoriam di Paul Dibon, Napoli, 17-18 maggio 1996*, ed. by Marta Fattori, Florence: Olschki, 1997, pp. 115-131; Idem, *Dis/simulations. Jules-César Vanini, François La Mothe Le Vayer, Gabriel Naudé, Louis Machon et Torquato Accetto, Religion, morale et politique au xviiie siècle*, Paris: H. Champion, 2002; Idem, ‘Pour une histoire de la dis/simulation,’ *Les Dossiers du Grihl*, 2009-02, URL: <http://dossiersgrihl.revues.org/3666>; Idem, ‘Mensonge et politique au début de l’âge moderne,’ *Les Dossiers du Grihl*, 2013, URL: <http://dossiersgrihl.revues.org/5936>; Fernández-Santamaría, José Antonio, ‘Simulación y disimulación: El problema de la duplicidad en el pensamiento político español del barroco,’ *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia* 177, no. 1, 1980, pp. 741-770; Macchia, Giovanni, *I moralisti classici da Machiavelli a La Bruyère*, Milan: Aedphi, 1988, esp. the 4th section on *Il potere della dissimulazione*; Mattei, Rodolfo De, ‘Ragion di stato e mendacio,’ in *Il problema della ragion di Stato nell'età della Controriforma*, Milan: Riccardo Ricciardi, 1979, chap. 12; Sénellart, Michel, ‘Simuler et dissimuler: l’art machiavélien d’être secret à la Renaissance,’ in *Histoire et secret à la Renaissance*, ed. by François Laroque, Paris: Presses de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1997, pp. 99-106; Snyder,

dissimulation conducted by Delio Cantimori, Carlo Ginzburg, Leo Strauss, Perez Zagorin, Michael Hunter, David Wootton, and others.⁴³ These pioneering works have helped historians lay the foundations for this new line of research, identifying key concepts, problems and sources and showing the importance that deception has to understanding the political realm and spiritual world of Early Modern Europe. My thesis draws on all of them. However, it also provides new sources and methodological approaches that allow us to create new arguments and, in some cases, refine the ideas stated by these previous works:

Previous studies draw on the reading of Italian, French, English and Dutch texts yet I have researched new and more varied sources. I also consider these materials, but focus my attention on the study of around 150 Iberian texts, many of which had long gone unnoticed by scholars. This is important not only because it recovers the contribution of what was then the main economic and political power in Europe, but also because, as we shall see, Iberian authors paid much attention to this matter, publishing more than a hundred treaties between 1595 and 1700 that legitimated the use of deception from moral and political grounds. The study of these texts allows us to expand our knowledge on dissimulation to a level of detail that has not been known to date. Moreover, it allows us to know the position of the Catholic leadership on the matter.

John R., *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge: University of California Press, 2009; Villari, Rosario, *Elogio della dissimulazione. La lotta politica nel Seicento*, Roma: Laterza, 1987.

⁴³ Some of the most important works on religious dissimulation are: Biondi, Albano, 'La giustificazione della simulazione nel Cinquecento,' in *Eresia e Riforma nell'Italia del Cinquecento*, Florence: Sansoni, 1974, pp. 7-68; Cantimori, Delio, *Eretici italiani del Cinquecento: Ricerche Storiche*, Florence: Sansoni, 1939; Ginzburg, Carlo, *Il Nicodemismo. simulazione et dissimulazione religiosa nell'Europa del '500*, Turin: Einaudi, 1970; Eliav-Feldon, Miriam & Tamar Herzig (eds.), *Dissimulation and Deceit in Early Modern Europe*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015; Hunter, Michael, & David Wootton, *Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992; Sommerville, Johann P., 'New Art of Lying: Equivocation, Mental Reservation, and Casuistry,' in *Conscience and Casuistry in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Edmund Leites, Cambridge: University Press, 1988, pp. 159-184; Strauss, Leo, 'Persecution and the Art of Writing,' *Social Research*, 1941, pp. 488-504; Tutino, Stefania, *Shadows of Doubt: Language and Truth in Post-Reformation Catholic*, Oxford: University Press, 2014; Van Houdt, Toon, et al. (eds.), *On the Edge of Truth and Honesty. Principles and strategies of fraud and deceit in the early modern period*, Leiden: Brill, 2002; Vecchio, Silvana, 'Mensonge, Simulation, Dissimulation: Primauté de l'intention et ambiguïté et du langage dans la théologie morale du bas Moyen Âge,' in *Vestigia, Images, Verba: Semiotics and Logic in Medieval Theological Texts (XIIth-XIVth century)*, ed. by Constantine Marmo, Turnhout: Brepols, 1997, pp. 117-132; Zagorin, Perez, *Ways of Lying: Dissimulation, Persecution and Conformity in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990.

The studies that exist on religious dissimulation focus almost exclusively on heterodoxy (Nicodemism, Crypto-Judaism, Morisco's *taqqiya*, Libertines, atheists) and on the Protestant territories, leaving Catholic areas unstudied. Instead, I focus my attention on the latter, showing how deception was also legitimised in the very heart of the Roman Church, through casuist doctrines such as verbal equivocation and mental reservation.

Most of the studies analyse dissimulation in specific countries and in the sixteenth and/or seventeenth centuries, yet I take a more comprehensive approach. Although I am also mainly interested in that period and the production of the Spanish Empire, I have tried to adopt a wider scope, analysing the phenomenon in the *longue durée* (from the 1400s to the 1700s) and throughout Western Europe. This comparative approach helps us to contextualize the contributions of Italian, French and Dutch thinkers and to define the mentalities of the period. Jon Snyder tried to understand the 'culture of dissimulation and secrecy of Early Modern Europe' through the study of a dozen authors, considered more or less canonical. In my opinion, this limited corpus led him to create a narrative that, although compelling in appearance, does not hold up when a larger number of sources is examined. He sees originality in ideas that were already present in Iberia fifty years prior and fails to identify and understand some of the milestones that led to the legitimisation of deception in the period.

Another recurrent problem that I see in previous scholarship is that it tends to address religious and political dissimulation as two separate phenomena, independent from each other. In my opinion, this is a biased approach that should be abandoned when studying societies of the Ancient Regime. In this thesis, I try to eliminate that rigid separation, explaining how the changes in moral theology (the generalization of private confession and the subsequent development of the doctrines of verbal equivocation and mental reservation) are closely linked to the acceptance of political dissimulation.

Previous studies addressed actions such as dissimulation, simulation, lying, secrecy, fraud, and so on as autonomous and disconnected phenomena. In this thesis, I have tried to unite them under a single conceptual framework, considering them different

forms of deception. This helps us define terms and to structure them into a single coherent conceptual framework, an essential step in order to establish an academic dialogue. As I show below, this conceptual framework can be useful not only for historians, but also for those social scientists interested in the study of human communication and language.

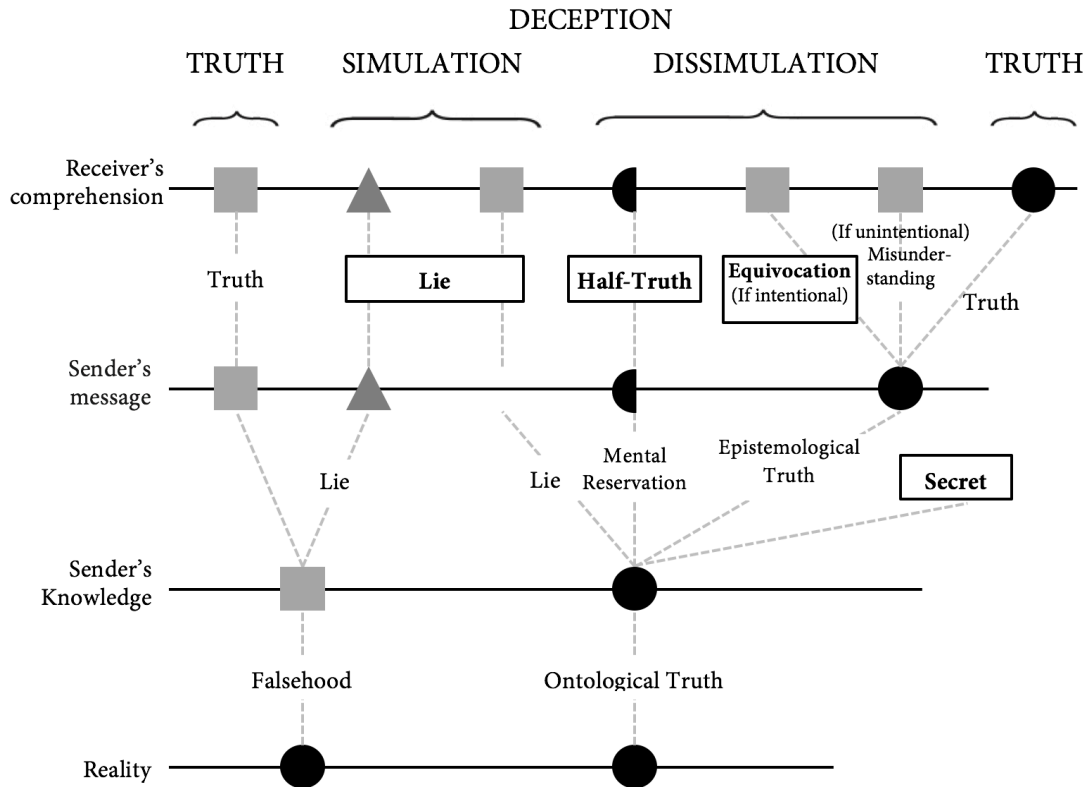
LINGUISTIC CONTEXT & DEFINITION OF TERMS

This thesis draws on the methodological principles of German conceptual history. I believe, like Koselleck, that socio-political concepts ‘set certain horizons as well as certain limits to possible experience and conceivable theory’⁴⁴ and that their changes throughout history should be considered both as causes and consequences of the economic, political, and social changes of an era.⁴⁵ A clear definition of such concepts is therefore essential to the historical study of moral and political thought. Unfortunately, yet for powerful reasons, clear definitions are rare in the humanities and social sciences. Over recent decades, many psychologists, sociologists, and historians have used terms like *deception*, *lies* and *secrets* without having a clear understanding of what they meant. Some scholars have proposed interesting conceptual frameworks,⁴⁶ but in my opinion none of them are valid for historical study. Thus, I decided to create my own, addressing these actions not as ethical or psychological categories, but as acts of communication. My proposed framework can be expressed in the following scheme:

⁴⁴ *Vergangene Zukunft*, p. 119.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 330.

⁴⁶ For a detailed analysis of the various definitions proposed for the terms of deception and lying see James Edwin Mahon, ‘The Definition of Lying and Deception,’ *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. by Edward N. Zalta, Fall 2015, URL: <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2015/entries/lying-definition/>.



I believe that, in order to understand the meaning of deception in all its complexity, we must first define the two key concepts that function as foundations of its cohesive chain: *truth* and *falsehood*. I suggest we do that by distinguishing between four levels of analysis:

- *reality*, which is the subject that we discuss and we try to understand; in other words, the referent.⁴⁷
- the *sender's knowledge*, which is the representation that each individual has of this reality (depending on the case it can be more or less accurate).
- the *sender's message*, which is the representation of the reality that the sender wants to transmit. This message can be verbal or non-verbal (i.e. a gesture).
- and, finally, the *receiver's comprehension*, what the receiver understands from the sender's message.

⁴⁷ Of course, the matter is more complicated than that. We could always argue (as Berkeley did) that reality is unknowable, or that it is a construct that is produced through speeches. Such an assertion would drag us to the old debate on the phenomenal dimension of history, the epistemological limits of the discipline, and the postmodernists' controversies whose useful results no one has yet seen.

If the sender's knowledge corresponds to reality, we consider it to be an *ontological truth*. On the contrary, if it does not, we consider it *false*. When knowledge is not shared between the sender and the receiver (in other words, when it remains hidden from the receiver) it becomes a *secret*. When it is shared, it can adopt different forms, depending on the sender's intention. If the message corresponds to the reality that he considers true, we consider it an *epistemological truth*. If not, we consider it a *lie*. Thus, we can define lying as the act of issuing a false statement with the intention of getting another person to believe that statement to be true. As shall see, this definition was already formulated by St. Augustine in the fourth century (*mendacium est locutio contra mentem cum intentione fallendi*) and it is very useful for historians since it helps us to avoid indulging in anachronisms.

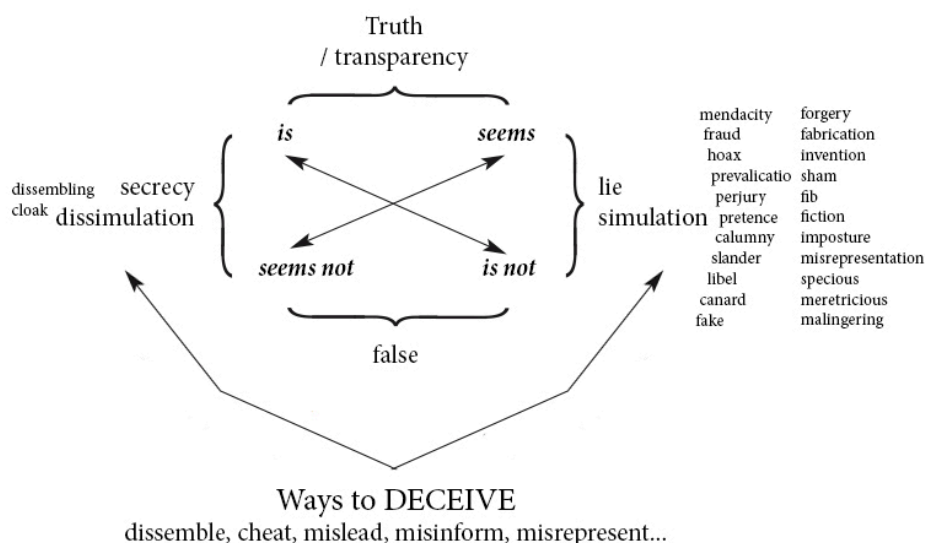
Let us consider an example: I think that the earth has an ellipsoid shape. That is, in fact, the image that our society has had of reality since the late nineteenth century. If I say that the earth is an ellipsoid, I tell the truth. If I claim that it is a perfect sphere, then I tell a lie. But what can we say as historians about Copernicus? When he created his heliocentric model in the early sixteenth century, scientists and he himself believed that our planet was a perfect sphere. So when he said that the earth was round, he was not lying; he was *wrong*. And, paradoxically, he would have lied if he claimed that our planet was a spheroid flattened at the poles. Thus, it is understood that truth or lies do not depend on the information being transmitted, but on the sender's intention.

Once establishing the meanings of *truth*, *falsehood* and *lying* we can define *deception* as the action of intentionally confusing / dissembling / misleading / misinforming / cheating, etc. the receiver by encouraging him to accept as true something that the sender considers to be false. Deception can be verbal or nonverbal, stated or unstated, but it always has to be conscious and intentional. Otherwise it would not be deception, but a *mistake/misunderstanding*.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ I therefore disagree with those scholars who argue that deceive is an achievement or success verb. (i.e. Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, London: Hutchinson, 1949, p. 130). On the contrary, I believe that an act is an act of deceiving if it has the intention to deceive, regardless the results that it achieves.

It is important to note that there are many forms of deception. Lying is just one of them. Sometimes the sender decides to withhold his knowledge to mislead the receiver (*secrecy*). On other occasions, he transmits just part of his knowledge and omits another with the same purpose; this kind of *half-truth* was known in the Early Modern Age as *mental restriction* (*restrictio mentalis*). Finally, the sender can transmit his entire knowledge to the receiver, but do so in a way that is intentionally unclear and confusing, using amphibological words, ambiguous expressions or by obfuscating the information in its complexity, with the intention of inducing his listener to deception. This action was often called *verbal equivocation* (*equivocatio*).

Language is full of terms that include a number of devices that could be used to deceive. Building on the work of Algirdas Julien Greimas, I have tried to arrange them on a “semiotic square” –a device that allows us to represent graphically the logical structure of any semantic category.⁴⁹



Its reading is very simple. In this semiotic square, something that *is* and *seems* to be *true*, and something that *is not* and *seems not* is *false*. Something that *seems* but *is not* is considered a *lie* or, as often appears in historical sources, *simulation*. On the contrary, what *is* but *seems not* is *dissimulation*. The distinction between these two terms is very

⁴⁹ Algirdas J. Greimas & Joseph Courtés, *Semiotics and Language: An Analytical Dictionary*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982.

important, since around it medieval and early modern authors organised the whole debate on the lawfulness of deception. *Dissimulating* is the action of not showing what it is (*supressio veri*); while *simulating* is the action of showing what is not (*suggestio falsi*).⁵⁰ Both actions are aimed at deceiving, so they were often treated as synonyms and considered forms of hypocrisy and falsehood.⁵¹ In such circumstances, I will use the neologism *dis/simulation* created by Jean-Pierre Cavaillé. However, there is an important difference between them. Dissimulation is an act of concealment that may be linked to prudence, modesty, humility and discretion. The sender decides not to tell others what he is, what he has, what he thinks he knows. On the contrary, simulating is always an act of pretence. The sender does not hide information but rather creates a new or fake nature.

This theoretical distinction is very old. It already appears in Roman law, whose legal scheme differed between deceit (*dolus*) ‘made by a negative act’ and outcomes ‘made by a positive act.’⁵² Most medieval and early modern theorists accepted this distinction.⁵³ However, as we shall see, the moral evaluation of both changed significantly over the centuries.

⁵⁰ For a lexical and historical analysis of these concepts see Jean-Pierre Cavaillé, ‘Simulatio/dissimulatio, notes sur feinte et occultation, XVIe-XVIIe siècle,’ in *Il Vocabolario della Repubblica delle Lettere. Terminologia filosofica e storia della filosofia. Problemi di metodo, Atti del Convegno Internazionale in Memoriam di Paul Dibon, Napoli, 17-18 maggio 1996*, ed. by Paul Dibon & Marta Fattori, Florence: Olschki, 1997, pp. 115-131.

⁵¹ This can be found in both medieval (See, for example: Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, X, letter H, Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II, II, quaest. 111, art. 4.) and early modern text. In his study of the Latin glosses of St. John Chrysostom Francisco de Quevedo tells the reader: ‘hypocresia means dissimulación’ (*Parte segunda postuma de la Política de Dios y Gobierno de Christo*, Madrid: Diego Díaz de la Carrera, 1662. I quote the edition by James O. Crosby, Madrid: Castalia, 1966, p. 280). Similarly, Alejo Venegas claim that ‘Hypocrisy is a simulation that pretends more than it really is’ (*Agonía del tránsito de la muerte con los avisos y consuelos que cerca della son provechosos, dirigida á la muy ilustre señora doña Ana de la cerda, condesa de mérito...*, Toledo: Juan de Alaya, 1537, p. 302). For more on this matter see Frederic Amory, ‘Whited Sepulchres: The Semantic History of Hypocrisy to the High Middle Ages,’ *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale* 53, 1956, pp. 5-17.

⁵² Cicero, *De Officiis*, [44 BC], III, 60. Ed. by Michael Winterbottom, Oxford Classical Texts, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.

⁵³ See, for example: Isidoro of Seville, *De differentiis verborum*, in *PL* 83, 62a, sect. 515. See also 64c, sect. 541; Rodrigo Fernández de Santaella, *Vocabulario eclesiástico*, Seville: Juan Pregnitzer, 1499, ‘simular’ and ‘disimular’; Sebastián de Covarrubias, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española*, Madrid: Luis Sánchez, 1611; Real Academia, *Diccionario de la lengua castellana en que se explica el verdadero sentido de las voces...*, Madrid: Imprenta de la Real Academia Española, 1732, vol. III, pp. 308-309.

THESIS STRUCTURE

I have divided the thesis into three parts. In the first (chapters I and II) I analyse how deception was discussed in the field of moral theology. The scholars who have studied this issue have held that medieval and modern cultures were dominated by a total prohibition of deception, which would have begun with the Augustinian condemnation of lying in the fifth century and would have remained the reigning orthodoxy until at least the nineteenth century. I argue that this view is incomplete and, therefore, incorrect, since the history of deception goes far beyond the concept of the *lie*. If we expand the scope of our analysis to other forms of deception and read alternative sources we discover a very different account. Namely, the existence of a less rigorous moral current that, without challenging the stigma against lying, legitimised the use of deception in many circumstances of life through the ideas of verbal equivocation and truth-omission (secrecy and mental restriction). This alternative current began to develop from the thirteenth century and reached its zenith between the 1550s and 1660s helped by the success of casuistry theology. Some of the most influential theologians of the time participated in it, including Raymond of Penafort, Erasmus of Rotterdam, and Martín de Azpilcueta. Together, they developed what I call an “Ethics of Deception” that exerted a decisive influence on moral literature, as it was closely related to issues such as the salvation of the soul, freedom of worship, and the relationship between the individual and the community of believers.

In the second part, I argue that this “Ethics of Deception” also exerted a major influence on the birth of modern political thought. Between the 1510s and 1580s, deception went from being a vice of tyrants to an essential virtue for all prudent rulers. I explain how this change occurred, first attending to the contributions of Italian, Flemish, French and English thinkers (chapter III) to focus later on Iberian authors (chapters IV-VII). Scholars have usually relegated the Iberian Peninsula’s contributions to European political thought to the background, merely recognizing the importance of authors such as Pedro de Rivadeneira and Baltasar Gracián. In my study, I intend to show

that this is only the tip of the iceberg. Between 1595 and 1700, more than 70 treatises appeared in the Iberian Peninsula that legitimated the political use of deception, explored its limits and the best ways to perform it. Many of these treatises were translated into several major European languages (from English to Russian) and were widely read across the continent, exerting a decisive influence on the formation of modern political thought. I argue that this success is mainly due to Iberian authors' ability to harmonise the political realism of Machiavelli with the flexible morality of casuistry, something that allowed them to justify deception within the margins of Catholic orthodoxy. Furthermore, this also shows that Spain was not an intellectually moribund and culturally isolated empire during that period as some historians suggest.

The final conclusion I reach is that early modern society did not invent deception, but it did create its possibility, by recognising it as an intrinsic part of the world and human relations. The theorists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries understood and argued that deception was a necessary evil in society. Interestingly enough, to do it they used the same arguments that contemporary social scientists systematised and tested four hundred years later: the defence of deception as a necessary evil in society, its essential role in the development of individualism and complex social structures, and the convenience of using truth-omissions and equivocations as alternatives to lying. This led to some of the most characteristic features of Baroque culture and opened the door to some of the most transcendental changes of sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe, such as the creation of a new politic governed by reason rather than faith, the secularization of social behaviours, and the emergence of the notions of individualism, privacy and freedom of thought. For all these reasons, I claim that deception played an important role in the shaping of Modernity.

CHAPTER I

DECEPTION IN THE MIDDLE AGES:
FROM STRICT ADHERENCE TO EXCEPTIONS

Always tell the truth. It is the
easiest thing to remember.

DAVID MAMET

CLASSICAL AND EARLY MEDIEVAL VIEWS OF LYING

Classical thinkers often discussed the problem of deception, but failed to come to agreement about it.⁵⁴ Although the Greeks had a high regard for veracity, there were many philosophers among them who claimed that lies could be tolerated under certain conditions. Aristotle argued for transparent truth-telling and condemned 'secrecy as a mark of fear.' In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he lauded the magnanimous or high-minded man (*megalopsychos*) as someone who 'will care for truth more than for reputation; and he will speak and act openly, because he has contempt for fear and secrecy and falsity. And hence he will be truthful.'⁵⁵ Plato disagreed with his disciple. He stated that the 'lie is hated by men as well as gods,' whose nature only accepts truth.⁵⁶ However, he acknowledged that sometimes lying can be useful and lawful for public officials. In the third book of *The Republic*, Plato taught that 'the rulers of the State (...)

⁵⁴ Vid. Rodolfo de Mattei, *Dal premachiavellismo a l'antimachiavellismo*, Florence: Sansoni, 1969, chap. 2: Il problema della liceità del mendacio; and *Il problema della ragion di Stato nell'età della Controriforma*, Milan: Riccardo Ricciardi, 1979, chap. 12: Ragion di stato e mendacio.

⁵⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, IV, chap. 8, 1124b. Trad. by George Apostle, *The Nicomachean Ethics: Translation with Commentaries and Glossary*, Dordrecht: Reidel Pub. Co., 1975.

⁵⁶ Plato, *The Republic*, II, 381e-382e, ed. by Simon R. Slings, *Platonis Rempublicam*, Oxford Classical Texts, Oxford: University Press, 2003.

may be allowed to lie' and to use deception 'as a medicine (*pharmakon*) (...) in their dealings either with enemies or with their own citizens' so long as they used it 'for the public good.'⁵⁷

Plato was not alone. According to Xenophon, Socrates claimed that there were certain situations in which lying was not only permissible but even necessary. This is the case when a general in battle 'tells a lie' to save his men, or when a father lies 'to restore his son to health.'⁵⁸ The Stoics also praised the value of 'noble lies' in certain circumstances. Seneca, who would become a major authority for early modern readers, stated that 'one must know how to withdraw into oneself' and promoted the prudent use of dis/simulation at the right time.⁵⁹

Roman rhetoricians also failed to develop a common position on the topic. Quintilian exalted honesty as a virtue, but endorsed the use of deception under certain circumstances:

A good man may sometimes think it proper to tell a lie, and occasionally in matters of small moment: as when children are sick, we invent many things in order to help them, and we promise many things we shall not do; much less is it forbidden to tell a lie when an assassin is to be prevented from killing a man, or an enemy to be deceived for the benefit of our Country.⁶⁰

In his *Pro Ligario*, Cicero allowed the use of 'virtuous and merciful lies' ('*honesto et misericordiae mendacio*').⁶¹ However, he contradicted this view in other writings, in which he claimed that 'simulation and dissimulation ought to be eliminated from the whole of our lives.'⁶² According to Cicero, deception is incompatible with the virtue of honesty, an essential characteristic of the good man and community life (*res publica*). Hence, lies

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, III, 380b-c and 389c-d. See also Christopher Gill, 'Plato on Falsehood - not Fiction', in *Lies and Fiction in the Ancient World*, ed. by Christopher Gill & Timothy P. Wiseman, Exeter: University Press, 1993, pp. 38-87.

⁵⁸ *Memorabilia*, [c. 371 BC], bk. IV, chap. 2, 14-18. Ed. by M. D. Macleod, Xenophon: *Apology and Memorabilia*, Aris & Phillips Classical Texts, Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2008.

⁵⁹ Seneca, *De tranquillitate animi*, in *Dialoghi morali*, [c. 54], XVII, chap. 3. Ed. by Maria Grazia Cavalca, Bologna: CLUEB, 1981.

⁶⁰ Quintilian, *Institutiones Oratoriae*, [95], bk. XII, chap. 1, sect. 38. Ed. by Michael Winterbottom, Oxford Classical Texts, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970.

⁶¹ *Pro Ligario*, [46 BC], chap. 5. Ed. by Albert C. Clark, *Orationes: Volume II: Pro Milone, Pro Marcello, Pro Ligario, Pro Rege Deiotaro, Philippicae I-XIV*, Oxford Classical Texts, Oxford, 1963.

⁶² 'Ex omni vita simulatio dissimulatioque tollenda est.' *De officiis*, III, chap. 15, sect. 61.

must be avoided at all costs, both in personal relationships and in the art of government.⁶³

The same difference of opinion can be found in literature and history. Beginning with Euripides, many ancient authors praised the virtue of *parrhesia* (literally *pan*, all – *rhema*, that which is said) according to which one must say everything that one thinks, no matter what the cost may be.⁶⁴ However, the same men who admired the lies of the shrewd Odysseus also worshipped Hermes, the patron of thieves and sharp entrepreneurs, and found admirable the skilful deceits of Aristophanes' heroes. 'Lying is good,' claimed Heliodorus in his *Aethiopica*, 'when it benefits those who tell the lie and does no harm to those who hear it.'⁶⁵ Classical comedies and tragedies often described cheats and dupes, sometimes to condemn them, sometimes to praise them.⁶⁶ And the same applies to historians. Herodotus, Livy, and Tacitus applaud honesty, but their writings also provide a number of examples of lawful political and religious frauds made by admirable rulers.⁶⁷

This unresolved discussion continued into Late Antiquity and was absorbed by a primitive Christian doctrine determined to protect itself against Roman persecution and to define the profiles of its orthodoxy. Among the first followers of Christ the following question arose: was it permissible to lie and hide their faith to avoid punishment? Early

⁶³ *Laelius de amicitia*, chap. 8, sect. 26. See also *De legibus*, chap. 8, sect. 5; and *De Officiis*, III, chap. 15, ss. 26, 60, 81, and 102.

⁶⁴ *Vid.* Michel Foucault, *Fearless speech*, ed. by Joseph Pearson, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2001.

⁶⁵ *Aethiopica*, trans. and ed. by Moses Hadas, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1957, bk. I, chap. 26, sect. 6.

⁶⁶ On this topic see: Emlyn-Jones, Chris, 'True and Lying Tales in the *Odyssey*,' *Greece & Rome* 33, no. 1, April 1986, pp. 1-10; Hartigan, Karelisa, 'Salvation via Deceit: A New Look at the *Iphegeneia at Tauris*,' *Eranos* 84, 1986, pp. 119-125; Kurke, Leslie, 'Kapêleia and Deceit: Theognis 59-60,' *American Journal of Philology* 110, 1989, pp. 535-544; Lateiner, Donald, 'Deceptions and Delusions in Herodotus,' *Classical Antiquity* 9, 1990, pp. 230-246; Marco, Francisco & José Remesal, *Fraude, mentiras y engaños en el mundo antiguo*, Barcelona: Universidad de Barcelona, 2014; Moore, John, 'The Dissembling-Speech of Ajax,' *Yale Classical Studies* 25, 1977, pp. 47-66; Mursurillo, Herbert, 'The Problem of Lying and Deceit and the Two Voices of Euripides' *Hippolytus* 925-31,' *Transactions of the American Philological Society* 104, 1974, pp. 231-238; Syme, Ronald, 'Mendacity in Velleius,' *American Journal of Public Health* 99, 1978, pp. 79-105; Walcott, Peter, 'Odysseus and the Art of Lying,' *Ancient Society* 8, 1977, pp. 1-19; Whitman, Cedric. H., *Aristophanes and the Comic Hero*, Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1964, esp. pp. 21-58 and 281-293; Winkler, John, 'The Mendacity of Kalasiris and the Narrative Strategy of Heliodoros' *Aithiopika*,' *Yale Classical Studies* 27, 1982, pp. 93-158.

⁶⁷ Wiseman, 'Lying Historians: Seven Types of Mendacity,' pp. 122-146.

Church Fathers offered contrasting answers to this dilemma.⁶⁸ Many of them, such as St. Clement, Tertullian, and St. Basil, took up the classical notion of *parrhesia*, which held in high esteem the virtue of truthfulness, and branded the men who lied and deceived as despicable.⁶⁹

According to them, the Holy Scriptures dictated that not telling the truth was such an evil thing that it could never be permitted, even in cases when telling a lie would prevent a disaster, such as the death of an innocent or the destruction of a city. The ninth commandment made clear: ‘You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; you shall not lie to one another’ (Leviticus 19. 11). ‘And you shall not bear false witness against your neighbour’ (Deuteronomy 5. 20). In the Bible, ‘God is truth’ (John 14. 6) and rejects all forms of deception, no matter what goals it pursues (Proverbs 8. 7; Romans 3. 4). Jesus Christ, states: ‘I have come into the world to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice’ (John 18. 37). The devil, on the contrary, is the one who ‘does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies’ (John 8. 44). In fact, early Christians never forgot that all human misery was born of a lie: the one that the serpent told Eve in Paradise. From this deception emerged all the pain, hunger and suffering of

⁶⁸ On the image of lie among the Church Fathers see: Colish, Marcia L., ‘The Stoic Theory of Verbal Signification and the Problem of Lies and False Statements from Antiquity to St. Anselm,’ in *Archeologie du Signe, Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies*, ed. by Lucie Brind’Amour and Eugene Vance, 1983, pp. 17-43; De Mattei, Rodolfo, ‘Il problema della liceità del mendacio,’ in *Dal premachiavellismo all’antimachiavellismo*, Florence: Sansoni, 1969; Ehrman, Bart D., *Forgery and Counter-forgery: The Use of Literary Deceit in Early Christian*, Oxford: University Press, 2013, pp. 529-549; Godefroy, L., ‘Le mensonge,’ in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, ed. by Alfred Vacant & Eugène Mangenot, vol. X, Paris: Librairie Letouzey et Ané, 1928, cols. 559-561; Kirk, Kenneth E., *Conscience and its Problems: an Introduction to Casuistry*, London: Longmans, 1948, pp. 182-188; Lugaresi, Leonardo, ‘Nel teatro del mondo: un doppio sguardo su dissimulazione e rappresentazione della vita religiosa nel cristianesimo antico,’ *Annali di Scienze Religiose* 4, 2011, pp. 21-68; Ramsey, Boniface, ‘Two Traditions on Lying and Deception in the Ancient Church,’ *Thomist* 49, no. 4, 1985, pp. 517-544; Schindler, Franz, ‘Die Lüge in der patristischen Literatur,’ in *Beiträge zur Geschichte des christlichen Altertums und der byzantinischen Literatur*, ed. by Albert Michael Koeniger, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1969, pp. 421-433.

⁶⁹ Clement of Rome, *Epistola ad Corinthios*, bk. I, chap. 27. In PG 1; Lactantius, *Divinae institutiones*, bk. IV, chap. 18. in PL 6; Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem*, bk. II, chap. 1; *Liber de Anima*, chap. 17; *Apologeticus*, chap. 21; Basil, *Regulae brevius tractatae*, inter. 58, 59, and 76. In PG 31; Prosper, *Expositio psalmorum*, ps. 134, v. 10; Eusebius of Cesarea, *Preparationis evangelicae*, bk. IV, chap. 6.

humanity.⁷⁰ Following Jesus Christ meant, therefore, living in the ‘spirit of truth’ (John 14. 17). The good Christian should ‘put away falsehood and speak the truth with his neighbour’ (Ephesians 4. 25).

Maintaining truthfulness quickly became the reigning orthodoxy, reflected in liturgies, theological treatises and catechisms. A good example is found in the *Disticha Catonis*, a Latin collection of proverbial wisdom and morality compiled between the third and fourth centuries AD. The *Cato* was the most popular schoolbook during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, prized not only as a Latin textbook but also as a moral compass for the students. Its pages condemned duplicity and recommended transparency and honesty as essential social and moral values. ‘Speak the truth freely, though the truth be hard.’ ‘What you’ve approved and lauded openly, Shun the reproach of damning flightily.’⁷¹

However, not everything was rigorous condemnation in this period. There were also some thinkers who adopted a more flexible view and maintained that lying was acceptable, perhaps even obligatory, in certain circumstances. According to Clement of Alexandria (d. c. 215):

Whatever, therefore, he [the good Christian] has in his mind, he bears on his tongue, to those who are worthy to hear, speaking as well as living from assent and inclination. For he both thinks and speaks the truth; unless at any time, medically, as a physician for the safety of the sick, he may deceive or tell an untruth, according to the Sophists.⁷²

Origen (d. c. 254) held a similar position, supporting the existence of certain forms of lawful deception. In the sixth book of his *Stromata*, he remarks that there are times when an out-right lie should be employed (*‘cui incumbit neccessitas mentiendi’*):

⁷⁰ For a review of the different interpretations of this episode made during the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period see Dallas G. Denery, *The Devil Wins: A History of Lying from the Garden of Eden to the Enlightenment*, Princeton: University Press, 2015, chap. 1, pp. 21-61.

⁷¹ *Disticha Catonis*, IV, no. 25. Ed. by Marcus Boas & Hendrik J. Botschuyver, Amstelodami: North-Holland Pub. Co., 1952.

⁷² Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, VII, chap. 9. Ed. by William Wilson, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers*, vol. 2, Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885.

The person on whom the necessity of lying occasionally falls must be very careful to use a lie in the manner of a seasoning or a medicine, so as not to exceed the proper measure or go beyond the limits observed by Judith with respect to Holofernes (...) Hence it is clear that, unless we have lied in such a way as to seek some great good, we shall be judged as the enemies of the one who said: 'I am the truth.'⁷³

Another thorough defence of deception written in this period is found in the work of John Cassian (d. 435). Cassian devoted fifteen chapters of his *Collationes* to proving the legality of lying, an argument he developed based on the principle of choosing the lesser evil:

And so we ought to regard the lie and to employ it as if its nature were that of the hellebore: which is useful if taken when some deadly disease is threatening, but if taken without being required by some great danger is the cause of immediate death (...) When then any grave danger hangs on confession of the truth, then we must take to lying as a refuge, yet in such a way as to be, for our salvation, troubled by the guilt of a humbled conscience.⁷⁴

Similar views were held by St. Hilary of Poitiers (d. c. 368), John Chrysostom (d. 407), and John Climacus (d. c. 650), to mention but a few.⁷⁵

THE END TO THE CONTROVERSY: THE CONDEMNATION OF ST. AUGUSTINE

As is evident, the first four centuries of Christian thinkers recognised two different positions on the question of whether lying could ever be justified.⁷⁶ On the one hand,

⁷³ Origen, *Fragmenta ex libris Stromatum*: 'Πᾶν ἄρα ὅτιπερ ἂν ἐν νῶ, τοῦτο καὶ ἐπὶ γλώσσης φέρει πρὸς τοὺς ἐπαΐειν ἁγίους ἐκ τῆς συγκαταθέσεως, καὶ ἀπὸ γνώμης λέγων ἅμα καὶ βιούς. ἀληθῆ τε γὰρ φρονεῖ ἅμα καὶ ἀληθεύει, πλὴν εἰ μὴ ποτε ἐν θεραπείας μέρει, καθάπερ ἰατρὸς πρὸς νοσοῦντας ἐπὶ σωτηρίᾳ τῶν καμνόντων, ψεύσεται ἢ ψεῦδος ἐρεῖ κατὰ τοὺς σοφιστάς.' This passage has been preserved in Jerome's *Apology against Rufinus*, 14, 6. Origen defends the same idea in his *Contra Celsum*, 4, 18-19, [c. 248], ed. by Henry Chadwick, Cambridge: University Press, 1980.

⁷⁴ Cassian, *Collationes*, II, chap. 17. In *PL* 49.

⁷⁵ Hilary of Poitiers, *Tractatus super psalmos*, chap. 14, sect. 10. In *PL* 9; John Chrysostom, *Dialogus de sacerdotio*, I, nr. 8. In *PG* 48; John Climacus, *Scala paradisi*, gr. 12, schol. 6. In *PG* 88.

⁷⁶ According to St. Augustine: 'There is a great question about lying which often arises in the midst of our everyday business, and gives us much trouble, lest we may either rashly call that a lie which is not such,

many of the Fathers and Ecclesiastical writers condemned deception as something intrinsically evil that should never be permitted. On the other hand, many others, although recognising the supremacy of truth, admitted (sometimes regretfully, sometimes not) some exceptions in which deception should be allowed. Everything depended upon the liar's intention and the consequences that may result from the deception; ie. one should never lie to benefit themselves or to cause damage. But it was permitted to tell a lie with the intention of accomplishing some good, such as saving a person from great harm or to develop one's growth in humility.

This diversity of views culminated at the end of the fourth century in a dispute between St. Jerome and St. Augustine over the interpretation of one of the most prominent and explicit references to dissimulation in the New Testament: *Galatians* 2, 11-13. In this passage, Paul relates how his fellow apostle, Peter, on account of his fear of the Jews of Antioch, disguised his true beliefs and pretended to conform to the ordinances of Jewish law. Paul, therefore, accused Peter publicly of hypocrisy and of not walking uprightly in the truth.⁷⁷

According to St. Jerome, this episode reflected a feigned dispute between the two apostles, who would have rightly dissimulated in order to win over Jewish converts to faith in Christ. He likewise maintained that Paul himself engaged in dissimulation on multiple occasions, as he himself acknowledged in his first letter to the Corinthians: 'To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law' (I Corinthians 9. 20).⁷⁸ To justify this behaviour, Jerome used the teachings of Plato and Origen. He also cited examples of lawful deception in the Old Testament, such as

or decide that it is sometimes right to tell a lie, that is, a kind of honest, well-meant charitable lie.' (*De Mendacio*, sect. 1).

⁷⁷ Vid. Auvray, Paul, 'Saint Jérôme et saint Augustin. La controverse au sujet de l'incident d'Antioche,' *Recherches de science religieuse* XXIX, 1939, pp. 594-610; Sinapi, Michèle, 'La question du mensonge officieux dans la correspondance Jérôme-Augustin,' *Mensonge et image*, *Rue Descartes* 8/9, November 1993, pp. 63-84. On the different interpretations of this episode made during the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period see Albano Biondi, 'La giustificazione della simulazione nel Cinquecento,' in *Eresia e Riforma nell'Italia del Cinquecento*, Florence: Sansoni, 1974, pp. 7-68.

⁷⁸ On Paul's dis/simulation see Mark D. Given, *Paul's True Rhetoric: Ambiguity, Cunning, and Deception in Greece and Rome*, Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001.

David feigning madness (I Samuel 21. 10) and Jehu, king of Israel, pretending to worship the idol Baal so that he could kill its priests (IV Kings 10. 18-28). From these and other cases, Jerome concluded that deception is not always reprehensible and that 'simulation at times may be accepted as useful.' Pious men should be allowed to feign for the sake of their own salvation and the others.' After all, Christ himself, 'who was without sin,' used dis/simulation when he took on sinful human flesh to satisfy God's justice for the salvation of mankind.⁷⁹

St. Jerome's interpretation of the episode in Galatians was strongly contested by another great theologian of the time, Augustine (d. 430), who saw in Jerome's interpretation a dangerous justification of lying that could put into question the very validity of the Holy Scriptures. St. Augustine explained his view in a series of letters written between 387 and 405. According to Augustine, Paul was never guilty of speaking untruths and had rightly censured Peter for his conduct. In fact, in his opinion the Bible did not contained a single passage that could support anything other than the 'necessity of truth.' In those episodes in which deception and duplicity did appear, they do so only in a metaphoric, figurative or prophetic way, conveying a truth if correctly understood.⁸⁰

St. Augustine dedicated a number of works to develop his theory.⁸¹ In 395, he wrote *De Mendacio*, a short treatise that exerted a decisive influence on later canonists and

⁷⁹ St. Jerome, *Commentarium in Epistolam ad Galatas Tres Libri*, in *Patrologia Latina Cursus Completus*, ed. by Jacques Migne, Paris, 1844-1855 (henceforth cited as *PL*), vol. XXVI, cols. 363-367: 'utilem vero simulationem et assumendam in tempore.'

⁸⁰ Augustine's letters to Jerome regarding this issue are to be found in *Epistolae ad Galatas Expositionis Liber Unus*, in *PL* 33. An English translation in *Letters*, trans. by Wilfred Parsons, Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1951-1956, vol. I, pp. 93-98, 172-179, and 390-420. On this issue see Eric A. Plumer, *Augustine's Commentary on Galatians*, Oxford: University Press, 2003.

⁸¹ On Augustine's views on lying see: Bonnier, Charles, *Monographie du mensonge: essai sur la casuistique*, Liverpool: Lyceum Press, 1913, pp. 2-7; Brinton, Alan, 'St. Augustine and the Problem of Deception in Religious Persuasion,' *Religious Studies* 19, 1983, pp. 437-450; Denery, Dallas G., *The Devil Wins: A History of Lying from the Garden of Eden to the Enlightenment*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015, pp. 105-130; Feehan, Thomas D., 'Augustine on Lying and Deception,' *Augustinian Studies* 19, 1988, pp. 131-139; Idem, 'The Morality of Lying in St Augustine,' *Augustinian Studies* 21, 1990, pp. 67-181; Idem, 'Augustine's Own Examples of Lying,' *Augustinian Studies* 22, 1991, pp. 165-190; Griffiths, Paul J., *Lying: An Augustinian Theology of Duplicity*, Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2004; Kirwan, Christopher, *Augustine*, London: Routledge, 1989, pp. 196-204; Ray, Roger D., 'Christian Conscience and Pagan Rhetoric: Augustine's Two Treatises on Lying,' *Studia Patristica* 22, 1989, pp. 321-355; Roland-Gosselin, Bernard, *La morale de saint Augustine*, Paris: Riviere, 1925, pp. 127-141; Zagorin, Perez, *Ways of Lying: Dissimulation, Persecution and Conformity in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990, pp. 16-24.

theologians. The text made two major contributions. Primarily, it established the canonical definition of lying, understood as ‘a false statement made with the intention to deceive’ (*enuntiationem falsam cum voluntate fallendi*).⁸² The liar, according to Augustine, was a person who by speech or other action expresses something (*aliud*) contrary to his mind (*in animo*) with the conscious goal of deceiving the listener.⁸³ From this follows an important consideration: the lie depends on the intention with which things are said (*intentio dicentis*) and not on the truth or falsity of those things. The one that says something false thinking that it is true, is wrong, but does not lie. On the contrary, he who speaks the truth thinking it false, lies.⁸⁴

Thus, Augustine created a definition of lying that focused on its moral sense, and not on an epistemological interpretation. Falsity is not determined by the authenticity of the statement, but by the ethical impulse of the speaker. The lie depends on the relation between what one thinks and says, between the mind and the word. It is a moral problem because it only considers the accord between the speaker’s tongue and thoughts, excluding completely the listener from the equation. Augustine thereby inaugurates a new way of conceiving the lie that falls into the system of the Ethics of Goals: the righteousness or wrongness of an act is determined by the intention with which the individual performs it, and not by its consequences.⁸⁵

⁸² *De mendacio*, sect. 4. The same definition in *Contra mendacium* (12, 26) y el *Enchiridion* (6, 18 and 22). The three works in *PL* 40.

⁸³ *De Mendacio*, sect. 3.

⁸⁴ *De Mendacio*, sect. 3: ‘Not every one who says a false thing lies, if he believes or opines that to be true which he says. Now between believing and opining there is this difference, that sometimes he who believes feels that he does not know that which he believes, (although he may know himself to be ignorant of a thing, and yet have no doubt at all concerning it, if he most firmly believes it:) whereas he who opines, thinks he knows that which he does not know. Now whoever utters that which he holds in his mind either as belief or as opinion, even though it be false, he lies not. For this he owes to the faith of his utterance, that he thereby produce that which he holds in his mind, and has in that way in which he produces it. Not that he is without fault, although he lie not, if either he believes what he ought not to believe, or thinks he knows what he knows not, even though it should be true: for he accounts an unknown thing for a known. Wherefore, that man lies, who has one thing in his mind and utters another in words, or by signs of whatever kind. Whence also the heart of him who lies is said to be double; that is, there is a double thought: the one, of that thing which he either knows or thinks to be true and does not produce; the other, of that thing which he produces instead thereof, knowing or thinking it to be false.’ This definition of lying was already present in Classical thought (see, for example, Aulus Gellius’ *Attic Nights*, XI, 11). Interestingly enough, it almost equals the one used by the communication theorists today (see *Conceptual Framework*).

⁸⁵ *Contra mendacium*, sect. 6. The same opinion was shared by Gratian (*Decretum*, part II, causa 22, quest.

It is worth noting that such a definition rests in turn on an eminently theological conception of language. Classical philosophers conceived of language as a human creation in which words and things were connected in an arbitrary and contingent way. By contrast, St. Augustine saw language as a divine creation and defended the existence of a natural link between linguistic signs and the realities that they referred to. According to him, the ability to speak was given to man as a form to worship God and as a method to communicate his thoughts to his fellow men. To use it to deceive not only jeopardised the relationship between men; it was also a serious offense against God and a sin contrary to Christianity, what the psalmists called ‘the law of truth’ (Psalm 22. 142).

This brings us to the second pillar of the Augustinian theory: the lie is an act absolutely and completely evil that belongs to the moral category of sin. When a man lies, he always sins, no matter what the circumstances or the effect of the lie might be. The lie always has a *voluntas fallendi*, something that goes against the truth and against the natural order of language, hence it is always wrong, regardless of the motives leading to it. ‘It is clear, then, (...) that the Holy Scriptures do not say anything except that we should never lie, ever.’⁸⁶ In a dangerous situation, the Christian could prudently ‘conceal the truth’ by remaining quiet.⁸⁷ Silence is sometimes allowed, but lying is never lawful, not even to save a life, since ‘the chastity of the soul is superior to the chastity of the body.’ Better to suffer poverty, marginalization, and even martyrdom in our bodies, taught Augustine, than commit a mortal sin that would condemn our souls to eternity in Hell.⁸⁸

St. Augustine again addressed the moral problem of lying several years later in *Contra mendacium* (c. 420), a treaty inspired by the Iberian heresy of Priscillianism. The

2), Peter Abelard (*Ethica seu liber dictus scito te ipsum*, chap. 3) and St. Thomas, (*Summa theologiae*, II, II, quaest. 12, art. 1). For an overview of this topic see Irène Rosier, ‘Les développements médiévaux de la théorie augustinienne du mensonge,’ *Hermès* 15, 1995, pp. 91-103.

⁸⁶ *De Mendacio*, sect. 21.

⁸⁷ *Contra Mendacium*, sect. 10: ‘It is not, however, the same thing to hide the truth as it is to utter a lie (...) for in general we hide truths not by telling a lie, but by holding our peace (...) It is not then a lie, when by silence a true thing is kept back, but when by speech a false thing is put forward.’

⁸⁸ *Contra Mendacium*, sect. 3.

origins of this movement dated to 370-380, when a noble and well-educated Spaniard called Priscillian became the head of a group of ascetics (*abstinentes*) based in the city of Merida. These men shared a set of unorthodox ideas that soon unleashed controversy. They denied the dogma of the Trinity, recognised several apocryphal gospels as genuine, practiced liturgical observances similar to mysticism, and condemned the opulence and riches of the official Church.

In 385, Priscillian, who had served as Bishop of Avila for five years, was condemned by a tribunal of the Emperor Maximus in Trier, and charged with spreading gnostic and Manichaean doctrines contrary to the faith. He was immediately executed with several of his companions. However, this action had unexpected consequences, and instead of ending the movement, it rather served to intensify it. The number and zeal of its acolytes increased. Dictinus, Bishop of Astorga, assumed the movement's leadership. He honoured the victims of Trier as martyrs and took the Priscillianist followers under his protection. Yet in 400, the Council of Toledo condemned the movement and decreed the excommunication of all its members. But the sect continued to flourish clandestinely using 'lies to conceal their religion.'⁸⁹

To avoid persecution, Priscillianists had no scruples about denying their beliefs and even swearing that they held orthodox views if challenged by outsiders. To legitimise this attitude, Dictinus wrote a treatise entitled *Libra* in which he defended the thesis that lying to conceal religious doctrines is sometimes justifiable, especially when the life or property of believers is at risk. According to Dictinus, the Gospels taught believers to be honest with neighbours (Ephesians 4. 25), so Priscillianists had to be honest and transparent with other members of the sect, but not with mainstream Catholics, who were not their neighbours. To outsiders, they could lie without fear. To justify this view, Dictinus cited several Scriptural examples: Abraham's pretence that his wife Sarah was his sister (Genesis 12. 11-13); David's feigning madness (I Samuel 21. 13); Jacob pretending to be Esau (Genesis 27. 19) and Jesus' deception to his disciples on the road

⁸⁹ *Contra Mendacium*, sect. 9.

to Emmaus (Luke 24. 28). The true faith, Dictinus concluded, the one that God would judge on the Final Judgment, is the one that is kept in the heart, not the one professed with the lips.

In order to overcome this layer of deception and identify the real Priscillianists, some Catholics started to pretend that they were part of the sect. This situation led to a spiral of duplicity and lies that threatened to corrupt the whole Iberian Peninsula. Alarmed by the prospect of chaos, in 419 a young priest called Consentius sent a copy of Dictinus' *Libra* to St. Augustine as well as a detailed account of the activities of the sect, asking him to mediate in the matter. A year later, St. Augustine sent back his reply in the form of a short treaty: *Ad Consentium contra Mendacium*.

In it, Augustine corrects slightly and expands the arguments advanced twenty-five years earlier in *De Mendacio*.⁹⁰ He grants certain importance to the motive of the liar and recognises that it is less serious to lie to help someone than to gain a personal benefit.⁹¹ However, he reminded readers that, even when it pursues the most honourable goal, lying is still sinful, and therefore it should be avoided at all costs. Augustine condemned the techniques used by Priscillianists in the face of persecution stating that believers are obligated to profess their faith publicly at any price. But he also condemned the lie used by the Catholics who tried to uncover Priscillianists, insisting that the heretics 'must be refuted, not imitated.'⁹² It is by truth, he claimed, that we must 'guard against lies, by truth catch them, and by truth wipe them out.'⁹³

In summary: for Augustine the essence of language rested in the bond between intention and utterance. Whenever someone lied, he broke this bond and undermined God's creation, thereby sinning. Lies, like other sins, could be small or great, venial or mortal, depending upon many circumstances, but in the end are all prohibited.⁹⁴ 'He

⁹⁰ A text that, by then, Augustine considered '*obscurus et anfractuosus et omnino molestus*' (*Retractationes*, chap. 1, sect. 27).

⁹¹ *Contra Mendacium*, sect. 7-8.

⁹² *Ibid.*, sect. 2.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, sect. 6.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, sect. 16 and 20. In his *Enarratio in Psalmos* (chap. 5, sect. 7. In *PL* 36), St. Augustine recognises that 'there are two sorts of lies which have in them no great fault.' Namely, when we joke or when we lie to be helpful. 'But yet they are not without fault.' (*Duo sunt genera mendaciorum in quibus non est magna*

who says that there are some just lies must be regarded as saying nothing else than that there are some just sins, and consequently that some things which are unjust are just.⁹⁵ Endorsing the classical virtue of *parrhesia*, Augustine envisioned the ideal Christian as a *homo fenestratus*, whose face ought to be an open book and whose heart ought to be as transparent as glass.

THE CONDEMNATION BECOMES ORTHODOXY

Although it never ceased to receive clarifications and small modifications, Augustine's rigorous doctrinal position became the reigning orthodoxy in the West for many centuries to come.⁹⁶ His insistence on the continuity between mind and mouth created a specific relationship between the individual and truth that would dominate medieval thought. Almost every theologian of the period accepted the idea of the absolute illicitness of lies and made the principle a key element of Christian ecclesiology. We find it in the penitential books and manuals of confessors⁹⁷ (*Summae de Paenitentia* and

culpa, sed tamen non sunt sine culpa). This is all that he says on this matter. Augustine does not delve into these cases and does not foresee any other exception.

⁹⁵ *Contra Mendacio*, sect. 15.

⁹⁶ On the medieval views on lying see: Bondolfi, Alberto, 'Tu ne témoigneras pas faussement contre ton prochain (Ex. 20, 16). Quelques considérations historiques sur le prétendu caractère absolu du huitième (neuvième) commandement,' *Revue d'éthique et de théologie morale* 58, 2005, pp. 29-77; Dewan, Lawrence, 'St Thomas, Lying, and Venial Sin,' *Thomist* 61, 1997, pp. 279-299; Casagrande, Carla, & Silvana Vecchio, *I peccati della lingua: disciplina ed etica della parola nella cultura medievale*, Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1987, esp. pp. 251-290; Courtois, Gérard, 'Mensonge et parjure selon saint Thomas d'Aquin,' *Mensonge et image, Rue Descartes* 8/9, 1993, pp. 85-98; Dorszynski, Julius A., *Catholic Teaching about the Morality of Falsehood*, Washington: Catholic University Press, 1948; Landgraf, Arthur, 'Definition und Sündhaftigkeit der Lüge nach der Lehre der Frühscholastik,' *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* 63, 1939, pp. 50-85 and 157-180; Fumagalli, Beonio Brocchieri, *Le Bugie di Isotta. Immagini della mente medievale*, Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1987; Rosier, Irène, 'Les développements médiévaux de la théorie augustinienne du mensonge,' *Hermès* 15, 1995, pp. 91-103; Stone, Martin W., 'In the Shadow of Augustine: The Scholastic Debate on Lying from Robert Grosseteste to Gabriel Biel,' in *Herbst des Mittelalters? Fragen zur Bewertung des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts*, ed. by Jan Aertsen & Martin Pickavé, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004, pp. 277-317; Vecchio, Silvana, 'Mensonge, simulation, dissimulation. Primauté de l'intention et ambiguïté du langage dans la théologie morale du bas Moyen Âge,' in *Vestigia, Images, Verba: Semiotics and Logic in Medieval Theological Texts (XIIth-XIVth century)*, ed. by Constantine Marmo, Turnhout: Brepols, 1997, pp. 117-132; Vincent-Cassy, Mireille, 'Recherches sur le mensonge au Moyen Âge,' in *Études sur la sensibilité au Moyen Âge. 102e Congrès National des Sociétés Savantes*, Paris, 1979, vol. II, pp. 165-173.

⁹⁷ For some examples see: Bartholomew of Exeter, *Liber Poenitentialis*, ed. by Dom Adrian Morey,

Summae Confessorum), in the monastic rules, and in the main scholastic “summa”, such as those by Peter Lombard, Alexander of Hales, Albert the Great, Bonaventure, and Thomas Aquinas.⁹⁸ Similarly, it appears in the principal collections of canon law, such as Burchard of Worms’, Ivo of Chartres’, and Gratian’s.⁹⁹

Medieval thinkers endorsed Augustine’s definition of a lie as ‘speech contrary to the mind’ and condemned it as something intrinsically and absolutely evil, regardless to the possibility that lying might save the life of another person, or of all Christianity.¹⁰⁰ These thinkers used two arguments. The first claim was mainly theological: lying was forbidden because it was a sin contrary to the sanctity of God and the salvation of the soul. This was stated in more than 150 passages of the Holy Scriptures that condemn the lie without making any distinctions or restrictions.¹⁰¹ God is Truthful. Man is supposed

Bartholomew of Exeter, *Bishop and Canonist: A Study in the Twelfth Century*, Cambridge: University Press, 1973, pp. 163-300, esp. pp. 241-250; Thomas of Chobham, *Summa confessorum*, ed. by F. Broomfield, *Analecta mediaevalia Namurcensia* 25, Paris: Beatrice-Nauwelaerts, 1968, pp. 539-558; Raymond of Pennafort, *Summa de paenitentia*, I, tit. 10, sect. 1; Martín Pérez, *Libro de las confesiones*, [c. 1317], chap. I, sect. 163, ed. by Antonio García García et al., *El Libro de las confesiones. Una radiografía de la sociedad medieval española*, Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 2002; Antoninus of Florence, *Confessionale: Defecerunt scrutantes scrutinio*, chap. 49; Guilielmus Peraldus, *Summae virtutum ac vitiorum*, Lyon: Antonium Vincentium, 1551, vol. 2, tract. 9, part. 2, chap. 5.

⁹⁸ Peter Lombard, *Sententiarum*, III, dist. 38l and 39; Alexander of Hales, *Summa universis theologiae* (*Summa fratris Alexandri*), bk. II, inq. 3, tract. 2, sect. 1, quaest. 2, tit. 8, col. 4. Ed. by Bernardini Klumper, Rome: Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1924-1948; Albertus Magnus, *Summa Theologiae*, chap. 33, 412, ed. by D. Siedler, *Opera Omnia*, Cologne: Albertus Magnus Institut, 1978, vol. 34; Bonaventure, *Commentarium in Ium Sententiarum*, dist. 38, art. unicus, quaest. 2; Anselm of Canterbury, *Cur Deus homo*, bk. I, chap. 12, ed. by Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Warren Richardson, *Complete philosophical and theological treatises of Anselm of Canterbury*, Minneapolis: Banning Press, 2000, pp. 319-321; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, II, II, quaest. 110, art. 3.

⁹⁹ Burchard of Worms, *Decretum*, XII, 16, in *PL* 140, 875-884; Ivo of Chartres, *Decretum*, XII, in *PL* 161, 779-802; Gratian, *Decretum*, part II, causa 22, quest. 2. On the last one see Marcel David, ‘Parjure et mensonge dans le Decret de Gratien,’ *Studia Gratiana* 3, 1955, pp. 117-141.

¹⁰⁰ According to Gregory the Great: ‘All lie is iniquity, all iniquity a lie (...) every lie must be exceedingly guarded against, although sometimes there is a certain type of lie that is of lighter fault, if one lies to render help (...) But the perfect men flee even this kind of lie, so that not even the life of someone is saved through their deceit, lest their souls be harmed, while they try to save the life of another’s body’ (*Moralia in Job*, XVIII, sect. 3). In Peter Lombard’s view, ‘Whoever thinks that there is a genus of lies which is not sinful, deceives himself shamefully since he thinks it is morally good to be a deceiver of others.’ (*Sententiarum*, III, sect. 323). Same idea in St. Thomas, *Summa theologiae*, II, II, quaest. 110, art. 3). In the late 12th century, Pope Alexander III (d. 1181) sent a letter to the Archbishop of Palermo to recall him that ‘the Sacred Scripture prohibits one to lie even in order to save the life or another.’ (*Decretales D. gregorii Papae IX*, 5, tit. 19, *De usuris*, 4.

¹⁰¹ ‘Thou shalt fly lying’ (Exodus 23. 7); ‘You shall not lie, neither shall any man deceive his neighbor’ (Leviticus 19. 11) ‘Thou wilt destroy all that speak a lie. The bloody and deceitful man the Lord will abhor’ (Psalm 5. 7); ‘He that speaketh lies, shall perish’ (Proverbs 19. 9); ‘Be not willing to make any manner of lie’ (Ecclesiastes 8. 14); ‘Lie not one to another’ (Colossians 3. 9). Other Scriptural texts that

to imitate the perfections of God; therefore, holiness in man demands total honesty. Lying was considered something intrinsically wrong, because it violated our own nature and our duties to God. During the Middle Ages, orthodoxy was associated with the truth, while heterodoxy was associated with the lie and its creator, the Devil.¹⁰²

The second argument was a sociological one: lying was absolutely and intrinsically evil because it brought error into the mind of the listener and harmed society by destroying language, considered the main instrument of communication among men.¹⁰³ Humans are social creatures that must live together and communicate with each other to achieve happiness. For that purpose, God gave humanity language. A language made up of words (linguistic signs) connected by a natural link to their meanings. Commerce, justice, politics, friendship: all these things, in order to be carried on successfully, demand that men be able to put faith in such link. But the devil, always eager to sabotage the Divine Creation, inserted the lie under the form of the serpent in Paradise.¹⁰⁴ If it were to be generalised, mutual trust and confidence among neighbours would disappear, making life in community impossible. In the words of Aquinas:

Since man is a social animal, one man naturally owes to another whatever is necessary for the preservation of human society. Not it would be impossible for men to live together, unless they believed one another, as declaring the truth one to another. Hence the virtue of truth does, in a manner, regard

condemn lie are: Isaiah 5. 20; *Zach.* 8, 16; Proverbs 6. 16; 12. 22; 13. 5; 19. 9; Ecclesiastes 4. 31; Wisdom 1. 11; Job 27. 4; Psalm 14. 3; 30. 19 and 33. 14.

¹⁰² *Vid.* Emilio Mitre Fernández, 'Mentira frente a verdad en las disputas medievales entre católicos y heréticos,' *Ilu. Revista de ciencias de las religiones* 16, 2011, pp. 173-202.

¹⁰³ See, for example: Rodolfo Ardente, *Speculum universale*, XIII, fols. 162-165; Albertus Magnus, *Summa Theologiae*, tract. 33, 412; John of La Rochelle, *Summa de vitiis*, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Ms. lat. 16417, fols. 105v-110r; William of Auxerre, *Summa aurea*, bk. III, ed. by Jean Ribailier, Paris: CNRS, 1985-1986, vol. 2, pp. 867-873; Prevostin of Cremona, *Summa theologiae*, ed. by Daniel Edward, *Praepositini Canellarii de Sacramentis et de Novissimis [Summa Thologicae Pars Quarta]*, Rome: Editiones Urbanianae, 1964, p. 42; Anselm of Canterbury, *De veritate*, chap. 2, in *PL* 158; Bonaventura, *Commentarii in quattuor Libras Sententiarum Petri Lombardi*, sent. 3, quaest. 1, in *Opera Omnia*, Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1882-1885, vol. 1; Gregory the Great, *Moralia*, XVIII, sect. 3, in *PL* 75-76; Isidore of Seville, *Synonyma*, II, 53; John Damascene, *Paralella rupefucaldina*, 61, in *PG* 96; Hugh of St. Victor, *Summa sententiarum*, II, tract. 4, chap. 5, in *PL* 176; Peter Lombard, *Libri quatuor sententiarum*, III, 323, in *PL* 192.

¹⁰⁴ 'Whe he [the devil] tells a lie he speaks from his very nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies' (John 8. 44). In Dante's *Comedy* we read: 'At one time in Bologna I heard tell of the Devil's many vices, and I heard he is a liar and the father of all lies' (*Inferno*, XXIII, 142-144).

something as being due.¹⁰⁵

Truthfulness was, for these intellectuals, one of the foundations of social living. This is clearly stated by the Bible itself when it commands believers to ‘put away lying, and speak the truth every man with his neighbour: for we are members of one another’ (Ephesians 4, 25). Men are bound by a right to mutual truthfulness. Every man has a right not be deceived. In return, he is forced to not lie. Every action that lessens or destroys this trust violates the natural law. That is why every wish to deceive another was, always and intrinsically, an evil act.¹⁰⁶

On these premises, medieval moralists condemned lies, but also what sources often call the ‘sins of the tongue’: perjury, flattery, false testimony and also simulation and dissimulation. With regard to the latter, the authors of the period recognised from the very beginning the differences between simulating and dissimulating,¹⁰⁷ but determined that both actions were kinds of ‘lies told by the signs of outward deeds’ and, as such, ‘a sin’ that should be condemned.¹⁰⁸ In fact, both actions were linked to hypocrisy, conceived by St. Thomas as ‘a kind of di/simulation,’¹⁰⁹ usually associated with religious

¹⁰⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, II, II, quaest. 109, art. 3: ‘Ad primum ergo dicendum quod quia homo est animal sociale, naturaliter unus homo debet alteri id sine quo societas humana conservari non posset. Non autem possent homines ad invicem convivere nisi sibi invicem crederent, tanquam sibi invicem veritatem manifestantibus. Et ideo virtus veritatis aliquo modo attendit rationem debiti.’

¹⁰⁶ It is true that not all the theologian of the period agreed with this interpretation. For instance, Johannes Duns Scotus argued that the sinfulness of lies could not rest in the alleged misuse of language, but in the liar's intention to deceive (Duns Scotus, *Questiones in librum tertium Sententiarum*, dist. 38, quaest. 1, art. 1. I use the ed. by Luke Wadding, *Opera Omnia*, Louvain, 1639. Reprinted in Paris: Vivès, 1894).

¹⁰⁷ Such difference is already reflected in Isidore of Seville's *De differentiis verborum* de San Isidoro de Seville, written by the late 6th century. A person who ‘*simula*’ ‘pretends to do things that he does not. Someone who *disimula* wants to conceal the things that he does.’ (Isidore of Seville, *De differentiis verborum*, in *PL* 83, 62a, sect. 515. See also 64c, sect. 541).

¹⁰⁸ According to Aquinas ‘Dissimulation is properly a lie told by the signs of outward deeds. Now it matters not whether one lie in word or in any other way (...) Wherefore, since every lie is a sin (...) it follows that also all dissimulation is a sin.’ (*Summa Theologiae*, II, II, quaest. 111, art. 1).

¹⁰⁹ ‘Hypocrisy is a kind of dissimulation, whereby a man simulates a character which is not his, (...) it is directly opposed to truth whereby a man shows himself in life and speech to be what he is.’ (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II, II, quaest. 111, art. 4). This association dates back from Antiquity and it was well known by the early medieval authors. In his *Etymologiae* (c. 630) Isidore of Seville explains: ‘*Hypocrite* is a Greek word corresponding to the Latin *simulator*, for whereas he is evil within (...) he shows himself outwardly as being good; hypo denoting falsehood, and krisis, judgment.’ (X, letter H). For more on this matter see Frederic Amory, ‘Whited Sepulchres: The Semantic History of Hypocrisy to the High Middle Ages,’ *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale* 53, 1956, pp. 5-17.

pretending.¹¹⁰ For medieval men, hypocrisy was one of the most repulsive sins anyone could commit since it was closely linked to the sin of vanity. Hypocrites used di/simulation to snatch from the virtuous their deserved reward: honour and fame, two key elements in medieval society upon which social and economic success depended. As Antonio Garcia de Villalpando explained in 1487:

[The hypocrite] is a simulator. He is not just, but he wants to seem so and obtain glory from it. And that is why he is called avaricious, despite being evil and doing evil he wants to be honoured, to snatch the glory and holiness of others. (...) His technique consists in hiding what he truly is and pretending what he is not in front of the eyes of men.¹¹¹

We can find several works devoted to this topic in the Late Middle Ages: from the *Flores de los Morales de Job* by Pero López de Ayala to the libellous *Contra Hipócritas* (1417) by the humanist Leonardo Bruni, which had a number of manuscript translations in Castilian.¹¹² The hypocrite, claimed Alfonso Martínez de Toledo, uses lies and di/simulations ‘to be noticed and praised’ as holy by his neighbours and, at the same time, to achieve salvation.¹¹³ The *Castigos y documentos del rey don Sancho* explain some of the liar’s tricks: the hypocrite donates a ridiculous amount of money ‘and calls the poor with loud voices so everyone can hear him and say that he is very generous.’ And ‘when going to church, he kneels in front of everyone and raises his hands, and kisses

¹¹⁰ See some examples in: Augustine, *De sermone Domini in monte*, II, chap. 2. In PL 34; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II, II. quaest. 111, art. 2; Antoninus of Florence, *Defecerunt*, LVIII; and Martín Pérez, *Libro de las confesiones*, part I, no. 139. On the association dis/simulation - hypocrisy see Francois Amory, ‘Whited Sepulchres: The Semantic History of Hypocrisy to the High Middle Ages,’ *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale* 53, 1956, pp. 5-17.

¹¹¹ ‘Es simulador, el cual no es justo, mas deséalo parecer y gloriarse de ello, y por eso se llama avariento porque, siendo malo y haciendo mal, desea ser honrado de santidad y arrebatar el loor de la vida ajena. Y así, como el estudio de estos tales es esconder mucho lo que son y aquello que no tienen trabajan por publicarlo a los ojos de los hombres, porque sean estimados y gloriados en más de su merecimiento, así que huyen de ser vistos quien son y ante las presencias de todos se viste de una grande honestidad e inocencia.’ Antonio García de Villalpando, *Razonamiento de las Reales Armas de los Católicos Reyes don Fernando y doña Isabel*, Fundación Lázaro Galdiano, Ms. 15.539. fol. 204v-205. *Apud* Carrasco Manchado, ‘Simular y disimular,’ p. 338.

¹¹² *Vid.* Campo, Victoria, ‘La traducción castellana del *Contra Hipócritas* de Leonardo Bruni,’ *Revista de literatura medieval* 10, 1998, pp. 9-48, and Weiss, Julian, ‘Vernacular Commentaries and Glosses in Late Medieval Castile, II: A Checklist of Classical Texts in Translation,’ in *Medieval Hispanic Studies in Memory of Alan Deyermond*, ed. by Julien Weiss, Louise Haywood & Andrew Beresford, London: Tamesis, pp. 237-271.

¹¹³ ‘...ser notado y tenido en reputación.’ Alfonso Martínez de Toledo, *Arcipreste de Talayera o Corbacho*, [1438], ed. Joaquín González Muela, Madrid: Castalia, 1984, p. 236.

the holy altar, so people believe he is a great believer.¹¹⁴ The liar, added Uberte Valaguer, ‘shows a virtue that he does not possess looking for applause; he demands glories that he does not deserve; (...) in appearance he seems a saint, but in secrecy he is pure malice.’¹¹⁵ His sin is therefore double, since he pretends to deceive not only men but also God.

From theology, the moral prohibition of lying spread to the other spheres of medieval culture. As we will see, it permeated political thought, chivalric codes and the models of civil behaviour. It was also included in the *iuris civilis*, which was at the time severely influenced by canon law. Contracts and oaths of this period often included clauses in which the signatories committed themselves to act ‘without art or deception or simulation.’¹¹⁶ Furthermore, falsehood (*falssedat*) was featured in the main legal compilations as a sin and a crime against God and against men.¹¹⁷ The prohibition also extended to literature, in which liars and hypocrites were systematically demonised. In Dante’s *Inferno*, liars and deceivers are confined to the final two circles, and receive the worst punishments. ‘Since fraud belongs exclusively to man,’ Virgil explains, ‘God hates it more and, therefore, far below, the fraudulent are placed and suffer most.’¹¹⁸ In the epic poems and chivalric novels the same condemnation can be found. Against Roland, a symbol of honesty and loyalty, there is always a Ganelon, the archetype of falsehood and treachery. Through these and other channels, the moral condemnation against lying and other forms of deception gripped medieval culture.

¹¹⁴ ‘...saca de entre diez maravedís una meaja y da grandes voces al pobre porque lo oyan todos, y digan que es gran limosnero.’ ‘Y cuando va a la iglesia, delante de toda la gente hinca las rodillas en tierra y alza las manos arriba, y roe los santos del altar, porque digan las gentes que es grande oracionero.’ Anonymous, *Castigos y documentos del rey don Sancho IV*, ed. by Antonio Rivera García, Murcia: Biblioteca Saavedra Fajardo, 2008, fol. 22.

¹¹⁵ ‘El hipócrita (...) muestra la virtud que no tiene; busca los aplausos, que no merece; solicita las glorias de que es indigno; se atormenta por parecer bueno; (...) en lo exterior es santidad y en lo secreto suma malicia.’ Anastasio Marcelino Uberte Valaguer, *Prevenciones de discretos del no ser para el ser político*, Naples: Jacinto Passaro, 1678, p. 43.

¹¹⁶ ‘Sin arte ni engaño ni simulación.’ *Compromiso de amistad* signed in 1473, in Emilio Lafuente (ed.), *Documentos relativos al desafío de D. Alonso de Aguilar y D. Diego Fernández*, Madrid: Sociedad de Bibliófilos Españoles, 1868, p. 139.

¹¹⁷ *Setenario*, law XCVIII; *Ordenamiento de Alcalá*, law V; *Fuero Juzgo*, II, tit. 4, art. 6; *Fuero Real*, laws CXV, CXXVIII and CXXXVI; *Siete Partidas*, law I, tit. 16 and law III, tit. 5.

¹¹⁸ ‘Ma perché frode è de l'uom proprio male, / più spiace a Dio; e però stan di sotto / li frodolenti, e più dolor li assale.’ Dante, *Inferno*, canto 11, ln. 25-27.

Of course, I do not mean to claim that men and women of the time did not know about or practice lying. My point is that their culture severely condemned it, creating a huge contradiction between social realities and the theoretical behaviour patterns dictated by Catholicism. As we shall see, this contradiction became especially acute from the thirteenth century on, as a result of the dual process of confessionalisation and social discipline that, from that moment on, started to reshape the West. This would force medieval thinkers to find new lawful ways to deceive without conflicting with the Augustinian condemnation of lying. By doing so, they would create some of the theoretical basis on which early modern authors would legitimise deception.

LAWFUL SECRETS

By early twelfth century, the leaders of the Christian Church realised that their parishioners knew very little about Catholic doctrine and understood that such ignorance was leading to the proliferation of heretical movements (Cathars, Joachimites, Waldensians, and so on) that put in serious danger the socio-political establishment. To solve this problem, successive Popes summoned four ecumenical councils in just one hundred years (1122-1215), all held in the Basilica of St. John Lateran, in Rome. The last of these councils, Lateran IV, was the most important. It was attended by over four hundred bishops, eight hundred representatives of various religious orders and the ambassadors of all the kingdoms and cities in the West. As Pope Innocent III stated in his letter of invitation, the meeting had two goals. First, 'to eradicate vices and institute virtues, to correct faults and to reform customs.' And second, 'to remove heresies and to strengthen the faith.' Seventy-one decrees were approved. Here we should focus our attention on the XXI, '*Omnis utriusque sexus*', which made annual auricular confession mandatory.

The first Christians knew two ways to wash their sins away: baptism, through which original sin and the faults committed during their pagan existence were removed; and

postbaptismal penance, which served to cleanse daily faults through prayer and ritual practices. This form of penance, called ‘canonical’ or ‘ecclesiastical,’ was performed aloud, by public declaration in front of the whole community.¹¹⁹ From the sixth century, this canonical penance began to coexist with an alternative method known as ‘tariff penance.’ The new method was based on the self-examination of conscience practiced in monasteries and it had an individual and pseudo-private character. Each sinner had a spiritual director, usually a monk, who listened to faults in secrecy. Once the sinner confessed and expiated his guilt by penance (prayers, fasts or the payment of money), the monk granted him absolution. This system had important advantages over public confessions since it made it easier for the penitent to reveal his sins. Therefore, it quickly gained followers and spread from Ireland to several areas on the Continent.

In 459, Pope Leo the Great wrote to the bishops of Campania, Samnium and Picenum to communicate to them his intention to abolish the ‘objectionable practice’ of canonical confession arguing that, due to its public nature, ‘many are kept away from the remedies of penance, either out of shame or fear that their enemies may come to know of facts which could bring harm to them through legal procedures.’¹²⁰ In 874, the council of Douzy endorsed this idea and decreed the mandatory use of private confession for secret sins. However, canonical penance remained widely practiced and required for certain public sins, such as murder and sacrilege.

The final transformation of penitential practice took place centuries later, during the High Middle Ages.¹²¹ In that period, a new religious sensitivity appeared that

¹¹⁹ The *Didache*, one of the earliest Church texts (first century AD), already mentions this practice. It invites the believers to assemble in common to ‘break bread and give thanks; but first confess your sins so that your sacrifice may be pure.’ (*The Didache*, trans. by James A. Kleist, in *Ancient Christian Writers*, vol. 6, New York: Newman Press, 1948, 14, 1).

¹²⁰ *Letter of Pope Leo I to the Bishops of Campania, Samnium and Picenum*, Ep. 168, 2.

¹²¹ The literature on this topic is very extensive. I found particularly useful the following titles: Biller, Peter, & A. J. Minnis (eds.), *Handling Sin: Confession in the Middle Ages*, Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 1998; Brambilla, Elena, *Alle origini del Sant'Uffizio. Penitenza, confessione e giustizia spirituale dal medioevo al xvi secolo*, Bologna: Il Mulino, 2000; Delumeau, Jean, *L'aveu et le pardon, Les difficultés de la confession, xiiiè-xviiiè siècle*, Paris: Fayard, 1990; Fernández Rodríguez, Pedro, *El sacramento de la penitencia: teología del pecado y del perdón*, Salamanca: San Esteban, 2013; Firey, Abigail (ed.), *A New History of Penance*, Leiden: Brill, 2008; Lea, Henry Charles, *A History of auricular confession and indulgences in the Latin Church*, Philadelphia: Lea brothers and Co., 1896; Voger, Cyrille, *Le pécheur et la pénitence au Moyen âge*, Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1982.

emphasised the importance of intention of the sinner and the notion of repentance. It was forged in the monastic world of the ninth century and reached a high degree of sophistication in the twelfth century, through the writings of theologians such as Abelard, Anselm of Canterbury, and Hugh of Saint Victor. For these thinkers, ‘salvation was not acquired simply by passive, sheeplike participation in religious rites, but “earned” by an effort of self-transformation.’¹²² Thus, the public and tariff penances were abandoned, and a new system of private penance was established. This system focused on the internal life of the sinner. To achieve forgiveness, one had to, in the first place, carry out a thorough examination of conscience and achieve a sincere ‘contrition’ –that is, repentance and a firm purpose of amendment. As George Duby observed, this penitential method ‘was an invitation to introspection, to the exploration of one’s consciousness,’ and eventually it contributed to the development of the notion of individualism in Western culture.¹²³

However, internal contrition was not enough. It was also necessary to suffer the humiliation and embarrassment of whispering one’s sins in the ears (*ad auriculam*) of a clergyman. Thus, the practice of the so-called auricular confession began, which would become canonical until today. Its practice was already recommended by the ninth century in certain French dioceses and Gratian tells us that it was predominant by the twelfth century.¹²⁴ Finally, it was made mandatory for all Christians at least once a year by the Fourth Lateran Council. Why did the Lateran prelates adopt this measure? The answer probably lies in its immense utility as pastoral tool. Auricular confession was a very useful instrument to collect and disseminate ideas. On the one hand, it allowed the confessor to measure *in situ* the degree of indoctrination of the faithful and to catalogue the most common errors and faults. On the other hand, it gave church figures the chance to indoctrinate in the course of interrogation and to exert a direct influence on

¹²² Georges Duby, ‘Solitude: Eleventh to Thirteenth Century,’ in *History of Private Life*, volume II: *Revelations of the Medieval World*, ed. by Phillippe Ariès & George Duby, Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1988, pp. 509-533.

¹²³ Duby, *Ibid.*, p. 513.

¹²⁴ Gratian, *De poenitentia*, dist. 1, chap. 90, in *Corpus Iuris Canonici editio Lipsiensis secunda post Aemilii Ludouci Richteri curas, Pars Prior: Decretum Magistri Gratiani*, ed. by Emil Friedberg, Graz: Akademische Druck, 1955, vol. 1, 1189.

the sinner's behaviour. With such characteristics, auricular confession became the favourite penitential regime of the Catholic Church and a key tool to ushering forward the confessionalization of the West.

The adoption of this practice was not, however, quick nor simple.¹²⁵ We must not lose sight that auricular confession presented a remarkable psychological difficulty for the sinner, who had to confess humiliating faults and embarrassing feelings to a priest who, most of the time, was an active member of his community. As St. Francis Xavier explained in 1549, there was a danger that 'the bitterness and shame of sins would take over the penitent's heart and tie his tongue,' scuppering the validity of the sacrament.¹²⁶ To guarantee its right execution, information needed to flow freely between penitent and confessor. To enhance this relationship, the Church relied on two psychological mechanisms: the first was the sense of guilt or, what is the same, the fear of Hell and the longing for salvation, which would be reinforced by the doctrine of Purgatory. The second bolstering tool was the promise of confidentiality. Ecclesiastical authorities realised that there was a direct relationship between the circumstances that facilitated discretion and the frequency with which the faithful used the sacrament.¹²⁷ For the believer to speak frankly, it was necessary that he had the feeling of being in a moment of intimacy with God (and, at the same time, with himself) and he had the absolute certainty that his sins would never reach his relatives and neighbours.¹²⁸

It was assumed that God was willing to forgive and forget (in that order) sins. But, since human beings cannot forget at will, the required confidentiality could only be assured by imposing strict secrecy. For this reason, the Fourth Lateran Council, in the same canon that prescribed annual confession, created the Sacramental Seal, one of the

¹²⁵ Its diffusion experienced several advances and setbacks, with important geographical differences. In fact, public and collective penance continued to be widely practiced in the 14th and 15th centuries. (Vid. John Bossy, 'The Social History of Confession,' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 25, 1975, pp. 21-38).

¹²⁶ '... la amargura y la vergüenza de los pecados se adueñase de tal modo del corazón del penitente que llegase a atarle la lengua.' Letter from Francisco Javier to Gaspard Barzé (1549) in *Saint François Xavier, Correspondance 1535-1552, Lettres et Documents*, ed. by Hugues Didier, Paris: Desclée Brower, 1987, pp. 233-234.

¹²⁷ Vid. Blanco, *Historia del confesionario*, chap. 2.

¹²⁸ 'Because it is secret men confess more truly their faults' (Antonino of Florence, *Confessionale: Defecerunt scrutantes scrutinio*, Burgos: Fadrique de Basilea, 1492, XXVI).

most original and fascinating canonical institutions of medieval theology.¹²⁹ Under it, priests were subjected to the compulsory and absolute obligation not to reveal to anyone ‘by word or sign or by any manner’ what they have learned during confession. The priest who did so would commit a mortal sin. He would ‘not only be deposed from his priestly office, but also be confined to a strict monastery to do perpetual penance.’¹³⁰ The Sacramental Seal was inviolable; therefore it was absolutely forbidden for a confessor to betray in any way a penitent for any reason, even under the threat of their own death or that of others. This non-disclosure obligation not only affected the sins revealed, but the entire content of the communication made to them by the penitents. Moreover, it was an inviolability *ad eternum*, since the death of the penitent would not free the confessor of the obligation of secrecy.

The establishment of the sacramental seal would have a major impact on the development of deception in the West. It is true that the duty to keep secrets already existed before Lateran IV, but it was after the Council when secrecy became canon and an integral part of orthodoxy.¹³¹ The acceptance of the privacy principle did not generate any dispute on the doctrinal level.¹³² But its practical application revealed (and

¹²⁹ The obligation of secrecy already appears in Leo the Great’s letter (*Magna indignatione*, in *PL* 54, 1209c.) and in the records of some regional or provincial synods, such as the Douzy Council (874). In Gratian’s *Decretum* (c. 1151) it was stated: ‘Let the priest who dares to make known the sins of his penitent be deposed’ (part I, dist. 6) and he goes on to say that the violator of this law should be made a life-long, ignominious wanderer.

¹³⁰ Chapter XXI: *De confessione facienda et non revelanda a sacerdote et saltem in pascha communicando*. See Norman P. Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990, vol. I, 245.

¹³¹ In Karma Lochrie’s view, ‘confession became the secret of medieval culture’ (*Covert Operations: The Medieval Uses of Secrecy*, Philadelphia: University Press of Pennsylvania, 1999, p. 31). The same could be stated for the Early Modern Period. According to the clergyman Juan Enriquez, ‘secret of confession is the strongest of the all secrets that can be’ (*Questiones practicas de casos morales*, Valencia: Herederos de Chrysostomo Garriz, 1647, fol. 200r. The whole sect. 53 is devoted to this issue).

¹³² The Sacramental Seal established in Lateran IV was ratified by the different synods and councils that followed. (*Vid.* James Lindsay, ‘Privileged Communications, part I,’ *Northern Ireland Legal Quarterly* 13, 1958-1960, p. 160) It was also endorsed by the main scholastic authorities. On this issue see: Honoré, Léon, *Le Secret de la confession, étude historico-canonique*, Paris: Giraudon, 1924; Kurtscheid, Bertrand, *A History of the Seal of Confession*, St. Louis: Herder, 1927; Lavenia, Vincenzo, ‘Assolvere o infamare. Eresia occulta, correzione fraterna e segreto sacramentale,’ *Storica* 20-21, 2001, pp. 89-154; Nolan, Richard, ‘The Law of the Seal of Confession,’ *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912, vol. 13, p. 649; Roos, John R., *The Seal of Confession*, Washington: Catholic University Press, 1960; Thompson, Keith, *Religious Confession Privilege and the Common Law*, Brill: Leiden, 2011, pp. 59-88.

aggravated) the deep contradiction that the rigid Augustinian doctrine had placed the Western Christian culture. A culture that, as we have seen, on the one hand defended the need for secrecy and, on the other, appealed for full transparency.

This problem arose: What would happen if a confessor was called upon by a secular tribunal to testify about what he had heard in confession? St. Thomas, following St. Augustine, dictated that he should remain quiet. According to him, when the judge requires an accused person to respond to a charge against him, he is bound to reply if it is done in accord with law, even though the response will convict him. However, if the question was asked in an unlawful way, then the witness was not required to answer at all and could remain quiet. Such behaviour would not amount to a sin, since ‘it is one thing to conceal the truth, and another to make false statements.’¹³³

Although this license proved very useful, it was just a partial solution, since silence was not always an option. Sometimes remaining quiet ‘caused suspicion’ or became unacceptable to the one who asked questions.¹³⁴ What was one to do when a judge forced him to respond to questions? What if the King or the Pope himself asked a confessor to reveal a sacramental secret and did not accept silence for an answer? In that case, the confessor would find himself trapped between two moral impediments: the prohibition against lying and the prohibition against breaking the seal of the confessional. It is precisely in that point where the monolithic condemnation imposed by St. Augustine began to crack. Absolute honesty was untenable in this case. The obligation not to lie came into conflict with other ecclesiastical and juridical norms such as the secrecy of confession and the obligation to protect the lives of the innocents. What should be done then? How to square this teaching with the obligation of keeping secrets?

¹³³ ‘*Aliud est veritatem tacere, aliud est falsitatem proponere.*’ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologica*, II, II, quaest. 69, art. 2. The same idea in quaest. 110, art. 3: ‘It is not lawful to tell a lie in order to deliver another from any danger whatever. Nevertheless it is lawful to hide the truth, by keeping it back, as Augustine says (*Contra Mend.* x).’ On this matter see Ansgar Kelly, ‘The Right to Remain Silent: Before and After Joan of Arc,’ *Speculum* 68, no. 4, 1993, pp. 992-1026.

¹³⁴ ‘*Callar causa sospecha.*’ Benito Remigio Noydens, *Practica de crras y confesores y doctrina para penitentes*, Barcelona: Antonio Ferrer, 1681, p. 359.

THE CASUIST PROPOSAL: DECEPTIVE WORDS AND SILENCES

The answer came from a new theological movement: casuistry. As its name suggests, casuistry is a branch of moral theology that attempts to adjust the observance of rigid and abstract general rules formulated by speculative theology to the reality of everyday life. This is done through the detailed study of cases (*casus*) –specific situations whether real or hypothetical. This discipline dips its roots in the classical probabilism cultivated by thinkers such as Carneades of Cyrene, who argued that human behaviour should be regulated by the “probable” and not the absolute.¹³⁵ Such probabilism exerted an important influence over rhetoric, philosophy, and Roman law, which paid great attention to the particular circumstances of each case, convinced that ‘*in causa ius esse positum*.’¹³⁶ During the Middle Ages, casuistry entered the *ius canonicum* through the *ius commune* and played a significant role in the development of Christian theology, especially from the thirteenth century on. The casuistic method was adopted by William of Ockham and the Franciscans of the University of Paris and from there it spread to other universities such as Bologna and Salamanca. This analytical method proved particularly useful for confessors, now obliged to adapt their sermons not to the anonymous mass of the parish, but to each of its members. Thus, following the Fourth Lateran Council, there appeared in Europe a number of treatises ‘of cases of conscience’ that attempted to determine the seriousness of each sin and the nature of their penitence according to their specific circumstances.

One of the first was the *Summa de paenitentia* written in Barcelona between 1222 and 1236 by the Catalan Dominican friar St. Raymond of Penafort (d. 1275).¹³⁷ Penafort was one of the most important jurists and theologians of his time. After graduating in both civil and canon law at the University of Bologna, he started to work for the papal legate Jean d'Abbeville, who was in charge of implementing the reforms promoted by

¹³⁵ ‘*Nos sequimur probabilia.*’ *Apud*. Cicero, *Tusculanae Disputationes*, II, a, 353.

¹³⁶ Alfenus Varus, *Digestum*, IX, 2, 52, 2.

¹³⁷ Also known as *Summa de confessoribus*. Written in 1222-1225, but redone in 1234-1236 to be adapted to *The Decretals* of Gregory IX. I use the printed editio princeps of Rome, 1603.

Lateran IV in the Iberian kingdoms. This experience helped Penafort to understand the problems posed by confession and to see the need to harmonise the doctrinal commandments with their practical applications. To do that, he wrote his *Summa de paenitentia*, a manual designed to assist priests in the care of souls, putting in their hands specific solutions for specific cases, without addressing the great moral issues. This work, the first of its kind, had a huge success and exerted a powerful influence on the moralists of the following centuries.

In one of his chapters, Penafort addressed the subject of the unlawfulness of lying through the dilemma of the man harbouring a fugitive from a murderer. He recognises that both St. Augustine and St. Isidore would certainly not allow this man to lie. But he also reminds his readers about the views of ‘others doctors’ who ‘say that in such a case one must lie.’¹³⁸ He then presents his own opinion, namely, that the man ‘should maintain silence.’ But:

If he thinks that silence could be dangerous, because the murderer could imply that the fugitive is at home, then he can either try to divert the enemy's attention to some other matter or respond with an ambiguous expression such as ‘*non est hic*,’ meaning, ‘he does not eat here’, or something similar.¹³⁹

Thus, Penafort introduces an important novelty: there are certain amphibological words and expressions that allow us to deceive the listener without making a speech contrary to the mind. As long as there are noble motives for doing so, a man may use equivocal terms to avoid telling a harmful truth, and that should not be considered a lie. For example, he could say that someone ‘*non est hic*,’ an expression with two possible meanings because the Latin verb *est* can be either the third person of *edo* (to eat) or the third person of *esse* (to be).

¹³⁸ ‘*Et ita dicunt simpliciter plerique doctores. Alii dicunt in tali casu mentiendum esse.*’ *Summa de paenitentia*, I, tit. 10, sect. 4: *Circa mendacium*.

¹³⁹ ‘*Ego credo, salvo meliori iudicio, quod talis debet esse processus; prim’ debet tacere, ut dicit Augustinus. Si videtur ei, quod taciturnitas sit periculosa, quia ex eo credit interrogans, eum concedere illum esse in domo, tunc transferat se in aliam materiam, quasi interrogando illum de aliquo facto, vel simile.*’ *Ibid*.

But Penafort does not stop there; he goes a step further and argues that, if silence or amphibological answers are not enough to deceive the murderer, the interrogated

could simply say ‘no’, and claim that he is not there. If his conscience tells him that that is what he should say, then he does not speak *contra conscientia*, he rather follows it, and therefor he does not sin at all.¹⁴⁰

According to Penafort, the intention to deceive not only determined the severity of the declaration *contra mentem*, as St. Augustine said, but it could also exonerate the liar from blame. The man who makes a statement that is objectively false, but does so for a good reason, cannot be considered a liar because he acts according to his conscience. The idea that every speech contrary to the mind is absolutely and intrinsically evil is therefore rejected. Sometimes one may use such speech as a last resort for defending an important secret or to protect an innocent life, following God’s commands. Penafort based his opinion on Origen’s authority and a number of examples found in Sacred Scriptures, such as the equivocation of Jacob to Isaac, Jehu’s ruse to the priest of Baal, Peter’s dissimulation, or Christ telling the Jews that they were not children of Abraham.¹⁴¹

In this way, Penafort opened the first crack, tiny but eventually decisive, in the compacted condemnation of deception formulated by Augustine. From this point on, casuistry started to penetrate the moral systems and, for the first time in the history of Catholic thought, a certain kind of deception was legitimised. Asked by a judge, some authors would claim, the confessor was allowed to assert his ignorance and respond falsely to questions, provided his knowledge derived only from the confessional.

By 1330, a priest from the Kingdom of Aragon named Guido de Monte Rotherii composed the *Manipulus Curatorum*, a handbook for parish priests who lacked an advanced education on the sacraments and pastoral care. This text became one of the most popular texts of the Middle Ages, with more than 250 manuscript copies surviving,

¹⁴⁰ ‘*Vel dic simpliciter, quod debet negare, et afferere eum non esse ibi: si tamen sua conscientia dictat sibi, quod ita debeat dicere; tunc non dicet contra conscientiam, immo sequetur eam, et nullo modo peccabit.*’
Ibid.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

and at least 120 different impressions before 1510. In it, Penafort's license was continued and expanded to affect oaths:

Suppose a priest is brought forward as a witness and is compelled to swear about a crime that he heard in confession. What should he do? If he speaks so that he reveals the confession, he will be punished; if he denies it, he commits perjury. I say that if he only knows about it through confession he ought to swear that he knows nothing about this matter about which he is questioned, and he does not commit perjury because he himself knows nothing about it. But what if the judge presses him, and asks him under oath whether he has heard anything about the crime at issue? The answer is that an oath does not bind him to say anything, in this matter, since the oath was not invented to be a bond of iniquity (...) hence such a one can legitimately swear to have heard nothing, and let him understand that he heard nothing as a man or in such a way that he ought to testify.¹⁴²

The same license was echoed by other Iberian moralists of the period, such as Clemente Sánchez de Vercial and Pedro Ciruelo, as well as numerous European Dominicans, such as the Frenchman William of Rennes, the German Johannes Nider (d. 1438), and the Italian St. Antonino of Florence (d. 1459).¹⁴³

The possibility of avoiding unlawful interrogation using amphibologies and mental reservations was also recognised by civil law. The *Siete Partidas* by Alphonse X dictates that, in order to protect 'the right to secrecy' (*poridad*), a clergyman questioned by an authority (*en virtud de obediencia*) about something 'that he knew through confession,' could remain quiet or 'say that he does not know, and he would say truth, since he does not know it as man, but as God. And if for that behaviour he was killed, he would be a

¹⁴² Guido de Monte Rochen, *Manipulus Curatorum*, Venice: Maximo de Burticis, 1491 (Casanata Library, Rome), II, tract. 3: *De confessione*, chap. 11: *De sigilo confessionis*. Ed. by Anne Thayer & Katharine Lualdi, *Guido of Monte Rochen: Handbook for Curates, A Late Medieval Manual on Pastoral Ministry. Medieval Texts in Translation*, Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011, pp. 24-29.

¹⁴³ Clemente Sánchez de Vercial, *El Sacramental*, [1423], III, tit. 107, ed. by José Barbosa Machado, *O Sacramental de Clemente Sánchez de Vercial*, no place: Pena Perfeita, 2005; Pedro Ciruelo, *Confessionario que es arte de bien confessar*, Alcalá de Henares: Juan de Brocar, 1543, fol. 60r; William of Rennes, *Summa Sti. Raymundi de Peniafort Barcinonensis Ord. Praedicator. De poenitentia et matrimonio cum glossis Ioannis de Friburgo*, Rome: no pub., 1603; Johannes Nider, *Praeceptorium divinae legis*, Augsburg: Johann Wiener, 1479, I, chap. 15; Antonino of Florence, *Confessionale*, XXVI.

martyr, and go straight to heaven.¹⁴⁴ Historical evidences suggest that this license was not a mere theoretical artefact, but a real option that was quickly put into practice. Théophile Raynauld claimed that in 1333 Guido de Monte Rotherii himself was questioned about a crime that was revealed to him under confession. Asked by the secular court, he said he knew nothing ‘*ut homo*,’ and no one accused him of perjury.¹⁴⁵

Thus, an interesting paradox occurred: private confession, although it removed secrecy before God, institutionalised it among men. The penitent man must display total transparency (he must confess all his sins), but the confessor must do exactly the opposite, protecting the Sacramental Seal at all cost, using amphibologies and mental reservations if necessary. And if clergymen, the exemplars of Christ on Earth, could employ deception to avoid the disclosure of a legitimate secret, why could they not do the same to protect other information under equally justifiable circumstances?

Such a possibility was already defended by Antonino of Florence in his *Summa sacrae theologiae*, one of the most influential moral texts of the late Middle Ages that went through numerous editions until the sixteenth century. Antonino analysed several biblical cases (Sara, Samuel, Jacobs) in which deception was lawfully used and concluded:

It seems to be possible to use sophistically words (*verbis sophisticis*) without committing the vice of lying in order to counteract the ruses of evil persons, namely when someone utters certain words which can be understood in a twofold manner and when someone utters these same words with one meaning but intends to put another meaning in the mind of his listener.¹⁴⁶

But Antonino did not stop there. He did not limit the use of these lawful techniques to protect the secret of confession; instead, he expanded it to other situations. For example, he mentioned the case of a priest who approaches the entrance to a city, and the

¹⁴⁴ ‘... o decir que no lo sabe, y dirá verdad; pues él no lo sabe como hombre, mas como Dios. Y si por aventura por tal razón le matasen, sería mártir por ello e iría derechamente la paraíso.’ *Siete Partidas*, [1265], law XXXV.

¹⁴⁵ Théophile Raynauld, *Splendor veritatis moralis*, [1627], in *Opera Omnia*, Lyon: H. Boissat et G. Remeus, 1665, vol. XIV, p. 160.

¹⁴⁶ *Summae Sacrae Theologiae*, Venice: Bernardys Iuntus, 1571, II, tit. 10, chap. 1, cols. 1046E-1048A.

gatekeeper asks whether he has money to pay the entrance fee. Although the priest does have money, 'he can answer "no" because he is not obligated to pay the tax.' According to Antonius, 'he does not lie in speaking thus because he understands the word in another sense than that intended by the gatekeeper.'¹⁴⁷

The Dominican theologian Sylvester Prierias (d. 1527) held a similar view. In his *Summa Sylvestrina* (1516) he advocated the use of amphibologies and certain forms of mental restriction 'to hide the truth' (*celare veritatem*) under unjust questioning. He mentioned the case of the '*non est hic*' and added an interesting variant to the case proposed by Antonino. If a traveller arriving from a region where plague was suspected is stopped at the doors of a city and asked by the guard whether he comes from there, he could answer 'no' if he knows for a fact that he is not contaminated and that would not be a lie, for it fulfils the ultimate purpose behind the question –to keep out the plague.¹⁴⁸

In this way, late medieval authors began to legitimise certain forms of deceit as morally acceptable mechanisms for protecting secrets that should not be revealed, but also to prevent any unlawful questioning, abusive taxation, and injustice by authorities. As we have seen, this transformation was initiated by the generalization of auricular confession, combined with the development of moral casuistry. Of course, these were not the only factors involved. The process also involved ideological and cultural evolutions. I have already pointed out some of them, such as the gradual development of the notions of privacy and individuality and the establishment of the inquisitorial trial system, whose probing questions endangered many legitimate secrets.

The establishment of a new theory of language initiated by the nominalism of William of Ockham (d. 1347) should also be counted among developments during this period. Ockham developed an innovative theory of mental language that exerted a profound influence throughout scholasticism.¹⁴⁹ Building upon Aristotle's and

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Summa Summarum, quae Sylvestrina dicitur*, Rome, 1516, *Mendacium* 5 and *Juramentum* 3.2.

¹⁴⁹ On Ockham's notion of mental language see: Normore, Calvin, 'Ockham on Mental Language,' in *Historical Foundations of Cognitive Science*, ed. by John C. Smith, Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, pp. 53-70; and Trentman, John, 'Ockham on Mental,' *Mind* 79, 1970, pp. 586-590. For a wider perspective on the history of mental language in medieval philosophy see: Nuchelmans, Gabriël,

Boethius's works, Ockham suggested the existence of three kinds of language (*oratio*): written, spoken, and mental. Written language, he says, is composed of words inscribed on some material and visible to the eye. Spoken language is made up of words uttered by the mouth and audible to the ear. Mental language is different from both of these because it is composed of mental words, which have no material or outward expression, for they remain entirely within the mind.

According to Ockham, each language is a complex set of signs with its own properties and rules, used to make possible an interchange of ideas, feelings and desires, enabling human communication. The terms of mental language are natural signs of things. But the terms of written and spoken language are purely conventional signs, varying from person to person. They have been stabilised *ad placitum* having natural likenesses to the concepts they signify (hence English speakers say *dog* whereas in French it is *chien*).¹⁵⁰ This new conception of language contradicted the one established by Augustine, who saw a natural/divine connection between words and their meanings, making it much more serious to utilise double meanings and polysemy to deceive. By using ambiguity, the speaker was not breaking any natural link established by God, but “simply” something arbitrary set by men.

Theories of the proposition: ancient and medieval conceptions of the bearers of truth and falsity, Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1973, pp. 192-194; and Panaccio, Claude, *Le discours intérieur: de Platon à Guillaume d'Ockham*, Paris: Seuil, 1999, pp. 153-253.

¹⁵⁰ William of Ockham, *Expositio in Librum Perihermeneias Aristotelis*, I, proem. 11. I use the ed. by Ernestus A. Moody *et al.*, *Opera philosophica* II, St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1987. See also *Summa totius logicae*, I, chap. 12, 1, 40-43, ed. by Ph. Boehner *et al.*, *Opera philosophica* I, St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1974.

CHAPTER II

THE EARLY MODERN VIEW: A SPIRAL OF DECEIT

I am a lie who always speaks the truth.

JEAN COCTEAU

RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION AND THE SPRING OF DECEPTION

The discussion on deception acquired a renewed relevance in the early sixteenth century, as a result of the several religious conflicts that followed the Protestant Reformation. The rupture initiated by Luther led to the atomization of Western Christendom and the appearance of a number of competing religious factions, endemic wars and terrible atrocities such as the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre (1572) in which more than 10,000 Huguenots (French Calvinist Protestants) were killed. This situation was aggravated by the attitude of leaders from emerging modern states, who saw religious pluralism as a threat to their power that needed to be eradicated. After the 1555 Peace of Augsburg, the old medieval practice of '*cuius regio, eius religio*,' according to which the subjects of a kingdom were required to adopt the religion chosen by their ruler, became law. Consequently, several communities were forced to change their beliefs overnight and profess a religion that they did not traditionally consider their own. In this context, the issue of religious dis/simulation re-emerged as a vital imperative. For those persecuted, the dilemma was between pretending to adopt the mainstream beliefs or to die as martyrs. So, despite the Augustinian condemnation of deception, most of them decided to falsify their conversion and hide their heterodox

ideas and beliefs.

It should be noted that, perhaps unintentionally, the Church itself fostered this attitude. Both Roman and canon law stated that a crime that could not be proven should not be punished, requiring affirmative visible proof to convict. Without tangible evidence, the suspect had to be released, even though the judge might be confident of his guilt.¹⁵¹ This led to a relatively clear distinction between the external public forum, in which sins were judged and punished, and the *forum conscientiae*, an intimate space that was not subject to the Church's justice but to the judgement of God, the only entity that could really know what is kept in believers' hearts. This idea, often summarised in Johannes Teutonicus's maxim (d. 1245) '*Ecclesia de occultis non iudicat*' (the Church does not judge things which are concealed), was widely accepted by medieval theologians. Manuals of confession stated that sins unknown to the public should be purged by the individual to avoid arousing unnecessary scandals. Accordingly, it was decided that the Inquisition could only deal with those faults '*ad actum exteriorem*' of which there was '*clamor et publica fama*,' while the '*occultum*' faults remained out of its jurisdiction. In other words, the Church limited the actions of its judges to the visible public space, thus acknowledging the existence of an inner zone not subject to prosecution in the external forum of the courts; a zone to which only God and each individual could examine and judge.¹⁵²

It is precisely in this internal forum where men of early modern Europe would hide their unorthodox beliefs and subversive thoughts. The chest became an 'inner

¹⁵¹ Vid. *Codex Justinianus*, IV, 19, 23; *Code of Canon Law*, II, quaest. I, c. 13 and XV, quaest. 5, c. 2; Julius Clarus, *Praxis criminalis*, quaest. 62, no. 1; Mascardus, *De Probationibus*, I, quaest. I, no. 12; *Partidas* I, 5, 31-33; *Decretales Gregorii IX*, V, tit. 1, chap. 21.

¹⁵² On this topic the classic study remains Stephan Kuttner's '*Ecclesia de occultis non iudicat: Problemata ex doctrina poenali decretistarum et decretalistarum a Gratiano usque ad Gregorium PP. IX*,' in *Acta Congressus Iuridici Internationalis VII saeculo*, Rome: Pontificum Institutum Ultriusque, 1936, vol. III, pp. 225-246. See also: Ansgar, Henry, 'Inquisitorial Due Process and the Status of Secret Crimes,' in *Proceedings of the Eighth International Congress of Medieval Canon Law*, ed. by Stanley Chodorow, Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1992, pp. 407-428; Chiffolleau, Jacques, '*Ecclesia de occultis non iudicat? L'Eglise, le secret et l'occulte du XIIe au XVe siècle*,' *Micrologus, Nature, Sciences and Medieval Societies* 13, 2006, pp. 359-481; Kéry, Lotte, '*Non enim homines de occultis, sed de manifestis iudicant: La culpabilité dans le droit pénal de l'Eglise à l'époque classique*,' *Revue du droit canonique* 53/2, 2003, pp. 311-336; and Moss, Petter Von, 'L'individu ou les limites de l'institution ecclésiale,' in *L'Individu au Moyen Âge: individuation et individualisation avant la modernité*, ed. by Brigitte Bedos Rezak et al., Paris: Aubier, 2005, pp. 271-288.

world,' an intimate space of liberation where individuals could be their own masters and develop an authentic identity. But to protect this space, to deny access to the inquisitor, it is necessary to manage the information that flows between the inner and outer body. Achieving this inner-outer cohesion could only be accomplished through the constant and careful control of gestures and words; in other words, di/simulation.

The thousands of Protestants trapped in northern Italy, Germany, Iberia and other territories with leaders who remained loyal to the Papacy used this technique to adapt and disguise their religious practices. Publicly they identified with the Roman Catholic Church, but privately they favoured the Reformation. On Sundays and holy days they attended mass, knelt before the wooden idols and received confession. They celebrated Catholic marriages and allowed their children to be baptised. But in the privacy of their homes, they endorsed Luther's teachings and despised the rituals and perceived contradictions of Catholic worship. These crypto-protestants were therefore called 'Nicodemites' after Nicodemus, a Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin who pretended to be a pious Jew, while secretly he followed Jesus Christ (John 3. 1-2).

Over time, the term's use expanded to include not only Protestants that pretended to be Catholics, but also to the many heterodox groups that proliferated in Europe in between the Reformation and Counter Reformation, from the French libertines to the Crypto-Muslims of Iberia, through to the *Moyenneurs*, Anabaptists, Spiritualists, *Alumbrados*, Crypto-Jews and many others. To evade persecution, these groups resorted to the 'duplicity of heart and language,' pretending to conform to the ruling church while secretly adhering to a heterodox creed.¹⁵³

It is true that none of these attitudes were entirely new. The heretical groups of the Middle Ages had already practiced di/simulation to escape persecution. The novelty that occurred in this period was that, for the first time, there were Catholics groups among the persecuted. And, as we are about to see, this would have a major impact on the Western conception of deception.

¹⁵³ Calvin, *Contre la secte phantastique et furieuse des libertins qui se nomment spirituelz*, in *Joannis Calvini Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia*, Brunswick: Schwetschke et Filium, 1868, vol. VII, col. 170.

ERASMISM AND PRUDENT DECEPTION

Persecution affected first those Catholics who were closer to the Protestants: the Erasmists. The rupture of Western Christendom placed some these reformist thinkers in a difficult position. Most of them disagreed with both Luther and the Pope, but needed some institutional support to pursue their careers and see their intellectual and socio-economic ambitions fulfilled. Thus, they decided to 'accommodate' themselves to the surrounding powers, concealing their true ideas regarding certain controversies.¹⁵⁴

Erasmus himself is a great example of this behaviour. The outbreak of the Reformation placed him in an extremely delicate position. On the one hand, the prince of humanism had repeatedly criticised the abuses of the clergy and the deficiencies of the Catholic Church and recognised that many of the reforms for which Luther called for were urgently needed. On the other hand, he disagreed with some of the major doctrinal points of Protestantism; for example, the idea of free will or the rejection of transubstantiation. Moreover, he feared that by taking sides he would endanger his position as a leader in the movement for pure scholarship that he regarded as his purpose in life. Consequently, Erasmus decided to avoid committing himself, withholding his most controversial ideas and adapting his opinions to the circumstances, maintaining an ambiguous position between the Catholic Church and emerging Reformed movements. He did not hesitate to admit it: '*Ego Vertumnum, Proteum ac Polypum egi, memet in omnia vertens*,' he wrote in 1523.¹⁵⁵ 'The truth,' he confessed to a friend in 1520, 'need not always be stated, and much depends on how it is stated.'¹⁵⁶ 'Occasionally to conceal it may be beneficial, and in every case it is important to bring it out at the most suitable time and in the most suitable fashion.'¹⁵⁷

Erasmus's attitude towards *accommodation* in religious confrontation was determined by purely practical reasons:

¹⁵⁴ Vid. Rummel, *The Confessionalization of Humanism*, pp. 102-120.

¹⁵⁵ *Spongia Erasmi adversus aspergines Hutteni*, Basileae: Frobenium, 1523.

¹⁵⁶ Vid. Erasmus, *Opus epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterdami*, ed. by Percy S. Allen *et al.*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1906-1958, ep. 1119, lines 40-41.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, ep. 1167, lines 164-166.

Age and health do not permit me to wander about and live in poverty nor to hide somewhere or flee from place to place. Therefore, if I have kept quiet, it was to avoid becoming enmeshed in this inextricable labyrinth and forsaking the cause of the Gospel.¹⁵⁸

Moreover, it was also a reflection of ideological conviction: there are ‘certain matters which, although they may be true, cannot be discussed before everyone without risk to piety and concord.’ Putting the truth forward without taking into consideration the circumstances, he argued, could endanger the unity of Christendom.¹⁵⁹

Erasmus defended his nuanced views in several writings.¹⁶⁰ In his *Lingua* (1525), a long-winded diatribe on the abuse of language and speech, he drew a clear distinction between lying, which he deemed unchristian, and ‘dissimulating,’ a way of withholding or concealing the truth that he found wise and prudent in certain cases.¹⁶¹ In his *Praise of Folly* (1509), he mocked those theologians who, following the medieval tradition, flatly condemned deception without regard to the reasons that motivated it.¹⁶² According to Erasmus, the ‘fools’ tell always the truth:

...showing in their looks and expressing in their discourses whatever they have in their hearts. While the wise men are those with two tongues (...) whereof one speaks truth, the other what they judge most seasonable for the occasion. These are those ‘who turn black into white,’ blow hot and cold with the same breath, and carry a far different meaning in their breast from what they feign with their tongue.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁸ *Apud*. Randolph J. Klawiter, *The Polemics of Erasmus of Rotterdam and Ulrich von Hutten*, Notre Dame, IND: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977, p. 225.

¹⁵⁹ *Opera Omnia Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami*, Leiden: Peter Vander, 1703-1706, repr. Hildesheim, 1961-1962, vol. 9, 1277e-1278b.

¹⁶⁰ On Erasmus’s views of insincerity see: Bietenholz, Peter G., ‘Haushalten mit der Wahrheit. Erasmus im Dilemma der Kompromissbereitschaft,’ *Basler Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Altertumskunde* 86, 2, 1986, pp. 9-26, esp. 12-15; Idem, ‘*Simulatio*. Erasme et les interprétations controversées de Galates 2:11-14,’ in *Actes du colloque international Erasme*, ed. by Jacques Chomarat, Geneve: Droz, 1990, pp. 161-169; Biondi ‘La giustificazione della simulazione,’ pp. 23-34; Rummel, *The Confessionalization of Humanism*, chap. 3; and Trapman, Hans, ‘Erasmus on Lying and simulation,’ in *On the Edge of Truth and Honesty: principles and strategies of fraud and deceit in the early modern period*, ed. by T. van Houdt *et al.*, Boston: Brill, 2002, pp. 33-46.

¹⁶¹ Erasmus, *Lingua*, in *Opera Omnia*, vol. IV, 1A, 98, pp. 371-375.

¹⁶² Erasmus, *Moriae encomium Erasmi Roterdami declamatio*, Strasbourg: Matthiae Schurerij, 1511, chap. 53.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, chap. 36.

Such a statement represented a direct attack on the Augustinian concept of deception, which, as we have seen, envisioned the good Christian as a *homo fenestratus*, whose chest ought to be as transparent as glass.¹⁶⁴ To justify this view, Erasmus relied on the authority of certain Church Fathers, like Origen and Jerome, and a number of biblical precedents, such as Abraham calling ‘sister’ to his wife Sarah (Genesis 12. 11-13), David simulating madness (I Samuel 21. 10-15) or Michael deceiving Saul's messengers (I Samuel 10. 11-17). Furthermore, he mentioned the case of Christ, who often used dis/simulation to ‘accommodate to men’ and deceive his apostles.¹⁶⁵ According to Erasmus:

If he who is the Truth commands that this truth be suppressed for a time, a truth we must know and confess in order to be saved, what is novel about my remark that the truth must be suppressed in some instances?¹⁶⁶

In his *Annotations on the New Testament* (1516) Erasmus commented at length on the controversial dispute between Peter and Paul in *Galatians*.¹⁶⁷ After summarising the case, Erasmus rejected Augustine's interpretation of the text and gave his support to Jerome's view, which excused Peter's conduct as no more than a slight offense. Through careful analysis, Erasmus offers a positive reading of the apostle's concealment, which he considers an example not of lying, but of Christian flexibility and wisdom (*prudentia*), similar to that displayed by Paul in other circumstances.¹⁶⁸ According to the humanist, there was nothing reprehensible in this attitude because ‘no one denies that it is

¹⁶⁴ He stated the same in his *pologia adversus rapsodias calumniosarum querimoniarum Alberti Pii* (Basel: Froben, 1531, in *Opera Omnia*, vol. IX, 1123A-1169D, esp. 1194B) and in his *Adversus mendacium et obtreccionem utilis admonitio* (1530), where he defended the right to ‘deceive somebody for his own good or deserves being deceived’ (Vid. *Opera Omnia*, vol. X, p. 1688).

¹⁶⁵ See, for example, his *Ratio verae theologiae* (1518), in *Opera Omnia*, vol. V, 97F-98A.

¹⁶⁶ Allen, *Op. cit.*, ep. 1219, lines 100-101 and ep. 1202, lines 56-57.

¹⁶⁷ Especially in the second edition of 1519: *Annotationes in Novum Testamentum*, in *Opera Omnia*, vol. VI, cols. 807-810. See also *Erasmus' Annotations on the New Testament. Galatians to Apocalypse. Facsimile of the final Latin Text with all earlier variants*, ed. by Anne Reeve, Leiden: Brill, 1993, pp. 571-574.

¹⁶⁸ *Ecclesiastes*, in *Opera Omnia*, vol. V, cols. 294-298. The same idea is repited in Erasmus's *Ratio verae theologiae*, in *Opera Omnia*, vol. V, cols. 97-99; and in his *Paraphrases*, Lovaina, 1519, in *Opera Omnia*, vol. VII, cols. 855-856.

sometimes right for a pious man to dissimulate.¹⁶⁹ Thus, Erasmus becomes one of the first modern theologians to support Jerome's exegesis and claim the right of all individuals to *vacillatio* and religious dissimulation.¹⁷⁰

However, this was not his only significant contribution to the debate. In addition to his religious arguments, Erasmus justified dis/simulation ideas taken from the Greco-Roman classical tradition, thereby initiating a trend that would have great importance from the second half of the sixteenth century. For example, Erasmus resorted to the idea of *aptum*, a concept borrowed from classical rhetoric that evoked the skill of accommodating one's subject to time, place and audience.¹⁷¹

The man who dispenses the Word of the gospel needs not only faith, but also prudence (...) It is a characteristic of prudence to consider the time, place, and circumstances surrounding the person in order to decide what must be said when and in what form. In Paul we see the greatest simplicity matched by prudence. He turns himself into all shapes and considers, not what is allowed, but what is expedient (...) Now, if we consider the differences among people, differences in gender, age, social status, intellect, opinion, profession, custom, what prudence must the preacher possess to adapt his speech [to his audience] (...) The orators teach that no one speaks well, unless he speaks aptly.¹⁷²

Erasmus also revived 'Plato's opinion, when he allows those wise guardians (...) to deceive the [common] people with lies for the public benefit.' This defence accommodation and the 'noble lie' would have great importance in the coming decades, and find its secular equivalent in the political realism of Machiavelli.¹⁷³

Erasmus's view on dis/simulation, built on conceptions of Christian prudence and classical wisdom, was supported and practiced by other humanists of the period, such as Jacques Lefèvre (1512), Petrus Mosellanus (1519), and Gregorio Cortesi (1540).¹⁷⁴ In

¹⁶⁹ Erasmus, *Annotationes*, in *Opera Omnia*, vol. VI, cols. 807-810.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, cols. 501-503.

¹⁷¹ Cicero, *De Oratore*, III, 55, 211.

¹⁷² Erasmus, *Ecclesiastes*, in *Opera Omnia*, vol. V, cols. 781B-782F.

¹⁷³ Allen, *Op. cit.*, ep. 1195, lines 106-119. See also ep. 1165, lines 164-173.

¹⁷⁴ Lefèvre D'Etaples, Jacques, *Sancti Pauli epistolae xiv ex Vulgata editione adiecta intelligentia ex graeco, cum commentariis*, Paris: Stapulensis, 1512. I have used the edition of 1531. See fols. 21r-22v; Petrus Mosellanus, *De ratione disputandi, praesertim in re Theologica, Petri Mosellani Protegensis oratio*, Leipzig: Melchior Lotter, 1519; Gregorio Cortesi, *Ad eos qui a communi ecclesiae sententia discessere*

fact, many intellectuals of the Erasmian circle were targeted by both Catholic and Reformed theologians as ‘Nicodemists’ and criticised for their cowardice and hypocrisy. Despite these criticisms, the Humanist appeal for accommodation and the legitimacy of the practice of ‘husbanding the truth’ ended up having a profound influence on the theology and political thought of the coming decades.

VERBAL EQUIVOCATION AND MENTAL RESERVATION IN THE COUNTER-REFORMATION

The persecution of heterodoxy was not the only phenomenon that stimulated the debate on deception in the West. The many changes that affected orthodoxy itself were also decisive. From 1520s on, many intellectual elites (Erasmists, for example) and reformist theologians heavily criticised auricular confession and casuistry. Both Luther and Calvin denied that penance was a sacrament divinely instituted and condemned casuistry as a dangerous form of moral laxity.¹⁷⁵ The Catholic authorities reacted by strengthening both practices, defending their validity and mandatory character for the faithful. In 1551, the Council of Trent reaffirmed the sacredness of penance and renewed the Lateran Council's decree on annual confession. To ensure its observance, the Trent fathers and, in particular, the subsequent diocesan synods, developed an ambitious control system based on lists of inhabitants and compliance certificates that, in certain places, would remain in operation until the twentieth century. At the same time, the principle of confidentiality was strengthened in two ways. The *indispensabilis obligatio* of the secrecy of confession was ratified by canon law.¹⁷⁶ And second, the Church

adhortatio ad concordiam, Milan: Apud Caluum, 1540.

¹⁷⁵ Vid. Thomas Tentler, *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation*, Princeton: University press, 1977, esp. pp. 349-364.

¹⁷⁶ Indeed, we find this view in many of the early modern treatises written in Iberia. Among others: Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, *Dialogus de ratione dicendi testimonium in causis occultorum criminum, qui inscribitur Theophilus*, Valladolid: Nicolay Tierri, 1538; Domingo De Soto, *De Ratione Tegendi et Detegendi secretum*, Salamanca: Pedro de Castro, 1541; Pedro Mártir Coma, *Directorium curatorum o instruction de Curas, vtil y prouechoso para los que tienen cargo de animas*, Seville: Iuan de Leon, 1589, fols. 37v-38v; Bartolomé de Medina, *Breue instruction de como se ha de administrar el Sacramento de la penitencia*, Alcalá: Ioan Iñiguez de Lequerica, 1589; sect. 36; Francisco Ortiz Lucio, *Summa de summas*

promoted the use of the confessional box, which became mandatory in Europe after 1565. This secret box was specifically designed to protect the parishioners and to encourage them to communicate freely. Their heavy curtains and thick lattices, located in every church of the West, represented the materialization of a culture of secrecy and privacy that flourished during the Baroque period around the penitential rite. Auricular confession quickly spread across the West. By the end of the sixteenth century, it was no longer an obligation to be fulfilled reluctantly once a year, but an essential part of everyday life for millions of Christians and a key element of the new spirituality of the Counter-Reformation.

This process was accompanied by a new flowering of casuistry, which centred on the Iberian Peninsula as its main site of development and diffusion. Integrated in catechisms, treatises and, ultimately, in the everyday practice of confession, casuistry spread from Spain across Europe and exerted an immense influence on the culture of the period.¹⁷⁷ One of its earliest adaptors was Bartolomé Medina, often considered the

de auisos y amonestaciones generales para todos los estados y recopilacion de aduertencias y resoluciones de casos de consciencia con los sermones del Miserere y de penite[n]cia, Alcalá: Iuan Iñiguez de Lequerica, 1595, fols. 211v-213v; Manuel Rodriguez, *Summa de casos de consciencia: con aduertencias muy prouechosas para confesores, co[n] vn orden iudicial a la postre en la qual se resuelue lo mas ordinario de todas las materias morales*, Barcelona: Sebastian de Cormellas, 1596, vol. II, chap. 53, no. 4; Pedro de Ledesma, *Primera parte de la Summa: En la qual se cifra y summa todo lo que toca y pertenece a los sacramentos... principalmente lo que toca y pertenece al sacramento de la confession*, Salamanca: Juan y Andres Renaut, 1598, pp. 673-687; Alonso de Vega, *Espejo de curas, Utilissimo para todo genero de ecclesiasticos y, principalmente, para aquellos que tienen cargo de animas*, Madrid: Pedro Madrigal, 1602, vol. 2, chap. 9, no. 341-376; Idem, *Suma llamada nueva recopilacion y practica del fuero interior: Vtilissima para confesores y penitentes*, Madrid: Luis Sanchez, 1606, part 2, cols. 897-904.; Enrique de Villalobos, *Summa de la Theologia moral y canónica*, Barcelona: Sebastián de Cormellas, 1637, part 1, pp. 263-268; Idem, *Manual de Confesores*, Alcalá: Antonio Vazquez, 1640, fols. 67r-68v; Machado de Chaves, Juan, *Perfeto confessor i cura de almas...: Tomo segundo, en el qual... Se recogen todas las materias pertenecientes a los Estados de la Republica Christiana*, Barcelona: Pedro Lacavalleria, 1641, vol. II, tract. 3, pp. 591-598; Juan Enriquez, *Questiones practicas de casos morales*, Valencia: Herederos de Chrysostomo Garriz, 1647, sect. 53; Antonino Diana, *Suma Diana*, Madrid: Melchor Sanchez, 1657, pp. 696-706; Benito Remigio Noydens, *Practica de curas y confesores y doctrina para penitentes*, Barcelona: Antonio Ferrer, 1681, pp. 354-365; Jaime de Corrella, *Suma de la Theologia moral*, Madrid: Bernardo de Villa-Diego, 1694, conf. 12, pp. 405-414.

¹⁷⁷ On the history of casuistry in Europe and its presence in Iberia see, among others: Belda Plans, Juan, *La escuela de Salamanca y la renovación de la teología del siglo XVI*, Madrid: BAC, 2000, pp. 771-778; Caro Baroja, Julio, 'Probabilidades, laxitudes y corrupciones,' in *Las formas complejas de la vida religiosa: Religión, sociedad y carácter en la España de los siglos XVI y XVII*, Madrid: Akal, 1978, pp. 517-550; Egido, Teófanés, 'Los casos de conciencia y la conciencia de los casos,' in *Las Españas que (no) pudieron ser*, ed. by Manuel Peña Díaz, Huelva: Universidad de Huelva, 2009, pp. 93-113; Jonsen, Albert R., & Stephen Edelston Toulmin, *The Abuse of Casuistry*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988; Gallagher, Lowell, *Medusa's Gaze: Casuistry and Conscience in Early Modern Europe*,

creator of the term ‘probabilism.’ Building on Thomas Aquinas’s texts, Medina argued that ‘the goodness of the will depends on the intention of the goal,’ and gave great importance to a subject’s intention when judging the moral condition of his actions.¹⁷⁸ He was followed by many others, such as Antonio de Escobar (d. 1669), Emmanuel Rodríguez, Gabriel Vázquez, and Tomás Sánchez de Ávila (d. 1610). Thanks to these thinkers, casuistry reached its highest level of sophistication and influence, prevailing in the main European seminaries and universities, as well as in Jesuit colleges, which adopted casuistry as one of the foundations of their thought.

The reasons for this success can be found in the profound social changes that occurred with the advent of modernity. In opposition to the rigid norms imposed by the Fathers of the medieval Church, casuistry provided a flexible moral system, capable of accommodating modern realities and justifying social practices such as usury, regicide, the loss of virginity before marriage, or the invocation of falsehood. Casuists believed in the necessity of developing a new morality ruled by Christian prudence and reason. Each man should ‘act in conscience.’ That is, he should make his own rules to live and achieve salvation, taking into account the peculiarities of his own circumstances. This reasoning came to replace the closed traditional set of rules established by medieval theologians for moral probabilism that granted certain levels of autonomy and freedom.

To help him make the right decisions, casuist moralists wrote thorough treatises that took into account ‘what, when, why, in what place, at what time, by what means, by whom or against whom we have sinned and (...) how much of sin or damage is done.’¹⁷⁹ The purpose of such details was to determine whether or not an act was sinful and, if so, whether it was mortal or venial, and to find the appropriate penance and guarantee the salvation of the soul. These *summas* achieved such degree of complexity that the *Summa*

Stanford, CA: University Press, 1991; Palacios, Bonifacio, ‘Teología moral y sus aplicaciones entre 1580-1700,’ in *Historia de la teología española*, ed. by Melquíades Andrés Martín, Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 1987, vol. II, pp. 174-183.

¹⁷⁸ Bartolomé de Medina, *Expositio in Primam Secundae Angelici Doctoris D. Thomae Aquinatis*, Salamanca: Mathiae Gastii, 1578, quaest. 19, art. 7. See also Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I, II, quaest. 19, art. 7 and 9.

¹⁷⁹ ‘Cuál, cuándo, por qué, en qué lugar, en qué tiempo, con qué instrumentos, por quién o contra quién pecamos y en qué, por cuánto, la cantidad del pecado o daño que se hace.’ Vid. Garci López de Alvarado, *Breve compendio de confesión*, Venice: Bonelli, 1552, p. 3.

resolutiorum moralium by Antonio de Diana (1585-1663) featured up to 20,000 different cases.

But casuistry quickly led to a dangerous level of laxity. The casuist moralists built a very elastic and permissive morality, equipped with extremely accommodative solutions. The Jesuit Antonio de Escobar, one of the leaders of Iberian probabilism, argued that ‘the roads of virtue are always the wider ones’ and that ‘of two different solutions to a problem, I choose the milder and softer.’¹⁸⁰

In this theoretical framework, the issue of deception was deeply reviewed. Casuists were particularly interested in this topic and worked hard to find lawful ways to conceal a secret without lying. They discussed and developed the proposals of their medieval predecessors. Gradually, the idea of a word or sentence with two grammatically different meanings shifted to the idea of a word or sentence having two different meanings because of some modifying phrase that was added mentally by the speaker. Thus arose the doctrines of ‘verbal equivocation’ and ‘mental reservation,’ two distinct but complementary doctrines that would exert a decisive influence on early modern thought.¹⁸¹ Each of them employed different mechanisms: equivocation involved use of amphibological words or ambiguous expressions (*amphibologia et verborum ambiguitas*) whose meaning could be different for the speaker than for the listener. As for mental reservation (*mentalis reservatio*), it used an unexpressed additional statement

¹⁸⁰ ‘La Providencia ha querido en su infinita bondad que haya varios medios de salir bien librado en moral y que las vías de la virtud sean anchas.’ ‘De dos sentencias contrarias relativas a un problema elijo la más benigna y más suave.’ Antonio de Escobar y Mendoza, *Liber theologiae moralis viginti quatuor Societatis Jesu doctoribus reseratus*, Leiden: Sumptibus P. Borde, 1659, p. 3.

¹⁸¹ On the history of the theological debate over the doctrine of equivocation see: Jonsen, Albert R., & Stephen Edelston, *The Abuse of Casuistry*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988, pp. 195-215; Malloch, Archibald E., ‘Equivocation: A Circuit of Reasons,’ in *Familiar Colloquy: Essays Presented to Arthur Edward Baker*, Ottawa: Oberon Press, 1978, pp. 132-143; Sommerville, Johann P., ‘The “new art of lying”: equivocation, mental reservation, and casuistry,’ in *Conscience and Casuistry in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Edmun Leites, Cambridge: University Press, 1988, pp. 159-184; Stone, Martin, *The Subtle Arts of Casuistry: An Essay in the History of Moral Philosophy*, Oxford: University Press, 2000; Tutino, Stefania, ‘L’equivocatio in Inghilterra: un esempio di pratica nicodemitica?,’ *Archivio Italiano per la storia della pietà* 16, 2004, pp. 177-191; Idem, ‘Nothing but the truth? Hermeneutics and morality in the doctrines of equivocation and mental reservation in early modern Europe,’ *Renaissance Quarterly* 64, no.1, 2011, pp. 115-155; Idem, *Shadows of Doubt*, chap. 1; Vermeersch, Arthur, ‘Restriction Mentale,’ in *Dictionnaire apologetique de la foi catholique*, ed. by Adhémar d’Alès, Paris: Beauchesne, 1922, vol. IV, cols. 967-982; Zagorin, *Ways of Lying*, pp. 163-220.

that confers truth upon an articulated statement that by itself was false. In reality, both implied the same; both being devices of language designed to conceal and misrepresent the truth to the listener without incurring the sin of lying, invoking God's ability to read men's hearts.

As we have seen, the earliest formulations of these doctrines can be found in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, in texts such as Penafort's *Summa* and Peter Paludanus's *Disputatio de Veritate Morale*.¹⁸² Yet, it was not until the sixteenth century that equivocation and reservation acquired all their complexity, thanks to the work of numerous Catholic casuists across Europe and, more specifically, in Spain. The Iberian Peninsula had all the required ingredients to become an advanced laboratory in the search of lawful ways of lying, due to the solid implantation of casuistry, the remarkable Jesuit presence, and the religious plurality of its territories, among many other factors. By the 1550s, there already appeared some works that legitimised and systematised the use of verbal equivocation, such as texts by Domingo de Soto, Bartolomé de Medina, and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda.¹⁸³ The legitimisation of mental reservation came a few years later, in the 1580s, with the revolutionary work of Martin de Azpilcueta.

MARTIN AZPILCUETA ON DECEPTION

Azpilcueta, better known in Europe as Doctor Navarrus, studied theology at Alcalá and canon law at Toulouse. He taught at the universities of Salamanca and Coimbra. He gained the admiration of Philip II and Popes Gregory XIII and Sixtus V, becoming one of the most eminent Catholic intellectuals of his time. However, as often happens with great men, the most conspicuous feature of his thought was not born from his success,

¹⁸² Peter Paludanus, *Disputatio de Veritate Morale, cum Mendacio & Locutionibus Aequivocis ac Mente Restrictis Comparata*, in *Opera Omnia*, Lyon, 1665, vol. XIV, p. 105.

¹⁸³ Domingo de Soto, *De Ratione Tegendi et Detegendi secretum*, Salamanca: Pedro de Castro, 1541, membr. 2, quaest. 2, memb. 3, quaest. 3, and conclusions 4 and 7. See also his *De Iustitia et Iure*, Salamanca: Andreas à Portonariis, 1553, chap. 5, quaest. 6; Bartolomé de Medina, *Expositio in Primam Partem Angelici Doctoris Divi Thomae Aquinatis*; Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, *De Ratione Dicendi Testimonium in Causis Occultorum Criminum Dialogus*, Valladolid: Nicolás Thierry, 1538.

but from one of his greatest failures: the condemnation of Archbishop Carranza. Bartolomé Carranza was one of the most influential Catholic theologians of the Counterreformation. In 1559, he was arrested on suspicion of Lutheranism and accused of 'having fraternally corrected' in a private confession, the heretical opinions of the Spanish reformist Carlos de Seso (d. 1559), without denouncing him to the Inquisition. Thus began a long judicial process that lasted more than twenty-six years. A great deal of evidence was presented against him, although everything suggested that it was an unfair accusation, carefully orchestrated by his rival Fernando Valdés, the powerful General Inquisitor and Archbishop of Seville.¹⁸⁴ Carranza's trial soon surpassed his figure and became the bitter representation of a thorny theological debate on the validity of fraternal correction and the limits of the Sacramental seal: should confessors absolve secret sins through private correction (*in foro conscientiae*)? Or, on the contrary, should they break the silence and denounce penitents to be publicly persecuted by the Inquisition?

Azpilcueta was appointed Carranza's attorney. He conducted his defence, first in Spain and then in Rome, until 1576, when the Archbishop was finally convicted, forced to renounce *ad cautelam* some of his beliefs and imprisoned in the Convent of Santa Maria Minerva, where he died shortly after. Azpilcueta always believed in the innocence of his defendant. He publicly criticised the irregularities of the inquisitorial process and sent a report to Philip II describing the many injustices inflicted on the prelate, which procured him powerful enemies. After that, he decided to settle in Rome, where he devoted himself to the study of various aspects of canon law until his death in 1586.

Azpilcueta supported private correction and opposed inquisitorial punishment, which he saw as a way of defaming the sinner rather than promoting forgiveness. To ensure that cases like Carranza's would not happen again, he decided to create a morally lawful technique that would allow an innocent man to defend himself against unlawful

¹⁸⁴ For a detailed account, see: Burges, Martín & Carlos Tejero; *La vida del insigne Doctor Navarro, hijo de la Real Casa de Roncesvalles*, Pamplona: Navarra, 1999; Iglesia, Jesús de la, 'La Inquisición de Felipe II en el proceso contra el arzobispo Carranza,' *Anuario Jurídico y Económico Escorialense* 44, 2011, pp. 491-518; Tellechea Idógoras, José I., *El arzobispo Carranza y su tiempo*, Madrid: Guadarrama, 1968.

and invasive interrogation. With that purpose, he studied the doctrines of verbal equivocation and mental reservation, reformulating them on a new basis and giving them their fullest development.

Azpilcueta undertook this task for the first time in his *Enchiridion*, an influential *Manual de Confessores et penitentes* (1549) which had more than 80 Latin editions and 90 translations into several languages. In it, Azpilcueta endorsed St. Augustine's condemnation of *mendacio* and *simulatio*, both considered mortal sins. However, he disagreed with Augustine's rejection of deception, and argued that sometimes it was acceptable to deceive. For example, when a judge questioned a prisoner on matters that were irrelevant to the case in hand. According to Azpilcueta, the accused was bound to reply only according to the intention that an upright judge should have. If he interrogated him unlawfully, then the accused could without perjury say that he 'does not know (...) mentally understanding that he did not know so as to be obliged to reveal it.'¹⁸⁵

Azpilcueta expanded this idea in a later text: a commentary of the *Humanae aures*, commissioned by the Jesuits of Valladolid and published in Rome in 1583.¹⁸⁶ In it, we find one of the most detailed formulations of the doctrines of verbal equivocation and mental reservation ever written.¹⁸⁷ The text discussed one passage from Pope Gregory the Great's *Moralia*, a highly influential commentary on the book of Job written at the beginning of the sixth century. After referring to a statement of Job's for which he had been blamed by one of his interlocutors (Job 35. 2), Gregory inquired what harm there could be if in the judgment of men 'our words differ superficially from the rectitude of

¹⁸⁵ '... intelligendo intra se, illud se non ita scire, ut detegere teneatur.' *Enchiridion, sive Manuale Confessariorum et Poenitentium*, Valladolid: Diego Fernández, 1555, esp. chap. 12, no. 8-9. See also chap. 18, no. 61, and 25, no. 44.

¹⁸⁶ *Commentarius in cap. Humanae aures, XXII. Q. V. De Veritate Responsi; Partim verbo expresso, partim mente concepti. & de arte bona & mala simulandi*, Rome: n. pub., 1584. I use the version included in *D. Martini ab Azpilcueta Navarri, I. U. D. Praeclarissimi Commentaria*, vol. I, Venice: n. pub., 1588.

¹⁸⁷ This text has been examined by: Jonsen, Albert R. & Stephen Toulmin, *The Abuse of Casuistry: A History of Moral Reasoning*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988, pp. 195-215; Sommerville, Johann Peter, 'The "New Art of Lying": Equivocation, Mental Reservation and Casuistry,' pp. 159-84; Tutino, Stefania, 'Nothing but the truth?,' pp. 115-155; Vince, Maté, *From 'aequivocatio' to the 'Jesuitical equivocation': changing concepts of ambiguity in early modern England*, Thesis (Ph.D.), University of Warwick, 2013, pp. 56-70; Zagorin, *Ways of Lying*, pp. 168-185.

truth when in the heart they are in accord with it?’ He then went on to say in a much-quoted passage:

The ears of men judge our words as they sound outwardly, but the divine judgment hears them as they are uttered from within. Among men, the heart is judged by words; with God the words are judged by the heart.¹⁸⁸

As we see, this statement divides the act of communication into two levels, establishing a difference between the inner meaning and its outward expression. On the one hand there is the message said aloud with the mouth and, on the other, what is expressed silently by the mind and heart. From this passage, Azpilcueta developed his own theory of language, which would serve as foundation for his view on deception. The reasoning is as follows: St Augustine defined lying as a lack of accord between what the speaker thinks and what the speaker says. However, for Azpilcueta, this was an overly simplistic view of communicative action. As Aristotle, Gregory, and Ockham argued, an *oratio*, or a statement, ‘can be composed of different parts, some of which are vocal, others written, others silent and mental’ (such as when one tells something to oneself, for instance) and, Azpilcueta added, ‘mixed’ (*oratio mixta*). When we judge the truth or falsity of a statement, we need to take all these parts into account, because even though the different parts can be false when taken individually, the entire proposition can be true.¹⁸⁹

Azpilcueta illustrates his argument with a *casus* of matrimonial law. Let us imagine a man who privately tells a woman ‘I take you as my wife’ without having any intention to do so. When asked under oath by a judge whether or not he had said those words, the man replies that he had not, ‘mentally reserving’ (*subintelligendo mente*) that he had not

¹⁸⁸ Gregory the Great, *Moralium libri sive expositio in librum B. Job*, [c. 591], ed. by Marc Adriaen, *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*, vol. 143, Turnhout: Brepols, 1985, p. 1276.

¹⁸⁹ ‘*Quod una et eadem ratio potest componi ex diversis partibus, quarum aliae sint expresse vocales vel scriptae, et alie tacite et mentales: et quod ipsa tota sit vera, et partes eius separate sint falsae, et haereticae; et econtrario ipsa sit haeretica, et aliquot partes eius separate sint verae et catholice*’ Azpilcueta, *Commentarius in cap. Humanae Aures*, quaest. 1, sect. 3.

said them ‘with the intention of actually taking the woman as his wife.’¹⁹⁰ According to Azpilcueta, this action is not a lie, since the man mentally added that this was not his intention. There was no discrepancy between the entire proposition and his thought. And neither is a sin towards God, ‘because in his divine majesty he knows and sees the truly intended sense.’

Thus, Azpilcueta introduced a fundamental shift in the Western conception of language, which broke with the Augustinian model and raised the possibility of new forms of deception. For him, language is not a divine *eternum* determined by an internal correspondence (or lack thereof) between the listener’s thoughts and words, but a means to communicate through dialogue. His approach is neither theological nor moral, but hermeneutic. His approach recognised all the multiplicity and complexity of language, as Wittgenstein’s would do four centuries later. Azpilcueta argued that the communicative act takes place at three different levels at once: between the speaker and a listener; the speaker and himself; and the speaker and God. Alterations in the second and third level must be avoided at all costs, since they are mortal sins. Yet in the first level (the one that exists among men) alterations may occur lawfully as long as there is a good reason for it.

To support his theory, Azpilcueta provides a number of examples taken from the Holy Scriptures.¹⁹¹ Among others, he cites the example of Jesus Christ, when he said to his disciples that he did not know the day of the last judgment (Matthew 24. 36). Such a statement would have been false, according to Azpilcueta, if it was not because he mentally understood that he did not know it ‘so that it is appropriate to reveal it to them.’ The addition of this internal statement functions as a hidden corrective that makes the entire proposition truthful from the point of view of the speaker, since, in Augustinian terms, the speaker’s entire statement reflects what is in his mind.

¹⁹⁰ ‘*Non fuisse mentitum respondendo, quod non dixit verba praedicta, subintelligendo mente, quod non dixit ea animo contrahendi matrimonium.*’ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, quaest. 3, sect. 7.

In addition to justifying the use of mental restriction (which Azpilcueta called *oratio mixta* because it combines the articulated with the projected), Azpilcueta tried to reinforce the use of verbal equivocation (*verbis amphibologicis*) by building on arguments advanced by his predecessors.¹⁹² Namely, a word can have different meanings, and the speaker may use this polysemy to deceive the listener without incurring a moral fault. Azpilcueta explained this through the famous example attributed to St. Francis of Assisi. According to the story, the saint saw a man fleeing from a murderer, who then came upon him and demanded if his victim had passed that way. Francis replied: ‘He did not pass this way,’ pointing toward the sleeve of his cassock, thus deceiving the murderer and saving a life while shunning a lie.¹⁹³ According to Azpilcueta:

Anyone is allowed to use [this kind of] amphibology and duplicity in order to protect the safety of his mind, body, honor, property, or any other virtuous act.¹⁹⁴

From all this, Azpilcueta draws two important conclusions, two ideas that, although not entirely new, he expounded and justified more fully than his predecessors. Two ideas that would become the foundation (often hidden, but always present) on which the modern ethics of deception would grow. First, Azpilcueta consolidated the distinction between deceit (*dolus*) and lying (*mendacium*) –a distinction that was, as we have seen, foreign to Augustinian theology. Every lie is deceit, but not every deceit is a lie, because a man can fool another by using linguistic amphibologies and mixed propositions. While *mendacium* is always a sin, dis/simulation can be either good or bad, depending on the technique used, the goals pursued and the effects produced. Those who use it to

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ Azpilcueta, *Enchiridion*, chap. 12, sect. 8-9. For a commentary on the different interpretations that Azpilcueta and others made of this episode, see Jean-Pierre Cavaillé, ‘*Non est hic*. Le cas exemplaire de la protection du fugitif,’ *Les dossiers du Grihl: Secret et mensonge. Essais et comptes rendus*, 2004, URL: <http://dossiersgrihl.revues.org/300>.

¹⁹⁴ ‘*Facit conclusio precedentis questionis, scilicet, quod causa salutis animi, corporis, honoris, immo et rei familiaris, et cuiuscunque actus virtutis pot quis uti verbis amphibologis et duplicibus.*’ Azpilcueta, *Commentarius*, quaest. 2, sect. 10. Azpilcueta mentions other examples, such as the one formulated by Sylvester Prierias of the man who flees from a city infected by a plague (*Commentarius*, quaest. 2, sect. 9).

deceive others without just cause make *dolo malo* and commit a serious offense in the eyes of God.¹⁹⁵ But those who ‘prudently and for just cause’ (*bono dolo et ex iusta causa*) do or say something that ‘separately signifies a falsehood but is made true by a mental understanding, do not lie and use good prudence without evil deceit or cunning.’¹⁹⁶

In other words: the moral quality of the *dolus* must be assessed case by case. When someone is forced to choose between lying and revealing secrets that are protected by divine or human laws, he has the right to dis/simulate, seemingly satisfying the unjust questioner and at the same time remaining intact in conscience and in the eyes of God.

His other major contribution was to expand the framework in which verbal equivocation and mental reservation could be used. Azpilcueta considered unspoken truths acceptable not only in replies to unlawful questioning by judges or ecclesiastical authorities,¹⁹⁷ but as appropriate in ‘innumerable’ situations of daily life. For instance, to escape from physical harm, to avoid unfair taxation, to prosper in the court, and, in the case of the prince, to rule more effectively. This idea would be taken up by Rivadeneira a few years later and play a crucial role in the justification of political deception in Spain.

Azpilcueta introduced just one exception: dis/simulation should never be employed with religion. Regardless of the circumstances and objectives, no Catholic can hide his faith with mental reservations or pretend to be a heretic or infidel without committing a mortal sin. Good Christians are always forced to confess their true faith, even though doing so would endanger their lives or the whole kingdom.¹⁹⁸

THE CONSOLIDATION OF CASUIST DECEPTION

Were the doctrines of verbal equivocation and mental reservation a moral progress on

¹⁹⁵ Azpilcueta, *Commentarius*, quaest. 3, sect. 9.

¹⁹⁶ ‘qui vero prudenter, et iusta causa dicit vel facit aliquid, quod per se separatim significat falsum, sed subintellecto aliquo efficitur verum sine mendacio, dolo malo et astutia praedicta, utitur bona prudentia.’ *Ibid.*, quaest. 3, sect. 8.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, quaest. 2, sect. 5-12.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, quaest. 3, sect. 13-16.

lying, or rather the theological negation of it? It is hard to say. But the truth is that through texts like Azpilcueta's, both of them quickly spread across Europe. The first achieved a broad consensus; even the most conservative theologians considered it lawful to deceive using the amphibology of certain words and expressions. Mental reservation, on the contrary, prompted heated disputes, being heavily attacked by Protestant authorities and some Catholic thinkers, who considered it could easily lead itself to abuse. Despite this opposition, mental reservation acquired wide currency in Spain, from where it spread to the rest of the West. Between 1580 and 1680 Iberia witnessed the publication of more than thirty treatises that justified and extended the use of verbal equivocation and mental reservation. Among their authors, we find some of the most important theologians and moralists of the time, such as Pedro de Ledesma, Alonso de Vega, Luis de Molina, Juan de Caramuel, Tomás Sánchez de Ávila, and Antonino Diana, among many others.¹⁹⁹

Outside Iberia, mental reservation was accepted in the Catholic territories of Italy, Portugal and France, where important thinkers supported the doctrine, such as Charles

¹⁹⁹ Here is a list of some of the most relevant examples: Ávila, Nicolás de, *Suma de los mandamientos y maremagnum del segundo: que enseña para el confessorario, y persuade para el pulpito*, Alcalá: Iuan Gracian, 1610, disc. 2, chap. 19, sect. 4; Báñez, Domingo, *De Iure et Iustitia Decisiones*, Salamanca: Joannem Renaut, 1594, quaest. 69, art. 1-2; Bernaldo de Quirós, Antonio, *Selectae Disputationes Theologicae de Deo*, Leiden: Phil. Borde, 1654, tract. 1, disp. 4, sect. 3; Caramuel, Juan, *Theologia moralis fundamentalis*, Frankfurt: Ioan-Gottfridi Schonvvetteri, 1652, chap. 61-62; Castillo Sotomayor, Juan del, *De iustitia et iure*, Antwerp: Caesarem Ioach, 1641, bk. II, disp. 6, dub. 1; Diana, Antonino, *Suma Diana*, Madrid: Melchor Sanchez, 1657, p. 486; Escobar, Antonio de, *Liber theologiae moralis viginti quatuor Societatis Jesu doctoribus reseratus*, Leiden: P. Borde, 1659, exam. 10, chap. 2 and 4; García, Gerónimo, *Política eclesiástica, Regular y Religiosa*, Zaragoza: Ivan de Ybar, 1653, vol. II, tract. 10, dif. 4, dub. 5, no. 4; Hurtado, Tomás, *Resolvtiones Orthodoxo-Morales, Scholasticae, Historicae*, Cologne: Cornelium ab Egmond, 1655, sect. 14; Ledesma, Pedro de, *Primera parte de la Summa: En la qual se cifra y summa todo lo que toca y pertenece a los sacramentos...: principalmente lo que toca y pertenece al sacramento de la confession*, Salamanca: Antonia Ramirez, 1605, chap. 22, pp. 679-680; Machado de Chaves, *Perfeto confessor i cura de almas*, bk. VI, part. 8, tract. 3, doc. 18; and bk. 6, part. 4, tract. 1, doc. 10; Molina, Luis de, *De Iustitia et Iure*, Antwerp: Nutius, 1609, vol. V, tract. 4, disp. 3; Ortiz Lucio, Francisco, *Summa de summas de auisos y amonestaciones generales para todos los estados y recopilacion de aduertencias y resoluciones de casos de consciencia con los sermones del Miserere y de penitencia*, Alcalá: Iuan Iñiguez de Lequerina, 1595, fols. 77v-79r; Sánchez de Ávila, Tomás, *Opus morale in praecepta Decalogi*, Madrid: Ludovico Sanchez, 1613, vol. I, bk. 3, chap. 6, no. 13-15; Santísimo Sacramento, Leandro del, *Quaestionum moralium theologicarum in decem decalogi praecepta, Parte VII. In qua de Juramento & Voto agitur*, Leiden: Jacobi Canier, 1679, disp. 45, sect. 1-2; Suárez, Francisco, *Opus de virtute et statu religionis*, Lyon: Horatii Cardon, 1609-1625, vol. V, tract. 3, disp. 9-10; Valencia, Gregorio de, *Commentariorum Theologicorum...*, Ingolstadt: David Sartorivs, 1595, vol. III, disp. 5, quaest. 13; and disp. 6, quaest. 7; Vega, Alonso de, *Suma llamada nueva recopilacion y practica del fuero interior: Vtilissima para confessores y penitentes*, Madrid: Luis Sanchez, 1606, part. 1, chap. 11, 62 and 115; Villalobos, *Manual de Confessores*, chap. 15.

de Condren (commissioned by Richelieu himself) or the Jesuits Théophile Raynaud, Nicholas Abram, and Daniel Gabriel. By contrast, the Protestant territories were generally reluctant to accept mental reservation. Protestant authorities criticised the ideas of Azpilcueta and his followers as serious sins.²⁰⁰ And yet, even so some mental reservation apologist treatises appeared, usually written by Jesuits established in these hostile lands, such as Leonardus Lessius, Andreas Eudaemon, and Martin Becanus, among others.²⁰¹ For instance, in 1598, the English Jesuit Henry Garnet wrote a *Treatise of Equivocation* in which he echoed the ideas of Azpilcueta, Gregory of Valencia and Domingo Báñez to build a solid defence of dis/simulation.²⁰² Garnet supported ‘the lawful use of equivocation’ and ‘mental reservation’ to conceal the true without a lie or sin, even when speaking under oath. These practices, he argued, were especially legitimate for English Catholics, who ‘live for the most part among (...) violent and continual adversaries.’²⁰³

²⁰⁰ On this matter see Zagorin, *Ways of lying*, chap. 9-10.

²⁰¹ Leonardus Lessius, *De Iustitia et Iure*, Lovain: Ioannes Masius, 1605, vol. II, chap. 42, dub. 9; Andreas Eudaemon-Ioannis, *Andrae Eudaemon-Ioannis e Societate Iesu ad Actionem Proditoriam Edouardi Coqui Apologia pro R. P. Henrico Garnet*, Cologne: Agrippinae, 1610, p. 42; Becano, Martino, *Compendium manualis controversiarum huius temporis de fide ac religione auctore Martino Becano Societatis Iesu theologo*, Luxemburg: Hubertum Reulant, 1625, pp. 542-543. In addition to this, Protestant theologians wrote thorough dissertations on the lawfulness of dis/simulation, especially from the second half of the 16th century. See, for example: Farinacci, Prospero, *Variarum quaestionum & communium opinionum criminalium liber quintus: De falsitate & simulatione*, Lyon: Sumptibus Iacobi Cardon & Petri Cauellat, 1621; Schneider, Michael, *Thema politicum, an et quousque principi liceat simulare et dissimulare?*, Wittenberg: Röhner, 1636; Alexander, Caspar, *Hypomnemata politica de simulatione et dissimulatione politica*, Wittenberg: Röhner, 1653; Thomasius, Jacob, *Disputatio ethica de simulatione*, Leipzig: Ritzsch, 1654; Hanke, Martin, *De simulatione et dissimulatione disputatio*, Jena: Nisius, 1656; Schaller, Jacob, *Dissertatio philosophica de simulatione iudicis*, Strasbourg: Hetstedt, 1658; Boebelius, Balthasar, *Disputatio ethico-politica de simulatione*, Wittenberg: Jobi Wilhelmi Fincelii, 1659; Becker, Gottfried, *Discursus, de politico simulante*, Wittenberg: stanno Finceliano, 1666; Alberti, Valentin, *et. al., Exercitatio historico-politica de simulatione et dissimulatione in regenda et administranda republica...*, Leipzig: Literis Johann Erici Hahnii, 1675; Juncker, Conrad, *Disputatio Juridica Inauguralis de Simulatione, qvam Divini Numinis Auxilio...*, Altdorff: Heinrici Meyeri, 1676; Cramer, Johannes Fridericus, *Oratio styli exercendi gratia quum alter sinceritatem et candorem commendaret pro simulatione et dissimulatione*, Heidelberg: Ammonius, 1680; Weickhman, Joachim, *Exercitationis moralis de simulatione pars prior*, Danzig: Gedani Rhetius, 1684; Gülich, Johann Dietrich von, *Larva iuridico-politica detecta. Sive discursus iuridico-historico- politicus de simulatione et dissimulatione*, Osterodane: Fuhrmann, 1688; Neumann, Johann Georg, *Dissertatio politica de simulatione morbi*, Wittenberg: Literis Schrödterianis, 1688.

²⁰² Edited for the first time by David Jardine in London: Longmans, 1851.

²⁰³ On this topic see: Caraman, Philip, *Henry Garnet, 1555-1606, and the gunpowder plot*, New York: Farrar, 1964, chap. 16; Malloch, Archibald, ‘Father Henry Garnet’s Treatise of Equivocation,’ *Recusant History* 15, no. 6, 1981, pp. 387-395; and Paul, Henry, ‘Garnet’s Doctrine of Equivocation,’ in *The Royal Play of Macbeth*, New York: Macmillan, 1957, pp. 237-247.

The mere mention of these names reveals one striking fact: the high presence of Jesuits among dis/simulation defenders. If during the late Middle Ages it was mainly Dominicans who set the foundations of the doctrines of verbal equivocation and mental restriction, then in the Early Modern Period it was the Jesuits who took the lead. There are several elements that explain this fact. I would emphasise two. First, the major importance that casuistry and moral probabilism had in Jesuit thought. ‘Casuistry was (...) the system of ethical reasoning the Jesuits inherited, accepted, and then advanced.’²⁰⁴

Azpilcueta himself, although he was not a Jesuit, maintained a strong connection with the Society during his lifetime. He taught at several of its schools and maintained a close friendship with some of its most important members, including Francis Xavier. His *Manual de Confessores et penitentes* (1549) was mandatory reading in the Jesuit seminars and, as of 1599, half a century after its publication, the official edition of the *Directorio para los Ejercicio Espirituales* advises Azpilcueta’s text as the basis for the study of cases of conscience.²⁰⁵ We must also take into account the importance that Jesuit education granted to the stoic idea of control of passions. Loyola’s *Spiritual Exercises* emphasised the need to learn to master mind and body (*‘el pleno dominio de sí’*), an idea that would be key for the supporters of political dis/simulation.

The second factor that helps explain the success of mental reservation among Jesuits can be found in their own historical circumstances. As is known, Jesuits often acted as confessors and advisors of princes and rulers. Such proximity to power probably made them more aware of the miseries of politics and the need to dissimulate in certain occasions. Furthermore, the Society took its evangelizing projects farther than any other order of the Counterreformation. It established missions in the Americas, India, the Philippines, and Japan, and maintained a strong presence in Anglican England. Forced

²⁰⁴ John W. O’Malley, *The First Jesuits*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993, p. 145.

²⁰⁵ *Vid.* Giancarlo Angenozzi, ‘L’insegnamento dei casi di coscienza nella pratica educativa della Compagnia di Gesù,’ in *La Ratio studiorum. Modelli culturali e pratiche educative dei Gesuiti in Italia tra Cinque e Seicento*, ed. by Gian Paolo Brizzi, Rome: Bulzoni, 1981, pp. 121-162, esp. pp. 136-137 and 140-147.

to deal with indigenous pagans and Protestants enemies, Jesuits often resorted to dis/simulation to avoid religious persecution and conduct their catechetical work.

This behaviour was heavily criticised by the enemies of the Society, who saw in dis/simulation one of the most conspicuous features of Jesuit thought. According to Francisco de la Piedad, the 'Jesuit is a hypocritical person, who employs fiction, showing soft words and friendly face to those he has need of.'²⁰⁶ Henry Hammond defined their schools as authentic 'academies of dissimulation (...) diabolically embarked in a design, of not only practicing, but also maintaining and justifying whatever is most horrid and abominable in the sight of God and man.'²⁰⁷ According to William Watson, Jesuits believed that communication should act according to necessity and not according to the truth. They articulated their speeches with so many 'lies,' 'mental evasions,' and 'tergiversations' that it was impossible for a normal person 'to know a Jesuit heart.'²⁰⁸

Jesuit or not, the casuist theologians of the period widely legitimised the use of deception, refuting those two arguments that the Augustinian tradition had used to condemn it. Namely: that the Holy Scriptures teach us not to lie; and that deception endangered the common good of society. Early modern moralists claimed that, although the Bible is replete with general prohibitions against lying or dissembling, it also contains many episodes in which saints, apostles, and even Jesus Christ used verbal equivocation and mental reservation to achieve a positive end. Furthermore, many early Church Fathers praised in their works such actions and offer no explicit condemnation of the means employed.²⁰⁹ It follows from the above that, at certain times, the preservation and regular functioning of society demanded the use of deception. Subscribers of this approach recognised the preeminent value of truth in human

²⁰⁶ 'Jesuita es una gente de exterior hipócrita, de manifiesta ficción, de blandura en las palabras, y de rostro afable con aquellos que ha menester.' *Teatro Jesuitico, apologetico discurso, con saludables y seguras doctrinas, neccessarias a los principes y Señores de la tierra*, Coimbra: n. pub., 1654, p. 240.

²⁰⁷ Hammond's preface to his translation of Blaise Pascal's *Provincial Letters*, London: Richard Royston, 1658, unpaginated.

²⁰⁸ William Watson, *A Sparing Discoverie of Our English Jesuits and of Fa. Parsons under Pretence of Promoting the Catholike Faith in England*, London: Felix Kingston, 1601, pp. 11-12.

²⁰⁹ Some of the most cited episodes are: Genesis 12. 10-20; 26. 6; 27. 27; Job 3. 36; Exodus 1. 2; Judith 15. 10; Tobias 5. 18; Kings 10; Mark 13. 31-32 and John 7. 8. For more information on the biblical sources for the early modern dissimulation see Zagorin, *Ways of Lying*, pp. 15-37.

relationships, but rejected the Augustinian doctrine according to which deception was always and inherently sinful. Sometimes, they argued, the right to truth conflicted with the right to knowledge. Every person has the right to hear the truth, but not every person has the right to know all truths. There are times when the good of society demands certain information to be hidden, especially when this concealment could ensure the self-preservation and well being of such society. In those instances, deception does not undermine the common good, but rather protects it. At the end of the day, reasoned Brezmes Díez de Prado, ‘men must have a way to hide truth, whenever there is a strong reason to do so. And there cannot be a better way than mental reservation.’²¹⁰

Thus, early modern casuists managed to consolidate the defence of deceit formulated by their late medieval predecessors. Their other contribution was to expand its field of application far beyond the limits established by fifteenth century moralists. Through their writings, verbal equivocation and mental reservation ceased to be mechanisms for priests unlawfully questioned about the secrets of confession to gradually extend to every circumstance of daily life in which deception was more just, useful or beneficial than honesty. First, the right to deception went from the confessor to the confessed. According to Alonso de Vega:

If during confession someone was asked about a mortal sin [that he committed but] already confessed to before, or if he was asked for any information that he could not or should not confess it. [And] if he refuses, he would neither lie nor sin.²¹¹

²¹⁰ ‘Algún modo han de tener los hombres para ocultar la verdad, siempre que huviere causa bastante para ocultarla. No se puede dar modo más oportuno que el de la restricción mental.’ Brezmes Díez de Prado, *Teatro moral dividido*, p. 175.

²¹¹ The fragment continues at follows: ‘Let us see an example: A man committed fornication, and then confessed [its fault to a priest. Later,] in a second confession, [an other] priest asked him if he has committed fornication. He would not sin or lie in saying “no” (...) The reason is clear: because the confessor asked for the things that belongs to that confession.’ ‘Si a alguno le preguntasen en la confesion de algun pecado mortal que [aya cometido pero ya] aya confesado legitimamente, o le preguntan alguna circunstancia que no puede ni debe de confesar, si lo niega, no miente, ni peca venialmente. Declaremoslo con un exemplo. Un hombre cometió una fornicacion, y confesose ya della legitimamente, y en la segunda confesion preguntale el confesor si ha fornicado, no peca venialmente, diziendo que no, ni es mentira. Y lo mismo digo de la circunstancia: la razon es clara, porque se ha de entender que el confesor pregunta de lo que pertenece a aquella confesión.’ Alonso de Vega, *Suma llamada nueva recopilación*, vol. I, chap. 11, sect. 24, fols. 254r-254v.

Similarly,

If someone lies during confession, denying a venial sin that he has truly committed, because he did not want to confess that fault in that moment, (...) he would not morally sin. And the reason is that everyone is free to decide what he wants to confess (...) and to hide some venial sins (...) In this all theologians agree.²¹²

Furthermore, the confessor's right to rely on deception to not reveal the secrets of confession before a secular court was extended to every person processed. According to Nicolás de Ávila, 'when someone is unjustly accused of a crime he did not commit (...) he is not obligated to answer the truth, if he risks being condemned for such confession.' Ávila provides the following example:

Some thieves killed a traveller on a road with the sword of an innocent man, who happened to be there at that moment. The innocent man swears the truth: that he did not kill him. But he is charged of murder with false witnesses. Then, the judge asks him if he passed through that road at the time of the crime and if that sword is his.²¹³

In such a case, concluded Ávila, the man could reply it was not his sword. And that would not be perjury; but simply an 'officious lie' (*mentira oficiosa*).²¹⁴ Other casuists went even further, and allowed the deception of the accused regardless of whether he was or not guilty of the crime he was charged with. According to Alonso de Vega:

If a judge prosecutes someone for a murder or any other crime that this person has truly committed, but the judge has no legal proof nor evidence (...) against him, but just a suspicion (...) the person can, under oath, swear that 'he did not do it,' understanding 'to tell you,' since the judge was not

²¹² 'Si alguno en la confesión mintiere, negando el pecado venial que verdaderamente ha cometido, no entendiéndolo entonces de confesarse de él (...) no peca mortalmente: y la razón es, porque como en la libertad de cada uno este confesar, o dejar los pecados veniales que más quisiere, luego que niega, o calla alguno, es visto no le querer hacer materia de la confesión. En esto convienen todos los Teólogos.' *Ibid.*, fol. 255v.

²¹³ 'Unos ladrones mataron a un hombre en un camino con la espada de aqueste inocente, que a caso acertó a pasar por allí a aquella hora. Después acusado con falsos testigos de aquel homicidio, interrogado del juez, jura la verdad que él no le mató. Pasando el juez adelante le pregunta, si pasó por aquel camino a la hora que mataron a aquel hombre y si aquella espada era suya.' Nicolás de Ávila, *Suma de los mandamientos y maremagnum del segundo: que enseña para el confessorio, y persuade para el pulpito*, Alcalá: Iuan Gracian, 1610, disc. 2, chap. 19, sect. 4, pp. 427-428.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

acting lawfully. And that would not be perjury. And if despite of it, he is [sentenced] to death by hanging because of the judge's suspicion, the accused person would not be forced to reveal [his sin to be forgiven by God]. It would be enough to confess it to his confessor in his internal forum.²¹⁵

As can be observed, dis/simulation and mental restriction appear here as lawful mechanisms for protection against illegal prosecution and the excesses of a judge. At a time when the process of social discipline and confessionalisation resulted in increasing abuses of power through the judicial system, deceit appeared as a legitimate method of civil disobedience, a lawful way to avoid the injustices of the system, such as false accusations or torture.²¹⁶ Moreover, following the same logic (the right of every citizen to escape the abuses of power) casuists also justified the use of 'equivocations, amphibologies, and restrictions' (*las equivocaciones, amphibologias, y restricciones*) to avoid unfair taxation, illegitimate debts, unwanted marriages, and even a conviction for manslaughter.

This view can be found, for instance, in the *Practica de crras y confessores* by Benito Remigio Noydens (d. 1685), a Spanish theologian born in Antwerp that became a member of the Order of Clerics Regular Minor and wrote several works on very different subjects, ranging from exorcism to a moral history of Momo. In his *Practica de crras*, Remigio Noydens collects a number of significant examples of lawful dissimulations: 'the merchant can use an equivocal oath to sell' his goods. 'He who took what was owed to him can lawfully swear that he took nothing, understanding "that was not his."' 'He who owes fifty, and is asked for hundred, can deny that owes hundred, having the purpose of paying fifty.' 'A clergyman that carries a good that should not be

²¹⁵ 'Si el juez prende a uno por una muerte, o por qualquier delito, que en realidad de verdad el preso ha cometido, pero el juez no tiene porvanza, ni indicios, ni ninguna cosa de las que permite y quiere el derecho que haya contra él, sino por sospecha que tiene de él, como la podía tener de otro: tómale juramento, si el ha hecho aquello. Puede [el reo] jurar que no lo hizo y no será perjuro, entendiendo para sí, para decírselo, pues no preguntarle, según derecho, no es un juez: y si con todo ello por la sospecha que tiene el juez, le ahorcare, tampoco está obligado a decirlo, sino basta que en el foro interior lo confiese a su confesor.' Alonso de Vega, *Suma llamada nueva recopilacion y practica del fuero interior: Vtilissima para confessores y penitentes*, Madrid: Luis Sanchez, 1606, part. 2, chap. 16, case 29, col. 206. The same idea appears in many other texts. For example: Gerónimo García, *Política eclesiástica, Regular y Religiosa*, Zaragoza: Ivan de Ybar, 1653, vol. II, tract. 10, dif. 4, dub. 5, no. 4, p. 265; and Remigio Noydens, *Practica de crras y confessores*, pp. 34-35.

²¹⁶ Juan Machado de Chaves, *Perfeto confessor i cura de almas*, bk. VI, part. 4, tract. 1, doc. 10.

taxed, may swear to have nothing, understanding, “to pay for;” and a layman can do the same if requested unfairly, or if he already paid for it before.’ ‘If a thief forces a man to swear he will give him some money, that man can swear with equivocation to give it, “if owed.”’ ‘He who is forced to promise that he would marry a woman (...) can swear that he will, understanding “only if I am forced or I feel like it.”’ ‘He who killed a man [by mistake] thinking it was a beast, or in self-defence, can say he did not, understanding “guiltily.”’²¹⁷

All these examples, which indeed could be multiplied, demonstrate how deception penetrated theological thought in this period. Contemporary scholars often regard mental reservation as the theological equivalent of crossing one's fingers.²¹⁸ This may be the case for atheists of the twenty-first century. But for early modern believers this technique represented a huge advance. With it, moralists could legitimise almost every form of deception without clashing with the Augustinian prohibition of lying. A good example of this is to be found in the following statement by the Capuchin monk Jaime Corella:

If someone goes to Peter's house to capture him, and his wife, or son, or servant wants to hide the fact that he is at home, he could say, without lying, that ‘Peter left home.’ And to make it more credible, he can even swear it, understanding that he has left home on other occasions. Because the words ‘he left home’ are equivocal, since they can mean that Peter just left the house, or that he did it a long time ago.²¹⁹

²¹⁷ ‘El mercader puede usar del juramento equívoco para vender.’ ‘El que tomó lícitamente lo que le debían, puede lícitamente jurar que nada tomó, entendiendo ageno.’ ‘El que dece cincuenta, y le piden ciento, puede negar que debe ciento, teniendo propósito de pagar los cincuenta.’ ‘El clérigo que lleva alguna mercadería de que no debe alcabala, puede jurar que no la lleva, entendiendo para pagarla; y lo mismo el seglar si se la piden injustamente, o la pago ya a otro caballero.’ ‘Al ladrón que fuerza a jurar que le darán algunos dineros, se puede jurar con equivocación darellos, si los debiere.’ ‘El que fuere forzado a que prometa, se casará con la mujer que no está obligado, puede jurar lo hará entendiendo, si estoy obligado, o si después me diere el gusto de hacerlo.’ ‘El que mató un hombre pensando era fiera, o por defenderse, puede afirmar que no lo hizo, entendiendo culpablemente.’ Remigio Noydens, *Practica de cvras y confesores y doctrina para penitentes*, pp. 34-35.

²¹⁸ Bailey, Frederick George, *The prevalence of deceit*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991, p. 2.

²¹⁹ ‘Si a Pedro van a buscar a casa, y a la mujer, o hijo, o criado les importa el ocultar que esta en casa, pueden responder, sin mentir, que Pedro ha salido de casa; y para hacerlo más creible, si importa, jurarlo, entendiendo, que ha salido otras veces de casa; porque estas palabras ha salido de casa, son equívocas, y significan el que Pedro haya salido de casa, poco ha, o mucho antes.’ Jaime de Corella, *Practica de el confessorario y explicacion de las 65 proposiciones condenadas por la Santidad de N. SS. P. Inocencio XI: su materia los casos mas selectos de la theologia moral, su forma vn dialogo entre el confessor y penitente*, Barcelona: Rafael Figuerò, 1689, p. 255.

Casuists even exceeded the red line drawn by Azpilcueta and legitimised religious deception in those territories where sincerity could result in death, prison, or loss of property. Such was the case, for example, of England, where many people were forced to conceal their beliefs behind a facade of conformity to protestant worship after Catholicism was proscribed in 1558. Consequently, following that year there appeared some treatises that justified religious dissimulation and even simulation, provided they were temporary attitudes imposed by circumstances.²²⁰

And the list does not stop there. As we shall see later, religious dis/simulation was also widely legitimised by political theorists and theologians of the court.²²¹ Are these opinions mere exceptions inspired by Jesuit casuistry? Or, on the contrary, are they representative voices of a society that accepted large doses of deception even in religious practice? After all, was not the hypocrisy with which Catholics attended mass and observed their official rites one of the main criticisms of Erasmus and the Reformers of the sixteenth century? Truth-telling, the casuist admitted, was a socially useful institution. But so too was the omission of truth, especially when the revealed information could be put to evil use. Thus, in situations of ‘just cause’ (which according to Antonino Diana ‘may be necessity or utility, to save the body, the honour, or the property’²²²) it was lawful to use silence, strategic omissions and ambiguous expressions to hide the truth and deceive. This could be employed in an illegal interrogation, but also in a perfectly legal prosecution, in economic business, in confession and, ultimately, in any circumstance of life. It was enough that the individual not try to deceive God or himself.

²²⁰ We find this view, for instance, in the *Treatise to Prove That Attendance at the Protestant Church Was in Itself No Sin, and Therefore Might Be Lawfully Submitted to for the Purpose of Avoiding a Persecution* by the English Jesuit Alban Langdale (d. 1580). This text was discussed by: Holmes, *Elizabethan Casuistry*, pp. 90-94; Rose, *Cases of Conscience*, pp. 75-77; Southern, *Elizabethan Recusant Prose*, pp. 142-143; and Zagorin, *Ways of Lying*, pp. 145-146.

²²¹ See chapter VII.

²²² ‘Puede ser necesidad, o utilidad, para salvar el cuerpo, la honrra, o la hacienda.’ Antonino Diana, *Suma Diana*, p. 486.

THE TWILIGHT OF CASUIST DECEPTION

As might be expected, these dangerous ideas did not go unnoticed, and they unleashed furious attacks from the late sixteenth century on. Protestant theologians condemned the doctrine of mental reservation as ‘a very labyrinth to lead men into error and falsehood;’²²³ a rhetorical trick that opened the door to ‘all manner of lies’ by making it possible for any false statement to be true ‘if we do but reserve something in mind, according to our pleasure.’²²⁴ The same argued many voices within the Catholic world, which saw in casuistry a dangerous form of moral laxity that seemed to condone and justify everything. In Brezmes Díez de Prado’s words: ‘for me, what is the difference if someone speaks to me restricting the words in his mind or [simply] lying?’²²⁵

Indeed, if we approach the issue as Azpilcueta suggested, attending exclusively to the connection or rupture between what the speaker says and what he thinks, then the doctrines of verbal equivocation and mental reservation make sense. But if we conceive communication as the exchange of information between two individuals, and analyse the connection between what the speaker says and the listener understands, then there is no difference between lying *ad hoc* and mental restriction. Throughout the seventeenth century, attacks increased, fostered by the weakness of the Society of Jesus and the emergence of the Jansenist movement, whose religious ideas relied heavily on Augustinian theology. The works of some Jesuits were censored, such those by Leonardus Lessius (1624) and Étienne Bauny (1640). Moreover, some universities, such as Leuven, published lists of condemned casuist doctrines. In 1625, the English Benedictine John Barnes published in Paris his *Traicté et dispute contre les equivoques*, a powerful refutation of the teachings of Lessius and Parsons. Three decades later, in

²²³ *Apud*. Zagorin, *Ways of lying*, p. 196.

²²⁴ William Ames, *Conscience with the Power and Cases Thereof*, London: Rothwell, 1643, bk. IV, chap. 22, pp. 51-53.

²²⁵ ‘¿Por que, para mi, que más hace al caso que uno me hable, restringiendo las palabras en su mente, o que me hable mintiendo?’ Martín Brezmes Díez de Prado, *Teatro moral dividido en dos partes. En la primera se trata de las quarenta y cinco proposiciones que condeno Alexandro VII en dos Decretos. En la segunda se trata de las sesenta y cinco proposiciones que condenó Inocencio XI en otro Decreto*, Salamanca: Gregorio Ortiz, 1685, p. 179.

1657, Blaise Pascal attacked the casuist method in his *Provincial Letters*, a text that exerted a great influence on his contemporaries. In 1670, Baruch Spinoza criticised the doctrine of mental reservation and predicted that, if hypocrisy continued to spread, ‘men will be saying one thing and thinking another: belief in another’s word (...) will thus be undermined, nauseating sycophancy and deceitfulness encouraged; and hence will come frauds and the destruction of all honest dealing.’²²⁶ Thus we arrive at the papal condemnation of Innocent XI. In the bull *Sanctissimus Dominus* (1679), the pope condemned sixty-five proposals (*propositiones laxorum moralistarum*) taken from the works of Iberian casuists such as Antonio de Escobar, Tomás Sánchez and Francisco Suárez, and banned their teaching under pain of excommunication. One of those prohibited doctrines was mental reservation, severely censored in propositions 26, 27 and 28 as a kind of *mendacio* and perjury. ‘This condemnation,’ explained Brezmes Díez de Prado, ‘caused surprise across the [Spanish] Empire, as well as in Church,’ being as it was a ‘famous doctrine’ supported by ‘very important authors.’²²⁷ So much so that not even the papal bull settled completely the matter. In 1683, the clergyman Raimundo Lumbier, confused by the controversy between supporters and opponents of mental reservation, wrote to the Vatican requesting a definitive decision on the matter. The person who answered him recognised ‘that here [in Rome] the scholars are in the same confusion.’²²⁸ Many Iberian moralists endorsed the Pope’s condemnation.²²⁹ However,

²²⁶ *Tractatus Theologico-Philosophicus*, in *The Political Works*, ed. and trans. by A. G. Wernham, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958, p. 227.

²²⁷ ‘Esta condenación causó admiración en toda esta Monarquía, y puedo decir que en toda la Iglesia’ being as it was a ‘doctrina célebre’ supported by ‘gravísimos autores.’ Brezmes Díez de Prado, *Teatro Moral*, p. 173.

²²⁸ ‘... que allá los Doctos están en la misma confusión.’ Raimundo Lumbier, *Noticias teológicas morales acerca las proposiciones condenadas por NN. SS. PP. Inocencio XI y Alejandro VII*, Zaragoza: herederos de Pedro Lanaja, 1683, p. 157.

²²⁹ For example: Manero, Domingo, *Difiniciones morales, muy utiles y provechosas para curas, confesores y penitentes. Recopiladas de las obras del señor Don Christoval de Aguirre*, Pamplona: Juan Micon, 1696, pp. 312-313; Mota, Francisco de la, *Compendio de la suma anadida de Martin de Torrecilla con addiciones del tomo de proposiciones condenadas y del de Obispos y otras*, Madrid: Antonio Roman, 1698, vol. I, tract. 3, disp. 2, chap. 5, sect. 2, pp. 375-380; and Torrecilla, Martín de, *Suma de todas las materias morales*, Madrid: Antonio Roman, 1696, vol. II, pp. 257-258.

many others refused to accept it and continued to advocate the lawfulness of mental reservation until the end of the century.²³⁰

²³⁰ Among others: Barbosa, Agostinho, *Collectanea doctorum tam veterum quam recentiorum in jus pontificium universum*, Lugduni: Petri Borde, 1688, vol. V, part. 2, causa 22, quaest. 3, no. 21; Corella, *Practica de el confessorario*, pp. 253-261; Fuente Hurtado, Diego de la, *Theología reformata: qua plures enodantur morales difficultates ex mente SS. D. N. Innocentij Papae XI*, Hispali: Thomae Lopez de Haro, 1689, disert. 13-18; Remigio Noydens, *Practica de cvras y confessores*, pp. 34-36; Brezmes Díez de Prado, *Teatro moral*, part. 2, propost. 25-26, pp. 172-187; Santo Tomás, Juan de, *Prologomena in Scripturam Sacram: ubi peropportuna oblata occasione, propositiones 26. 27 et 28 circa restrictiones mentales a SS. D. N. Innocentio XI damnatae*, Salamanca: viuda de Lucas Pérez, 1692, disp. 1, quaest. 75, sect. 10.

CHAPTER III

DECEPTION IN EUROPEAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

Politics is the art of governing
mankind by deceiving them.

ISAAC D'ISRAELI

THE MEDIEVAL CONDEMNATION

In medieval Europe, Christianity served as the foundation of royal authority and political order. The king was considered the natural holder of divine power on earth and the vicar of Christ among men. This sacred ministry forced him to adapt his behaviour, public and private, to the moral standards dictated by religion, thereby ensuring God's support and serving as a model for his subjects. Christ had declared himself to be the Truth. Therefore, if the prince acted as his minister, it was logical to expect the same transparency and sincerity in him. Thus, the moral prohibition of deception formulated by Augustinian theology extended to the royal figure and the practice of government.

In 1081, Pope Gregory VII wrote a harsh letter to Alphonse VI about the sovereignty dispute they had engaged in for decades. He censured the Castilian king's conduct and warned him: 'Your prudence is not ignorant of the fact that it is a sin to lie (...) even a lie placed with a pious intention for the cause of peace is not entirely immune from fault.'²³¹ Most theorists agreed with his judgment. Medieval authors held that lying in

²³¹ 'Non ignorat prudentia tua mentiri peccatum esse, si et de otioso verbo in districto examine exigenda est ratio. Sed ne mendacium quidem ipsum quod fit pia intentione pro pace, a culpa penitus immune esse probari potest.' *Epistola ad Alphonsum Regem Catellae*, in *Sancti Gregorii VII Pontificis Romani Opera Pars Prima, Registrum*, bk. IX, ep. 2.

political practice threatened the social order, undermining the credibility of rulers and the feudal system.²³² According to Giles of Rome:

The first advisable thing for the royal majesty is to obey and be obedient to the law; and not with appearances or hypocrisy, but with truth and facts, so every man thinks that he is the true king [thanks to] God's will.²³³

Every mirror for princes (*specula principum*) of this period forbade lies and deception. The *Libro de los doze Sabios*, written about 1238 by one of the advisors of Ferdinand III, stated that the king should fight mendacious people and be the 'destroyer of the lie.'²³⁴ The *Flores de Filosofia* (c. 1255) recommended princes to 'speak always the truth, since the lie brings shame and there cannot be a worse disease than being dishonest.'²³⁵ The *Castigos del rey don Sancho IV* (c. 1293) devoted several chapters to condemning 'lies and falsehood' as 'a great mortal sin,' forbidden to all men and 'even more to the king.'²³⁶ In the *Oraciones a la República de Florencia*, a text translated into Spanish around 1450, it writes that men should rule:

Without pretence or simulation, which are corruptible and pernicious vices for those who rule the kingdom (...) They damage their spirits, weaken their brains and mortify their hearts, so when we try to save the Republic, it is already dead.²³⁷

²³² See, for example: Pseudo-Aristotle, *Secreto de los secretos* (Ms. BNM 9428), ed. by Hugo Bizarri, Buenos Aires: Incipit, 1991, pp. 33-34; Prevostin of Cremona, *Summa Theologiae*, p. 42.

²³³ 'Lo que primero que conviene a la real majestad es obedecer e ser obedientes a los ordenamientos de la ley y no con infinita ni con apariencia de hipocresía, más con verdad e por fecho manifesto que parezca todos los hombres que es rey verdadero e que tiene el reino de mano de Dios.' Juan García de Castrojeriz, *Glosa castellana al 'Regimiento de Príncipes' de Egidio Romano*, ed. by Juan Beneyto, Madrid: Instituto de Estudios políticos, 1947-1948, vol. I, p. 232.

²³⁴ 'destruidor de la mentira.' *El libro de los doze sabios o, Tractado de la nobleza y lealtad* (c. 1237), ed. by John K. Walsh, *Anejos del Boletín de la Real Academia Española* XXIX, 1975, pp. 71-118.

²³⁵ 'Que lo que hablare que sea verdad. Pues la mentira mete al hombre en vergüenza grande y no puede el hombre haber peor enfermedad que ser mal hablado y de mal corazón.' *Las Flores de Filosofia*, ms. 9428 de la Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid, ed. by Jose Manuel Lucía Megías, Murcia: n. pub., 1997, chap. 10. English trans. by Thomas Lee Fouché, *Flores de filosofia: an Edition with Introduction and Notes*, Doctoral Thesis, New York: Columbia University, 1979.

²³⁶ 'La mentira y la falsedad' are 'grande pecado mortal,' forbidden to all men and 'cuanto más al rey.' *Castigos y documentos del rey don Sancho IV*, ed. by Antonio Rivera García, Murcia: Biblioteca Saavedra Fajardo, 2008, chap. 11-13, esp. fols. 28v, 30r and 65r.

²³⁷ 'Sin fingimiento y simulación, que son unos vicios perniciosos y corruptibles de aquella clara sangre con que se gobierna el cuerpo común y universal, y con la tal corrupción, insertos y dañados los espíritus, enflaquece el cerebro y mortifica el corazón, así que cuando queremos acorrer a la república, que es ya

Similar statements can be found in the *Libro de los cien capítulos*, the *Bocados de Oro*, and in the many collections of proverbs and moral judgments that were published in Castile during the Middle Ages.²³⁸ It does not matter what the circumstances or motives were: the prince, wrote the Castilian humanist Diego de Valera, should ‘love truth and those who follow it and hate lies and liars.’²³⁹

The principle that kings or other leaders should be truthful was also reflected in the legal corpus of the time. For instance, the *Siete Partidas* (1265) by Alphonse X the Wise dictated that the king must speak without ‘deviation or twisting’ (*desviación ni torcimiento*) and:

[Avoid] lying, against himself or someone else, because (...) our Lord Jesus Christ said of himself, that He was the Truth. Wherefore, kings who occupy his place on earth, and who are in charge of saving the truth, should be careful not to violate it by uttering false words (...) or speaking in such a way as to not indicate well and plainly what he says. A king, more than anyone else, should observe this, for, if he does not (...), men would not believe him (...) and they would also contract a habit of lying. Moreover, (...) they would be unable to advise him properly (...) and God would punish him.²⁴⁰

Medieval thinkers considered honesty and transparency the main ethical foundations of good government and condemned simulation and deception as the most characteristic features of the tyrant: the vices that distinguished the good prince from the evil one. As

muerta, no podemos.’ *Cuatro oraciones a la República de Florencia*, ed. by Carmen Parrilla, Madrid: Gredos, 1995, p. 26.

²³⁸ *Bocados de Oro*, Seville: Meynardo Ungut, 1495, chap. 5 and 13.

²³⁹ ‘Amar la verdad y los que la siguen y aborrecer la mentira y los mentirosos.’ Diego de Valera, *Tratado de exhortación y comendación de paz*, [c. 1488], Ms.1341 Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid, fol. 17r.

²⁴⁰ ‘Decir mentira a sabiendas, en daño de sí mismo o de otro, pues (...) dijo nuestro señor Jesucristo por sí mismo que Él era la Verdad. Y por esto los reyes que tienen su lugar en la tierra, y a quienes pertenece guardarla, mucho deben procurar que no sean contra ella diciendo palabras mentirosas (...) o diciendo las palabras tan breves y tan aprisa (...) en manera que no muestre bien y abiertamente lo que dijere. Y esto debe el rey guardar más que otro hombre, pues si no lo hiciese (...) no lo creerían los hombres que lo oyesen, aunque dijese verdad, y tomarían de allí ocasión para mentir. Otrosí, cuando mostrase su razón de manera que no le entendiesen, no le sabrían responder ni aconsejar en lo que dijese.’ *Siete Partidas*, tit. IV, law 3.

it is stated in numerous political treatises, chronicals and histories in which Tiberius, Catiline, Severus and other Roman emperors are described as peerless hypocrites.²⁴¹

The Renaissance reinforced these views. The first humanists dreamed of a free and virtuous man, whose life was governed primarily by moral rectitude and transparency. For them, truth was an essential value, a key ingredient of *vera amicitia* and good governance, while deception was condemned as a pernicious practice. According to Matteo Palmieri, ‘nothing should be feigned, dissimulated or concealed among friends. Everything must be evident, explicit and clear, so they seem two beings driven by the same will.’²⁴² It was useless to employ deception in life, since the fame obtained by fraud was false and ephemeral. ‘Whoever aspires to acquire glory by a feigned appearance, simulated words and false ostentation is wrong because no simulated or feigned thing is sustainable.’²⁴³

These few references illustrate how the theological condemnation of lying and deception dominated medieval and Renaissance models of statecraft. The kings of these periods practiced deception as much as rulers of any other time, but they also liked to see such behaviours denounced in a theoretical way. Of course, such a contradiction could not survive indefinitely. From the fifteenth century, this model was gradually challenged by new political and cultural realities and the development of a pessimistic view of the world that finally led to the appearance of a new political model embodied in the “reason of state.”

²⁴¹ See some examples in: Sánchez de Arévalo, Rodrigo, *Suma de la Política y Vergel de los príncipes*, [c. 1457], ed. by Mario Penna, in *Prosistas castellanos del s. XV*, Madrid: Rivadeneira, 1959, pp. 284-288; Fernández de Heredia, Juan, *Gran crónica de España*, [c. 1385], ed. by Regina af Geijerstam, *Gran crónica de España, I. Ms. 10133 BNM*, Madison: Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, 1995.

²⁴² ‘Niuna cosa fra gli amici vuol essere finta, dissimulata, o nascosa: ogni sia aperta, specificata e chiara, in modo che paiano due in una medesima volontà.’ *Della vita civile*, written in 1429, first printed in Florence, 1528, bk. IV.

²⁴³ ‘Chi con finta apparenza, simulate parole e ostentazione non vera, stima acquistare stabile gloria è in errore, perocchè niuna cosa simulata o finta può essere durabile.’ *Ibid.*

NEW POLITICS FOR A NEW WORLD

The relatively optimistic view of human beings and their world that inspired late medieval humanists experienced a slow but steady decline from the beginning of the sixteenth century; a decline that eventually led to the appearance of the Baroque mind-set. The discovery of a new continent that was not mentioned in the Bible, the redefinition of the Cosmos initiated by Copernicus; the fracture of Western Christianity caused by the Protestant Reformation; the numerous epidemics, wars, economic crises, and famines that shook the map of Europe; all these factors contributed to generate the impression that the world was full with unknown, ephemeral, and distorted realities. Thus, the medieval vision, which embodied man's optimistic estimation of human potential for attaining truth and understanding the order of things, was progressively replaced by an early modern and rather pessimistic view that considered that truth was buried beneath appearances and deceit and that human intellect could at most aspire only to a dim, partial comprehension of it.²⁴⁴

The feeling of uncertainty and distrust also affected the perception of human beings and social relations. Throughout the sixteenth century, intellectuals went from the rediscovery of man as a perfect and virtuous being, to the perplexed contemplation of that enigmatic creature that seemed as variable, hostile and treacherous as the world itself. The fascination with the human psyche was replaced by a fear of it; an optimistic view of human interactions was overwhelmed by a sceptical one. Man remained the main concern of early modern authors, although not as the most perfect being of God's creation, but as a fragile creature, whose conduct was not ruled by the "right reason" or

²⁴⁴ There are a number of works that have explored this essentially pessimistic view of human life Renaissance humanism. See, among others: Cameron Allen, 'The Degeneration of Man and Renaissance Pessimism,' *Studies in Philology* XXV, 1938, pp. 202-227; Charles Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness: Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought*, Chicago: University Press, 1970; Harding Craig, *The Enchanted Glass. The Elizabethan Mind in Literature*, Oxford: University Press, 1936; Hiram Haydn, *The Counter-Renaissance*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950; William Bouwsma, *Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty: Renaissance Values in the Age of Counter Reformation*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968; *Idem*, *The Waning of the Renaissance, 1550-1640*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.

“virtue” but by self interest and certain contradictions for which God did not always provide answers.²⁴⁵

Moreover, early modern intellectuals thought that the evil nature of humanity had also corrupted social relations, which would be considered from then on as dominated by a ‘lineage of deceit and lies.’²⁴⁶ Life became a tortuous experience of ‘embracing shadows [and] chasing delusions,’ as Góngora observed.²⁴⁷ According to Baltasar Gracián: ‘Truth-telling and word-keeping are unknown now and seem things of past times.’²⁴⁸ In the views of the Spanish theologian and statesman Andrés Ferrer de Valdecebro:

Our ancestors knew a simple world ruled by divine and the natural laws supported by Prudence and Discretion. [In those days] flattery and deception were so rejected that almost no one practiced them. Today, falsehood has the domain and flattery the power; and truth suffers a miserable slavery. The divine and the natural laws are violated. The precepts that built and preserved glorious monarchies, are now neglected.²⁴⁹

Epistemological distrust led to the formation of some of the most conspicuous elements of early modern culture, completely transforming the artistic and literary manifestations of period. But it also led to the creation of a new system of social and political values that had a major effect on the conception of deception.

In the new world that was emerging, it was not possible to continue practicing evangelical transparency and bringing the heart ‘outside the chest’ (*fuor de’ petti*), as

²⁴⁵ Vid. Del Río Parra, Elena, *Cartografías de la conciencia española en la Edad de Oro*, México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2008; Robbins, Jeremy, *Arts of Perception: The Epistemological Mentality of the Spanish Baroque, 1580-1720*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2007; Rodríguez de la Flor, Fernando, *Pasiones frías: secreto y disimulación en el Barroco hispano*, Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2005, esp. pp. 141-162.

²⁴⁶ ‘Linaje de engaños y mentiras.’ Andrés Ferrer de Valdecebro, *Gobierno general Moral y Político hallado en las aves más generosas y nobles sacados de sus naturales virtudes y propiedades*, Madrid: Diego Díaz, 1647, p. 366.

²⁴⁷ ‘abrazar sombras, perseguir engaños.’ Soneto: *De la brevedad engañosa de la vida*, 1623.

²⁴⁸ ‘Desconócese ya, y parece cosa de otros tiempos, el decir verdad, el guardar palabra.’ Baltasar Gracián, *Oráculo manual y arte de prudencia*, Huesca: Iuan Nogues, 1647, Aforismo 120.

²⁴⁹ ‘Aquella sencillez de nuestros progenitores la gobernaba la Divina, y la Natural ley, con abrigo de la Prudencia, Discreción. Vivía acosada la lisonja, y con desamparo tanto el engaño, que apenas el más malicioso hallaba arrimo. Hoy tiene la falsedad dominio, la lisonja, imperio; la virtud obedece, y padece esclavitud mísera la verdad. La Divina Ley se atropella, la natural se violenta. Los preceptos, que erigieron y conservaron Monarquías gloriosas, se desprecian.’ Ferrer de Valdecebro, *Gobierno general Moral y Político*, p. 27.

medieval moralists suggested.²⁵⁰ Modern man had no other choice but 'to adapt to current times. There are no friends anymore, no sincerity, no good intentions. Everything is a lie, stratagem, and self-interest.'²⁵¹ Thus was born a new way of conceiving the relationship between the subject (which must meet his individual destiny) and the social group (in search of greater cohesion) based on self-interest (*amore di sé*) and the permanent control of appearances. Honesty and transparency became obsolete forms of socialization, useless under reigning circumstances. On the contrary, suspicion, opacity and deception emerged as new patterns of behaviour. At first they were conceived as defence mechanisms to protect the inner-self from the constraints of the world. But over time, deception would be praised as an essential pillar of social life –the sole factor that allowed peaceful coexistence among men. In his *Emblemas Morales*, Juan de Horozco y Covarrubias displayed a huge Atlas called Deception (*Engaño*) carrying the world on his back. In its caption he wrote: 'Only this sustains me.'²⁵²

This sociological transformation also affected the nobility and royalty. Long gone were the chivalrous and feudal models of medieval society, structured by blood ties and long-standing personal loyalties. Early modern Europe witnessed the emergence of the Modern State, and with it, the Court, a hostile forum inhabited by ambitious politicians competing in an unstable game of machinations, intrigue and lies. In that *locus* of power, 'men, and especially kings, live among enemies.'²⁵³ Courtiers tried to manipulate

²⁵⁰ Valeriano Bolzani, Piero, *Hieroglyphica*, Basil: n. pub, 1556. *Apud.* Maria Bettetini, *Breve storia della bugia*, Milan: Raffaello Cortina, 2001, p. 89.

²⁵¹ 'Debémonos, pues, acomodar con el tiempo que corre. Ya no hay amigos, no hay desengaños, no hay buenas intenciones. Todo es mentira, todo estratagema, todo propio interés.' Cristóbal Suárez de Figueroa, *El pasajero*, Madrid: Luis Sánchez, 1617. I use the ed. by Federico Rodríguez Marín, Madrid: Renacimiento, 1913, p. 132.

²⁵² 'Éste solo me sustenta.' *Emblemas Morales*, Segovia: Juan de la Cuesta, 1589.

²⁵³ 'Los hombres, y más los reyes, viven entre enemigos.' Pedro de Rivadeneira, *Tratado de la religión y virtudes que debe tener el príncipe cristiano para gobernar y conservar sus Estados. Contra lo que Nicolás Maquiavelo y los políticos de estos tiempos enseñan*, Madrid: Pedro Madrigal, 1595. I use the edition by Vicente de la Fuente, *Obras escogidas del padre Pedro de Rivadeneira*, Madrid: Imprenta de los Sucesores de Hernando, 1910. The quote on p. 123.

the prince to gain wealth and prestige. Consequently, wrote Saavedra Fajardo, 'it would be foolish' to recommend him 'to uncover his heart (...) without restraint.'²⁵⁴

Such distrust was exacerbated by the fleeting image of the world that we have already discussed. Early modern political thinkers considered monarchies human creations that were also subjected to that inexorable doom that affected everything. 'They are born, live and die as living creatures or plants, without a firm age of consistency.' Power was seen as an arrow, that goes 'up or down' in the air, but cannot remain suspended.²⁵⁵ Not even the Roman Empire, the greatest political achievement of Antiquity, was able to escape this fateful universal decline. The twilight is therefore inevitable. However, some authors believed that with the right political approach, it could be mitigated or delayed. According to the Toledan historian Eugenio de Narbona:

Republics, like all natural things, finish and are carried away by the stream of time and change. [But] this fall and change can be slowed down and, when it happens, becomes less terrible with the enforcement of a doctrine, whose precepts are like preservatives against corruption or a buttress to stop [the collapse of] this great building.²⁵⁶

Thus, the challenge was to formulate such a 'doctrine' that would allow the 'conservation of monarchies', according to the famous title of Fernández de Navarrete.²⁵⁷ This will be 'the main duty of the prince'²⁵⁸ and the principal obsession of the political theorists of the period. Thus, the thomistic conception of life and politics was left behind and the old humanist project of erecting a Platonic republic intended to

²⁵⁴ 'Sería necia ingenuidad' to recommend him 'que descubriese el corazón (...) sin recato.' Diego de Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de vn principe politico christiano: representada en cien empresas*, Munich: Nicolao Enrico, 1640, empresa 43: Ut sciat regnare.

²⁵⁵ 'No son las monarquías diferentes de los vivientes o vegetables. Nacen, viven y mueren como ellos, sin edad firme de consistencia. Y así, son naturales sus caídas. En no creciendo, descrecen.' *Ibid.*, empresa 50.

²⁵⁶ 'Las repúblicas se acaban, y son llevadas (como todas las cosas naturales) del raudal del tiempo y de la mudanza, y a esta están más sujetas las muy grandes repúblicas a quien su misma grandeza es peligrosa. Esta caída y mudanza se dilata más y cuando acaece se hace menos terrible con la observancia de esta doctrina, cuyos preceptos serán como preservativos de esta corrupción o estribos que detengan este gran edificio.' Eugenio Narbona, *Doctrina politica civil: escrita por aphorismos*, Madrid: viuda de Cosme Delgado, 1604, fol. 5r.

²⁵⁷ Pedro Fernández de Navarrete, *Conservación de monarquías*, Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1626.

²⁵⁸ Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un Príncipe Político Christiano*, empresa 59.

serve all men was definitively abandoned. It was replaced by a new way of understanding politics that set aside the 'ideal' to focus on the reality of things. A new politics that 'presupposes the malice and deceit of everything,'²⁵⁹ and saw the world as a battlefield governed by the rules of war, which often have little or nothing in common with the natural and religious laws.²⁶⁰ This *realpolitik* widely approved deception, since it considered it the only possible means to avoid manipulations and intrigue, progress in court, and ensure the preservation of the state. As we shall see, throughout the sixteenth century, deception escaped from its medieval condemnation and was gradually accepted by moral and theoretical understanding of power. From an immoral and sinful attitude, it would become a positive conduct, associated with the main Christian virtues: patience, self-sacrifice, self-control, and forgiveness.

The first sprouts of this *realpolitik* can be detected in the fifteenth century, in the works of certain humanists. A significant example is to be found in the *Momus sive de principe*, by the Italian Leon Battista Alberti. This allegorical satire, written around 1450 following Lucian's model, recounts the adventures of a pagan god who infiltrates the court of men. There he soon learns that 'simulation and dissimulation' are not sins, but 'advantageous and extremely useful techniques' (*tecniche vantaggiose e utilissime*) to prosper in life. Among certainties and bitter ironies, Alberti described a cruel and deceitful world in which deception appears as a cardinal virtue associated with *prudentia*:

I think that men who have power and an intense social life should (...) adapt scrupulously to circumstances, simulating and dissimulating (...) They must be able to hide their ambitions and desires with the skilful art of pretending; always vigilant, always alert (...) they must always have full control of themselves and never feel sorry for their opponents (...) They must cover their inner self under a friendly and mellifluous appearance (...) They should not believe anyone, but pretend to believe all; they must have no regard for anyone, but get used to approve and flatter anyone in public. The man who manages to do this would achieve fame (...), everyone would respect him

²⁵⁹ 'Que presuppone la malicia y el engaño en todo.' *Ibid.*, empresa 67.

²⁶⁰ On this topic see: Borrelli, Gianfranco, *Ragion di Stato e Leviatano. Conservazione e scambio alle origini della modernità politica*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1993; Viroli, Maurizio, *From Politics to Reason of State*, Cambridge: University Press, 1992.

and try to please him (...) What an optimal thing it is to know how to hide one's feelings by using the colourful and deceptive art of simulation!²⁶¹

There are similar references, though much shorter and restrained, in the works of some Iberian humanists, who devoted discrete commentaries to political dissimulation.²⁶² For example, in his translation of the *Aeneid* (c. 1428), Enrique de Villena praised the 'cunning speak' (*decir artificioso*) of Aeneas, who hid his defeat from his soldiers so as not to discourage them. According to Villena, 'in this he provided doctrine to the princes, who should dissimulate at times what they have in their minds, especially in cases like this one, when comforting their people.'²⁶³ Similarly, Hernando del Pulgar claimed that good men should be

True and constant. Although those who aspire to acquire great goods and honours, especially those who are involved in the governing of big things, sometimes can feign, simulate, and dissimulate in certain circumstances and matters, either to avoid further damage or to achieve better results.²⁶⁴

Similar statements are found in the characterization of some noblemen of the time, such as the King of Castile Sancho IV or Álvaro de Luna.²⁶⁵ If, by 1401, Pedro López de Ayala

²⁶¹ 'Penso, insomma, che gli uomini d'affari e chi ha un'intensa vita di relazione debbano (...) adattarsi scrupolosamente alle circostanze, simulando e dissimulando (...) Devono saper nascondere le proprie ambizioni e i desideri con l'abile arte di fingere; sempre vigili, sempre all'erta, (...) devono aver sempre il pieno controllo di se stessi e non aver mai pietà per gli avversari, (...) tener ben coperta l'animosità interiore sotto un'apparenza amichevole e melliflua; (...) non credere a nessuno, ma far vista di credere a tutti; non aver riguardi per nessuno, ma abituarsi ad approvare e adulare chiunque in pubblico. Chi si mostrerà carrozzato in questo modo avrà fama di persona a posto (...) [e] tutti lo rispetteranno e cercheranno di compiacerlo, (...) Che ottima cosa saper celare e avvolgere nella nebbia i propri sentimenti con l'esperienza nell'arte colorita e ingannevole della simulazione!' *Ibid.*, bk. II, chap. 7.

²⁶² See Ana Isabel Carrasco Manchado, 'Simular y disimular, percepción de un concepto moderno en la Edad media Hispana,' *Res publica* 18, 2007, pp. 335-352.

²⁶³ 'En esto da doctrina a los príncipes que deben disimular a tiempo lo que tienen en sus voluntades, mayormente en tal caso como éste, conhortando los suyos.' Enrique de Villena, *Traducción y glosas de la Eneida. Libros I-III*, [c. 1434], ed. by Pedro M. Cátedra, Madrid: Turner Libros, 1994.

²⁶⁴ 'Verdaderos y constantes, aunque los que están en deseo de adquirir grandes bienes y honores, y especialmente aquellos que entienden en la gobernación de grandes cosas, algunas veces les acaece fingir, dilatar, simular et disimular aquella diversidad de los tiempos o la variedad de los negocios, o por excusar mayores daños o por haber mayores provechos hayan de hacer variaciones en negocios según la ven en los tiempos.' Hernando del Pulgar, *Claros varones de Castilla*, [c. 1486], in the description of the Marqués de Villena. Ed. by Jesús Domínguez Bordona, Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1948, p. 54.

²⁶⁵ See: Valera, Diego de, *Doctrinal de príncipes*, [1476], ed. by Silvia Monetti, Verona: Istituto di Lingue e Letterature straniere, 1982; Chacón, Gonzalo de, *Crónica de Don Álvaro de Luna*, [1453], ed. by Juan de Mata Carriazo, Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1940, p. 257; Pérez de Guzmán, Fernán, *Generaciones y Semblanzas*, [1450], ed. by Robert Brian Tate, London: Tamesis, 1965, p. 45. See also Mario Penna, 'El

believed that fame ‘is only earned by truth’ (*no se gana salvo por verdad*), in 1486 Alfonso de la Torre affirmed just the opposite, considering ‘fame very deceptive,’ and that ‘honour [benefits equally] those who fake goodness as those who truly are.’²⁶⁶ However, it would be in the sixteenth century, with Machiavelli and his followers, when this new conception of politics would reach its maturity, under the theory of the so-called reason of state.

MACHIAVELLIAN REALISM AND DECEPTION

The author who best embodies the advent of *realpolitik* is Niccolò Machiavelli (d. 1527). In his famous treatise on *Il Principe*, written around 1513 from exile in the beautiful Tuscan countryside, Machiavelli proposed to the world a new political praxis following ‘the actual truth of things rather than an imaginary view of them,’²⁶⁷ and he argued that the prince was allowed to use deception and break the moral rules sometimes.²⁶⁸

Machiavelli starts from the assumption that the Prince should not be an ethical model, but the cornerstone of the government. His main mission is not to serve as a

Príncipe según Diego de Valera y el Príncipe según Maquiavelo,’ *Revista de estudios políticos* 84, 1955, pp. 121-138.

²⁶⁶ ‘La fama es muy engañosa,’ and ‘la honra [beneficia por igual] a los buenos aparentes como a los buenos verdaderamente existentes.’ Pero López de Ayala, *La Caída de príncipes de Juan Bocacio*, [c. 1400], printed in Alcalá de Henares: Juan de Brocar, 1552, fol. 213r; Alfonso de la Torre, *Visión deleytable*, [15th century], ed. by Jorge García López, Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 1991, pp. 257-258 y 269.

²⁶⁷ ‘Sendo l'intento mio scrivere cosa utile a chi la intende, mi è parso più conveniente andare drieto alla verità effettuale della cosa, che alla immaginazione di essa.’ Niccolò Machiavelli, *Il Principe*, Rome: Blado, 1531, chap. 15.

²⁶⁸ There is an extensive literature on this topic. See, by way of introduction: Bireley, Robert, *The Counter-Reformation Prince: Anti-machiavellianism or Catholic Statecraft in Early Modern Europe*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990; Bock, Gisela; Quentin Skinner & Maurizio Viroli (eds.), *Machiavelli and Republicanism*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990; Gilbert, Felix, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini: Politics and History in Sixteenth-Century Italy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965; Jurdjevic, Mark, *A Great and Wretched City: Promise and Failure in Machiavelli's Florentine Political Thought*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014; Mansfield, Harvey C., ‘Machiavelli's Political Science,’ *The American Political Science Review* 75, no. 2, June 1981, pp. 293-305; Pocock, J. G., *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975; Skinner, Quentin, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, Volume One: The Renaissance*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978; Idem, *Machiavelli*, New York: Hill and Wang, 1981; Strauss, Leo, ‘Niccolo Machiavelli,’ in *History of Political Philosophy*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

mirror of virtues but to ensure the preservation of the state and, through it, the entire civil community. He therefore rejected the medieval view, but also the humanist ethic, that conceived *virtus* as a set of fixed qualities. Machiavelli considered that there is no objective, universal and timeless moral norm that dictates the *right* code of conduct without regard to other considerations. In his view, it all depends on the circumstances of each moment. That is why the ruler should not embody a platonic *virtue*, understood as the pursuit of the Christian *truth* identified with evangelical precepts. He must rather embody an Aristotelian virtue in the sense of skill: the ability to rule by adapting to circumstances and using all the tricks at his disposal:

Many have imagined republics and principalities which have never been known or seen to exist in reality; the gap between how men live and how they ought to live is so wide, that he who abandons what is done for what ought to be done, will rather learn to bring about his own ruin than his preservation; for a man who wishes to make a profession of goodness in everything must necessarily come to grief among so many who are not good. Hence it is necessary for a prince wishing to hold his own to know how to do wrong, and to make use of it or not according to necessity.²⁶⁹

In other words, actions are not good or bad, but helpful or harmful to the aim pursued. 'A prince (...) should be prudent enough to avoid the disgrace of those vices which would lose him the state'. But:

he must [also] not mind incurring the disgrace of those vices without which it would be difficult to save the state, for if one considers well, it will be found that some things which appear vices result, if followed, in one's greater security and wellbeing.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁹ "Molti si sono immaginati repubbliche e principati che non si sono mai visti né conosciuti essere in vero; perché elli è tanto discosto da come si vive a come si doverrebbe vivere, che colui che lascia quello che si fa per quello che si doverrebbe fare, impara più tosto la ruina che la perservazione sua: perché uno uomo che voglia fare in tutte le parte professione di buono, conviene rovini infra tanti che non sono buoni. Onde è necessario a uno principe, volendosi mantenere, imparare a potere essere non buono, et usarlo e non usare secondo la necessità." *Il Principe*, chap. 15.

²⁷⁰ "È necessario essere tanto prudente che sappia fuggire l'infamia di quelle che li torrebbero lo stato (...) non si curi di incorrere nella infamia di quelli vizii senza quali possa difficilmente salvare lo stato; perché, se si considererà bene tutto, si troverrà qualche cosa che parrà virtù, e seguendola sarebbe la ruina sua; e qualcuna altra che parrà vizio, e seguendola ne riesce la securtà et il bene essere suo." *Ibid.*

Thus, from this point on, the traditional thesis reversed: it was not virtue that determined reality (fortune), but reality that determined virtue. Machiavelli encouraged his prince to deploy an opportunistic and pragmatic behaviour. 'He must keep his mind ready to shift as the winds and tides of Fortune turn.' Since to 'be able and know how to change to the contrary' is the key of political success.²⁷¹ This is the Darwinian view that would dominate (with the false interregnum of the Enlightenment) Western political thought until today.

Under this accommodative/double morality, deception was fully permitted, provided it served to preserve the state:

It is not necessary for a prince to have all the above-named qualities, but it is very necessary to seem to have them. I would even be bold to say that to possess them and to always observe them is dangerous, but to appear to possess them is useful. Thus it is well to seem pious, faithful, humane, religious, sincere, and also to be so; but you must have the mind so watchful that when it is needful to be otherwise you may be able to change to the opposite qualities.²⁷²

With these words, Machiavelli claims the use of appearances and deceit as constituent elements of political reality. A man can feign to be 'cruel or compassionate,' 'faithless or faithful,' 'religious or unbelieving' at the same time. He can pretend all those things, but he cannot be them at once, 'for human nature does not permit it.'²⁷³ The appearance is multiple and simultaneous, while the *being* is singular and rigid. So, Machiavelli says, 'the prince must take the examples of the fox and the lion and (...) be a great simulator

²⁷¹ 'E bisogna che elli abbi uno animo disposto a volgersi secondo ch'e' venti e le variazioni della fortuna li comandano, e, come di sopra dissi, non partirsi dal bene, potendo, ma sapere intrare nel male, necessitato.' Ibid.

²⁷² 'A uno principe, adunque, non è necessario avere in fatto tutte le soprascritte qualità, ma è bene necessario parere di averle. Anzi ardirò di dire questo, che, avendole et osservandole sempre, sono dannose, e parendo di averle, sono utile: come parere pietoso, fedele, umano, intero, religioso, et essere; ma stare in modo edificato con l'animo, che, bisognando non essere, tu possa e sappi mutare el contrario.' Ibid.

²⁷³ 'cru dele e pietoso', 'fedifrago e fedele', 'religioso e incredulo', '...per le condizioni umane che non lo consentono.' Ibid., chap. 15.

and dissimulator.²⁷⁴ He should seem ‘upright and religious,’ but does not have to be both all the time. ‘This was covertly taught to princes by ancient writers.’²⁷⁵ Deception and duplicity (what the American sociologist Erving Goffman would call the art of ‘impression management’²⁷⁶) are indispensables to govern. ‘Men in general judge more by the eyes than by the hands, for everyone can see, but very few have to feel. Everybody sees what you appear to be, few feel what you [really] are.’²⁷⁷ The one who rules has to deceive and lie to the subjects:

Occasionally words must serve to veil the facts. But let this happen in such a way that no one become aware of it; or, if it should be noticed, excuses must be at hand to be produced immediately.²⁷⁸

Deception is lawful, necessary and even easy to undertake, since ‘men are so simple, and so concerned with present necessities, that whoever wishes to deceive will always find those who will let themselves be deceived.’²⁷⁹ Thus, *Il Principe* announced the coming of a new type of politics focused not on justice or virtue but on the mastery of appearances in which several forms of deceiving such as dissimulation and fraud were permitted. Even perjury, considered the most serious and shameful form of deception in medieval thought, had a place in it.²⁸⁰ According to Machiavelli:

A prudent ruler ought not to keep faith when by so doing it would be against his interest, and when the reasons which made him bond himself no longer exist. If men were all good, this precept would not be a good one; but as they are bad, and would not observe their faith with you, so you are not bound to

²⁷⁴ ‘... ebbe di quelle pigliare la golpe e il liono (...) essere gran simulatore e dissimulatore.’ *Ibid.*, chap. 18. On Machiavelli’s view of dis/simulation see Barlow, J. J., ‘The Fox and the Lion: Machiavelli Replies to Cicero,’ *History of Political Thought* 20, 1999, pp. 627-645 and Snyder, John R., *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy in Early Modern Europe*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009, pp. 110-114.

²⁷⁵ ‘Questa parte è suta insegnata a’ principi copertamente dalli antichi scrittori.’ *Ibid.*, chap. 18.

²⁷⁶ *Vid.* Goffman, *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*, pp. 208-237.

²⁷⁷ ‘E li uomini in universali iudicano più alli occhi che alle mani; perché tocca a vedere a ognuno, a sentire a poche. Ognuno vede quello che tu pari, pochi sentono quello che tu sei.’ *Ibid.*, chap. 18.

²⁷⁸ Machiavelli’s instructions to diplomat Raffaello Giralami (*Instructions for Somebody Who Goes as Ambassador Somewhere*, 1522).

²⁷⁹ ‘E sono tanto semplici li uomini, e tanto obediscano alle necessità presenti, che colui che inganna troverà sempre chi si lascerà ingannare.’ *Ibid.* In his *Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio* (Florence: Bernardo di Giunta, 1531) Machiavelli repeats the same idea: ‘Men deceive themselves in respect of their own affairs, and most of all in respect of those on which they are most bent; so that either from impatience or from self-deception, they rush upon undertakings for which the time is not ripe, and so come to an ill end’ (chap. 3, sect. 8).

²⁸⁰ See on this matter Paolo Prodi, *Il sacramento del potere*, Bologna: Il Mulino, 1992.

keep faith with them. Nor are legitimate grounds ever waiting to a prince to give colour to the non-fulfilment of his promise.²⁸¹

Breaking an oath presented no problem in Machiavelli's theory. For him, morality only existed to improve civilian life. Therefore, if in certain circumstances a moral norm did not serve that purpose, it was perfectly right to put it on hold. In fact, according to him:

The experience of our times shows those princes to have done great things who have had little regard for good faith, and have been able by astuteness to confuse men's brains, and who have ultimately overcome those who have made loyalty their foundation.²⁸²

All he had to do was find some reason to justify his breach of agreement. Something that would not be difficult: after all, 'a prince never lacked legitimate excuses to honourably break his promise.'²⁸³

As we have said before, the need for political actors to resort to simulate and dissimulate to maintain power was neither new nor original to Machiavelli.²⁸⁴ In fact, it was defended long before him by other Italian humanists such as Leon Battista Alberti or Giovanni Pontano. But while for these figures such techniques were considered exceptional government actions, Machiavelli saw them as an intrinsic part of it,²⁸⁵ including in them acts such as perjury, which clashed with some of the most undisputed principles of Christian theology. Significantly, there is no attempt in Machiavelli's writings to justify the use of deception from a moral standpoint. On the contrary, he just

²⁸¹ 'Non può per tanto uno signore prudente, né debbe, osservare la fede, quando tale osservanzia li torni contro e che sono spente le cagioni che la feciono promettere. E, se li uomini fussino tutti buoni, questo precetto non sarebbe buono; ma perché sono tristi, e non la osservarebbero a te, tu etiam non l'hai ad osservare a loro. Né mai a uno principe mancorono cagioni legittime di colorare la inosservanzia.' *Il Principe*, chap. 18.

²⁸² 'Non di manco si vede, per esperienza ne' nostri tempi, quelli principi avere fatto gran cose che della fede hanno tenuto poco conto, e che hanno saputo con l'astuzia aggirare e' cervelli delli uomini; et alla fine hanno superato quelli che si sono fondati in sulla lealtà.' *Ibid.*

²⁸³ 'Né mai a uno principe mancorono cagioni legittime di colorare la inosservanzia.' *Ibid.*

²⁸⁴ *Vid.* Senellart, Michel, 'Simuler et dissimuler: l'art machiavélien d'être secret à la Renaissance,' in *Histoire et secret à la Renaissance. Etudes sur la représentation de la vie publique, la mémoire et l'intimité dans l'Angleterre et l'Europe des xvie et xviie siècles*, Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1997, pp. 99-106; Sfez, Gérald, 'La vérité suivante - Machiavel,' *Rue Descartes* 8/9, November 1993, pp. 99-123.

²⁸⁵ *Cfr.* Christian Lazzeri, 'Le Gouvernement de la Raison d'État,' in *Le Pouvoir de la Raison d'État*, ed. by Christian Lazzeri & Dominique Reynié, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992, pp. 91-134.

appeals to political practicality. It does not matter if hypocrisy is not one of the morally good actions permitted by religion. It is an essential mechanism to maintain the loyalty of subjects and, by extension, to ensure the preservation of the state –and that is enough to fully legitimate it:

And it must be understood that a prince, and especially a new prince, cannot observe all those things which are considered good in men, being often obliged, in order to maintain the state, to act against faith, against charity, against humanity, and against religion. And, therefore, he must have a mind disposed to adapt itself according to the wind, and as the variations of fortune dictate, and, as I said before, not deviate from what is good, if possible, but be able to do evil if required.²⁸⁶

Thus, Machiavelli placed theorists of power of the mid-sixteenth century in a difficult political and moral dilemma that required the articulation of two apparently contradictory principles: on the one hand, the conviction that it is impossible to rule without using concealment and deception; on the other, the categorical religious condemnation of lying as a deplorable act, expressed by the Bible with the motto ‘the lying mouth kills the soul’ (*Wisdom* 1:11). The alternatives offered to solve this quandary will shape the political thought of the coming centuries.

Helped by the new technology of the printing press (*Il Principe* had more than 15 editions between 1532 and 1559), Machiavelli's thoughts on how to use appearances and deceptions to accrue honour and respect quickly spread through Western Europe, causing a profound impact on political thinkers.²⁸⁷ Many statesmen saw in them the perfect tool to keep their positions of power at a time of immense political and dynastic instability. These men would be known as ‘the politicians’ (*políticos* in Spanish, *politiques* in French) a pejorative term to refer to those ‘impious,’ ‘atheist’ rulers and

²⁸⁶ ‘Et hassi ad intendere questo, che uno principe, e massime uno principe nuovo, non può osservare tutte quelle cose per le quali li uomini sono tenuti buoni, sendo spesso necessitato, per mantenere lo stato, operare contro alla fede, contro alla carità, contro alla umanità, contro alla religione. E però bisogna che elli abbi uno animo disposto a volgersi secondo ch’e’ venti e le variazioni della fortuna li comandono, e, come di sopra dissi, non partirsi dal bene, potendo, ma sapere intrare nel male, necessitato.’ *Il Principe*, chap. 18.

²⁸⁷ See: Bireley, *The Counter-Reformation Prince*; De Mattei, Rodolfo, *Dal premachiavellismo all’antimachiavellismo*, Florence: Sansoni, 1969; Sorrentino, Andrea, *Storia dell’antimachiavellismo in Europa*, Naples: Loffredo, 1936.

writers, viewed as disciples of Machiavelli, who put the success and well-being of their state above all else.²⁸⁸

In reality, Machiavelli was not immoral nor an atheist. When he encouraged his prince 'to do evil' if necessary he did not intend to deny the importance or validity of Christian moral codes, but *merely* point out the need to subject them to political practicality in specific circumstances. However, his conception of politics as a naturalist science, secular and independent of religion, posed a serious threat to the theological conception of power on which both Church and Monarchy based their authority. It is therefore not surprising that it was rejected by a large part of the European intelligentsia. In 1559 the Church banned *Il Principe* and placed it on the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* of Paul IV and again on the *Tridentine Index* in 1564.²⁸⁹ As a result of it, the book went out of print, although it was kept alive in the writings of its most virulent challengers, such as the English cardinal Reginald Pole, the Portuguese bishop Jerónimo Osorio, or the Protestant jurist Innocent Gentillet. This gave rise to the so-called 'antimachiavelism' that, as we shall see, had some of its most influential proponents in Spain.

Be that as it may, on this occasion (as in many others), history did not flow through either of the gorges located in the extremes, but through the wide and winding canyon that was created between them. In the midst of the controversy between Machiavelli's critics and defenders there emerged, in the last decades of the sixteenth century, a large group of intellectuals who, aware of the excesses of the Florentine and the expiration of the medieval model of Christian government, tried to find a middle ground that could ensure the preservation of the state without breaking the moral principles dictated by religion. They will achieve what Machiavelli could not: to define a fair and effective

²⁸⁸ On the use of this term in Early Modern Spain and France see: Fernández-Santamaría, *La razón de Estado*, pp. 47-51 and Annamaria Battista, 'Sull' antimachiavellismo francese del sec. XVI,' *Storia e Politica* 1, 1962, pp. 413-447, esp. pp. 416-417. A couple of examples in: Gabriel Naudé, *Considérations politiques sur les coups d'État*, Rome: n. pub., 1639, chap. III and Jerónimo de Gracián, *Diez lamentaciones del miserable estado de los ateístas de nuestros tiempos*, Brussels: n. pub., 1611, Lamentación VII. Henceforward I will use this term with that meaning.

²⁸⁹ Vid. Procacci, Giuliano, *Machiavelli nella cultura eropea dell'età moderna*, Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1995, pp. 83-121; and Godman, Peter, *From Poliziano to Machiavelli. Florentine Humanism in the High Renaissance*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998, pp. 303-333.

(honest and useful) political model in which a number of forms of deception (such as di/simulation) were integrated, without entering into conflict with a Christian morality that, at least in theory, will continue to prohibit lies. This operation was carried out in just thirty-six years and involved intellectuals from the whole of Christendom. Several political-ideological elements were involved: the advent of absolutism, the formulation of the theories of the reason of state, the redefinition of the Christian concept of *prudentia* and the recovery of classical thinkers. Among them, one stands out: the Roman historian Publius Cornelius Tacitus (d. c. 117).

THE ECHOES OF TACITUS

The Italian humanists of the late Middle Ages were the ones who began to recover the works of Tacitus, virtually forgotten since the ninth century.²⁹⁰ Giovanni Boccaccio had access to a manuscript copy of the *Mediceus II* (*Annals* 11-16, *Histories* 1-5) sometime between 1362 and 1371, and used it to write his *Decameron*.²⁹¹ Fifty years later, around 1425, Poggio Bracciolini found the codex *Hersfeldensis*, which contained the *Agricola*, the *Germania* and the *Dialogus*. These findings provided the basis for the editions of Vindelino and Francesco da Spira Puteolano, which appeared in Venice and Milan in 1470 and 1475 respectively.

The next important discovery occurred at the beginning of the sixteenth century, when Francesco Soderini stole from the Abbey of Corvey the *Mediceus I* (Books 1-6 of the *Annals*). Once in Rome, the manuscript came into the hands of Filippo Beroaldo the Younger, who in 1515 published in that city an edition of all Tacitus' texts known to this day. These were reprinted in Milan, together with the first scholarly commentary prepared by Andrea Alciato in 1517. Nevertheless, aside from such scholarly interest,

²⁹⁰ Last mentioned in 864 by Rudolf of Fulda in his *Annales Fuldenses*. See Francis J. Haverfield, 'Tacitus During the Late Roman Period and the Middle Ages,' *Journal of Roman Studies* 6, 1916, pp. 196-201.

²⁹¹ *Vid.* Vittore Branca, *Boccaccio: the Man and His Works*, New York: New York University Press, 1976, p. 106.

Tacitus was then considered a second-rate author. For the early humanists, his works were nothing more than a source of factual information from the classical world and Germania, lacking an original philosophy and written in a rough language and style, much lower than the one of Cicero or Titus Livy. It is not by chance that Machiavelli devoted his *Discourses* to the latter and not Tacitus.

However, this perception changed dramatically over the last three decades of the sixteenth century, when Tacitus became the undisputed master of ancient history and modern politics.²⁹² One of the main contributors of this transformation was the Belgian humanist Justus Lipsius. In 1574, Lipsius published the first critical edition of Tacitus in Antwerp, made from the *Vatican* and *Farnesiano* codices.²⁹³ Not satisfied with this, in 1581 he wrote a commentary to the *Annals*, turning then to the entire work of the Roman historian in 1585.²⁹⁴

Such works marked the beginning of modern *Tacitism*. Between these years and the end of the century, some of the leading theorists of the state published political commentaries on Tacitus, (Paschal, 1581; Scott, 1589; Botero, 1589; Ammirato, 1594;

²⁹² On Tacitus's reception and influence in European political thought of the fifteenth to seventeen centuries see: Burke, Peter, 'Tacitism, Scepticism, and Reason of State,' in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450-1700*, ed. by James H. Burns, Cambridge: University Press, 1991, pp. 479-498; Gadja, Alexandra, 'Tacitus and political thought in early modern Europe, c.1530-c.1640,' in *The Cambridge companion to Tacitus*, ed. by Anthony J. Woodman, Cambridge: University Press, pp. 253-268; Gori, Franco, & Cesare Questa (eds.), *La Fortuna di Tacito dal sec. XV ad oggi. Atti del colloquio di Urbino 9-11 ott. 1978*, Urbino: Presso l'Università degli Studi Urbino, 1979; Luce, T. James, & Anthony J. Woodman (eds.), *Tacitus and the Tacitean tradition*, Princeton: University Press, 1993; Toffanin, Giuseppe, *Machiavelli e el Tacitismo (La politica storica al tempo della Controriforma)*, Padova: A. Draghi, 1921; Tuck, Richard, *Philosophy and Government, 1572-1651*, Cambridge: University Press, 1993; Mellor, Ronald, *Tacitus*, New York: Routledge, 1993; Momigliano, Arnaldo, 'The first political commentary on Tacitus,' *The Journal of Roman Studies* XXXVII, 1947, pp. 91-101; Stackelberg, J. Von, *Tacitus in der Romania: Studien zur literarischen Rezeption des Tacitus in Italien und Frankreich*, Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1960; Suppa, Silvio (ed.), *Tacito e tacitismi in Italia da Machiavelli a Vico, Atti del convegno Napoli 18-19 dic. 2001*, Naples: Archivio della Ragion di Stato, 2003; Huau, Étienne, *Raison d'État et pensée politique à l'époque de Richelieu*, Paris: A. Colin, 1966; Stegmann, André, 'Le Tacitisme: Programme pour un nouvel essai de définition,' *Il Pensiero Politico* 2, no. 3, 1969, pp. 445-458; Schellhase, Kenneth C., *Tacitus in Renaissance Political Thought*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976.

²⁹³ Others will follow in 1578, 1585, 1600, 1607... and so on up to ten, two of them published after Lipsius' death.

²⁹⁴ José Ruysschaert, *Juste Lipse et les annales de Tacite: une méthode de critique textuelle au xvi^e siècle*, Turnhout: Brepols, 1949.

Cabriana, 1597...) praising his reflections on the nature of power and statecraft.²⁹⁵ With them, Tacitism became a dominant reference point in European culture. So much so that, in 1586, Tacitus was included in the *Ratio Studiorum* of the Society of Jesus, along with Caesar, Sallust, Livy and the other writers who formed the historical canon.²⁹⁶ In 1613, when writing his influential *Seminario dei Governi*, Girolamo Frachetta will appeal, in fifty per cent of his quotations, to the authority of Tacitus.

The question is: what is the reason for such success? What did the men of the late 16th century find in the work of a historian who died in the second century? To Giuseppe Toffanin and Benedetto Croce, Tacitism was a sort of mask used by Machiavelli's followers to covertly introduce his teachings after he was included in the index of prohibited authors.²⁹⁷ However, although this was probably the case for a considerable number of thinkers, this interpretation is too simplistic to be entirely correct. For many others, Tacitism was not a mere disguise for Machiavellianism, but rather a parallel and coetaneous stream of thought, considered a more appropriate tool to build a Christian reason of state at the service of the absolute prince.²⁹⁸

This was due to a number of factors. Firstly, because of the vivid historical context described in Tacitus' works. Unlike Cicero and Livy (republican authors), he told a story that appeared to correspond directly to contemporary circumstances of men of the 16th century. The crisis that took place in Rome after the fall of the Republic and the emergence of the *principatus* that occurred under Augustus and Tiberius reminded them of the wars of religion, the conflicts between emerging states and the problematic

²⁹⁵ Let us mention some of them: In 1581 appears the first political commentary on Tacitus, by C. Paschal (*C. Cornelii Taciti... Annalium libri quattuor priores et in hos observationes*). In 1589, Annibal Scott publishes in Rome his commentaries on the *Annals* and the *Histories* (*Cornelii Taciti Annales et Historias Commentarii ad politicam et aulicam praecipue spectantes...*, Rome: Barthololomaeum Grassius, 1589). In 1594, Ammirato publishes in Venice the *Discorsi sopra Tacito*. Finally, in 1597 appears in Florence the *Discorsi sopra i primi cinque libri di Cornelio Tacito* by Filippo Cavriani.

²⁹⁶ *Ratio atque Institutio Studiorum Societatis Iesu* (1586, 1591, 1599), in *Monumenta Paedagogica Societatis Iesu*, ed. by Ladislaus Lukács, Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1986, pp. 153 and 197.

²⁹⁷ See Toffanin (*Machiavelli e el Tacitismo*) and Benedetto Croce's *Storia dell'Età Barocca in Italia: Pensiero, poesia e letteratura, vita morale*, Bari: Laterza, 1957.

²⁹⁸ It should be noted that Tacitus never devoted any of his works to present a theory of the state. However, his writings are full of reflections, sentences and aphorisms that, with proper intention, could be used to compose (and legitimate) a specific *ordo politicus*.

issue raised by Machiavelli on the right form of princely rule. Furthermore, this historical likeness was compounded by a considerable political affinity. While Livy and Machiavelli advocated in their writings a model of Republican organisation, Tacitus's *Annals* evoked an imperial model closer to the absolutism pursued by the great monarchs of the Renaissance and the Baroque, who openly wanted to equate themselves with the Roman emperors. Finally, and above all, modern Tacitism provided thinkers with a solid (and less suspicious) theoretical basis upon which to build their allegations for greater autonomy of policy. Both Machiavelli and Tacitus extracted their lessons from the Roman past, used similar concepts²⁹⁹ and postulated the same idea: the need to establish a new political praxis free from moral limitations. There was, however, an important difference in their methods. Whereas the Florentine presented this point in great tension with the Christian religion (*'la nostra religione'*), in Tacitus, the attack was shifted to the religion of the pagans, making it easier to conceal the conflict.

The diverging receptions of both authors increased this difference. Prompted by their anticlerical zeal, the Machiavellian politicians claimed complete independence of policy and legitimised deception even though it was outside the limits of Christian morality. On the contrary, the Tacitists endeavoured to integrate these techniques of government within the Christian religion, finding ways to resolve the incompatibilities. Suitably interpreted, Tacitus's histories taught that it was perfectly possible to reconcile the political realism that modern times demanded (the practice of power must be aligned with the circumstances) with the traditional Christian doctrine that assumed the indissoluble link between morality and the exercise of power (since, as St. Paul dictated, *'non est enim potestas nisi a Deo'*). Thus, while morality served to prohibit Machiavelli, it allowed Tacitus to circulate freely.

Between 1580 and 1700, more than a hundred authors wrote commentaries on Tacitus, mostly political ones. Meanwhile, the *Annals* and the *Histories* achieved an immense success, having at least sixty-seven editions just in the first half of the

²⁹⁹ The *neccesità*, *virtù* and *fortuna* of the Florentine found their parallel in the notions of *fatum*, necessity, luck, fortune and freedom that appear, dispersed although recurrent, in Tacitus's writings.

seventeenth century (1600–1649).³⁰⁰ By this time, Tacitus was already viewed not only as the greatest historian of the Latin Antiquity (Jean Racine considered him ‘the greatest painter of antiquity’) but also as the main reference point in the conceptualisation and practice of modern politics. In every European court, from Vienna to Lisbon, Tacitus was read as the source to define the ‘good reason of state’, which postulated an autonomous and effective policy based on natural reason and the teachings of history and, unlike the ‘bad reason of state’ of Machiavelli, did not conflict with the dominant religion.

In this regard, two works, both published in 1589, stand out above the rest. The first one was *Della Ragion di Stato*, by Giovanni Botero; the second one was the *Politicorum sive civilis doctrinae* by Justus Lipsius.

BOTERO AND THE REASON OF STATE

Giovanni Botero (d. 1617) was one of the first European intellectuals who tried to systematise ‘the opinions of Niccolò Machiavelli and Cornelius Tacitus’ and create a theory *Della Ragion di Stato*, which he defined as ‘the knowledge of the means by which such a dominion may be founded, preserved and extended.’³⁰¹ His treatise, published in Italian in 1589 and quickly translated into Spanish (1593), French (1599), Latin (1602) and English (1606), was a resounding success, becoming one of the most influential political texts of the modern age.³⁰²

³⁰⁰ Peter Burke, ‘Tacitism,’ in *Tacitus*, ed. by Thomas A. Dorey, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969, pp. 149–171.

³⁰¹ ‘*Ragione di Stato è notizia di mezi atti a fondare, conservare, e ampliare un Dominio così fatto. Egli è vero che, se bene, assolutamente parlando, ella si stende alle tre parti sudette, nondimeno pare, che più strettamente abbracci la conservatione, che l'altre; e dell'altre più l'ampliatione, che la fondatione.*’ *Della ragione di stato, libri dieci, con tre libri delle cause della grandezza e magnificenza della città*, Venice: appresso i Gioliti, 1598, bk. I, fols. 1r–2v.

³⁰² The literature on Botero’s political thought and its influence in the modern age is rather scattered. See, among others: Baldini, A. Enzo, *Botero e la ‘Ragion di Stato,’ Atti del convegno in memoria di Luigi Firpo, Torino, 8–10 marzo*, Florence: Olschki, 1992; Cazzani, Pietro, ‘Giovanni Botero tra Machiavelli e la coscienza,’ *Letterature moderne*, vol. V, 1955, pp. 503–512; Continisio, Chiara, ‘Introduzione’ a G. Botero, *Della ragion di Stato*, Rome: Donzelli, 1997, pp. XI–XXXII; Cimbali, Giuseppe, ‘La sapienza

Botero was educated by the Jesuits in Palermo and Rome. As a member of the Society, he studied the classical authors of the *Ratio Studiorum* and taught at several of its schools until in 1580, when he was expelled for questioning the temporal power of the papacy. After that, he worked as a secretary to Charles Borromeo, the influential Archbishop of Milan, and participated in several diplomatic missions for the Church. These life experiences showed him, on the one hand, the need to inject a new dose of pragmatism into the political theory. Meanwhile, on the other, it demonstrated the indissoluble interweaving that existed between governmental power and ecclesiastical authority in the Italy of the late sixteenth century. Thus, Botero decided to develop a new political praxis that, without conflicting with the dominant religious framework of the Counter Reformation, could achieve the goal pursued by Machiavelli: the state's self-preservation, something that he considered the greatest moral good and highest goal of good governance.

Therefore, Botero wrote in the same context as Machiavelli did, but openly rejected two of his main ideas: the separation between politics and morality, and the reduction of the role of religion to a mere instrument of power. In his opinion, Christianity and

politica di Giovanni Botero,' in *Nuova antologia*, May 1896, pp. 104-137; Croce, Benedetto, *Storia dell'età barocca in Italia*, Bari: Laterza, 1929, pp. 71-98; De Bernardi, Mario, 'Il concetto di ragion di Stato in Giovanni Botero e la filosofia della politica,' *Atti dell'Accademia delle Scienze di Torino* 65, 1929, pp. 49-68; De Mattei, Rodolfo, 'Il pensiero politico di Giovanni Botero,' *Politica* XX, 1938, pp. 331-347; Idem, 'Il problema della ragion di Stato nel Seicento: La posizione di Botero,' *Rivista internazionale di filosofia del diritto*, XXVII, 1950, pp. 25-38; Idem, 'La posizione dottrinale di Botero e le recenti interpretazioni Critiche,' *Bollettino della Società per gli studi storici, archeologici ed artistici della Provincia di Cuneo* XXXIV, 1954, pp. 29-49; Descendre, Romain, *L'Etat du Monde: Giovanni Botero entre raison d'Etat et géopolitique*, Geneva: Droz, 2009; Firpo, Luigi, 'La Ration di Stato di Giovanni Botero: redazione, rifacimenti, Fortuna,' in *Civiltà del Piemonte. Studi in onore di R. Gandolfo nel suo settantacinquesimo compleanno*, Turin: Centro Studi Piemontesi, 1975; Kahn, Victoria, *Machiavellian Rhetoric: From the Counter-Reformation to Milton*, Princeton: University Press, 1994, pp. 70-84; Kowalewski, Maxim, 'Deux précurseurs: Botero et Campanella,' *Annales de l'Institut international de sociologie* III, 1897, pp. 139-185; Lazzarino Del Grosso, Anna Maria, 'Nuovi studi su Botero e la Ration di Stato,' *Il Pensiero Politico* 26, 1993, pp. 92-100; Morandi, Carlo, 'Introduzione' a G. Botero, *Della Ration di Stato*, Bologna: Capelli, 1930, pp. I-XLVII; Paolini, Paolo, 'Giovanni Botero contro Nicolò Machiavelli,' *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 115 (clxxv), fasc. 571, 1998, pp. 373-395; Segatori, Mario, 'La ragion di Stato: Botero,' in *Il Politico*, ed. by M. Tronti, Milan: Feltrinelli, 1979, vol. I, tomo I, pp. 58-96; Snyder, John R., *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy in Early Modern Europe*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009, pp. 121-124; Treves, Paolo, 'Il gesuitismo politico di Giovanni Botero,' *Civiltà moderna* 3, 1931, pp. 539-552; Zarka, Yves Charles, 'Raison d'État et figure du prince chez Botero,' in *Raison et déraison d'État: Théoriciens et théories de la raison d'État aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994, pp. 101-120.

monarchy were inextricably linked. Thus, it was not possible that acts judged unlawful by God could be considered lawful by reason of state. For this reason, Botero recommended the prince to rule virtuously, in justice and liberality, and without recourse to fraud or tyranny.³⁰³

At least that is what he claims in the initial chapters of his treatise. The truth is that in others he suggests rather the opposite, legitimising the use of deception in the same way that the Florentine had done before him. For example, in Book IX the ex-Jesuit recommends princes and captains to combine ‘courage with artifice’ and to use ‘the stratagems of war, which are not only legal, but of great praise.’³⁰⁴ In peacetime, deception is also needed. For Botero, secrecy (*secretezza*) is one of the foundations of the preservation of the republic. ‘The designs of princes,’ he says, ‘work well and smoothly while they are secret, but as soon as they come to light they lose their ease and effectiveness.’³⁰⁵ The concealment of certain information is, therefore, an essential element of the reason of state. To achieve it:

Dissimulation is a great aid, and Louis XI, King of France, considered it a main part of the art of ruling. And Tiberius was more proud of his skill in dissimulating, in which he excelled, than of anything else. By dissimulation I mean feigning to be ignorant of what you know, and to be uninterested in what affects you closely, as simulation is pretending and doing one thing in place of another. And, since there is nothing more fatal to dissimulation than the impetuosity of wrath, the prince must control this passion that he never betrays himself by words or other signs of his thought or emotion.³⁰⁶

This fragment is important because, despite its brevity, it contains one of the main arguments that the Baroque authors will use to justify political deception. As

³⁰³ *Vid. Della ragione di stato*, bk. II, sect. 15. Botero defends Catholicism as the only legitimate belief and criticises those ‘impious (...) who give princes to understand that heresies have nothing to do with politics.’ (*Ibid.*, bk. X, sect. 9).

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, bk. IX, sect. 22.

³⁰⁵ ‘*I consigli de’ principi, mentre stanno secreti, sono pieni di efficacia e di agevolezza, ma non sì presto vengono a luce, che perdono ogni vigore e facilità.*’ *Ibid.*, bk. II, sect. 7.

³⁰⁶ ‘*Giova assai la dissimulatione, nella quale Ludovico XI re di Francia collocava gran parte dell’arte del regnare. E Tiberio Cesare non si gloriava di cosa nessuna, più che dell’arte del dissimulare, nella quale egli era eccellente. E dissimulatione si chiama un mostrare di non sapere o di non curare quel che tu sai e stimi, come simulatione è un fingere e fare una cosa per un’altra. E perché non è cosa più contraria alla dissimulatione, che l’impeto dell’ira, conviene che il prencipe moderi sopra tutto questa passione in maniera tale, che non prorompa in parole, o in altri segni d’animo, o di affetto.*’ *Ibid.*

Machiavelli and some others did before him, Botero appeals to functionality and links it to the Christian notion of prudence. The prince and his closest collaborators ('counsellors and ambassadors, secretaries and spies') are involved in great affairs of state. They know valuable secrets (*arcana imperii*) upon which the conservation of the republic and the civil obedience depend. In order not to disclose them, they must be able to control themselves and hide their thoughts and intentions, so they may never be known 'by words or other signs of thought or emotion.' And it is here that deception comes in.

Botero distinguishes between simulation and dissimulation, but considers both as lawful as necessary. In fact, dis/simulation was not for him a selfish or sinful attitude, but quite the opposite. In detaching public image from private intention, and in applying the rule of secrecy to the expression of inner life as well, the prince subordinates his personal freedom to the imperative of the preservation of the state. In other words, for the modern ruler hypocrisy and concealment is not a privilege, but a sacrifice to ensure the common good. In this way, the idea of absolute monarchy makes it possible to sublimate the 'courtesan prudence', which moves from being a technique to prosper and achieve selfish goals, to being a '*prudenza politica*' or '*civile*' in which 'private and public interests converge' under the royal figure.³⁰⁷ In this regard, the reference to Tiberius and Louis XI is quite significant.³⁰⁸ With it, Botero evokes the adage attributed to both: '*Qui nescit dissimulare, nescit regnare*,' which will become a true classic of Baroque culture.³⁰⁹ Botero also encourages the prince to use hypocrisy to deal with popular uprisings. Ideally he should 'use force and (...) nip them in the bud as fast as possible'. However, if he is not in a position of sufficient power to defeat them,

³⁰⁷ This is the explanation provided by Botero himself in his *Saggio dell'Opera dé Prencipi e Capitani illustri* (Venice: Alessandro Vecchi, 1617) in the section he devotes to Emmanuel Philibert, Duke of Savoy.

³⁰⁸ Tacitus's modern commentators tended to focus their studies on books 1–6 of the *Annals*, in which the emperor Tiberius is the protagonist. As a result of this, Tiberius became an almost compulsory reference in discussions of dissimulation. Cfr. Chiara Pisoni, 'E virtute insin la frode... Tacito e la simulazione di Tiberio,' *Nuova Rivista Storica* 82, no. 2, 1998, pp. 239–254.

³⁰⁹ For a discussion of the origins and fortune of this motto see the article by Adrianna E. Bakos, '*Qui nescit dissimulare, nescit regnare*: Louis XI and *Raison d'état* during the Reign of Louis XIII,' *Journal of History of Ideas* 52/3, July-Sep. 1991, pp. 399–416.

It would be correct to concede them some or all of their demands, for there are two foundations of rule and government: love and reputation (...) And indeed it can help your reputation if you use artifice to create the appearance that you actually welcome what you cannot in fact prevent, as do the vessels that, sometimes, when not having the right wind to go where they planned, go to do their work where the wind takes them.³¹⁰

In short, Botero never genuinely confronted Machiavelli's position on deception, but rather had similar views on it.³¹¹ In the name of functionality, he recommended the Christian prince to do with a good conscience what Machiavelli had recommended him to do with no regard for conscience at all. Simulating, dissimulating, concealing, deceiving the population with 'equivocations and stratagems', hiding information, stabilising false agreements with rebels... everything fits within the Catholic morality when done in a good cause.

LIPSIUS' *PRUDENTIA MIXTA*

The other author who, in an attempt to reconcile Machiavellian pragmatism with Christian morality, ended up contributing decisively to the debate on deception was the Belgian humanist Justus Lipsius (d. 1606). Lipsius was a contradictory and fascinating character produced by the reformist Europe of this period. Born and raised a Catholic by the Jesuits, he converted to Calvinism in 1572 and later returned to the Roman Church in 1590. In addition to changing religions, Lipsius switched several times between cities, universities (he worked as a professor of history at the universities of

³¹⁰ 'Quando nissuno dei sudetti rimedi vaglia, più presto che venir all'armi, sia bene concederli quello che domandano, o in parte, o in tutto; perchè, essendo due fondamenti dell'imperio e del governo: l'amore e la riputazione, sebbene, cedendo, tu perdi della riputazione, conservi però l'amore (...) E si potrà anche sempre aiutare la riputazione con usare quelle arti, che fanno pareere che tu vogli quel che non puoi impediré e che doni amorevolmente que che ti è cavato di mano a viva forza, come fanno i mercanti, che alle volte, non avendo vento per andaré a trafficare ove avevano disegnato, vanno a fare le loro facende ove il vento li conduce.' *Della ragione di stato*, bk. V, sect. 9.

³¹¹ It was only on breach of promises and outright lying that Botero dissented completely from Machiavelli. (*Della ragione di stato*, bk II, sect. 11).

Jena, Cologne, Louvain and Leiden) and political factions over the course of his lifetime, leading some contemporaries to consider him a peerless dissimulator.³¹²

As a good humanist, Lipsius found the roots of his thought in Classical Antiquity. One of his main references was, as we have seen, Tacitus, to whom he dedicated several commentaries. The others were the Stoic philosophers of Rome.³¹³ Lipsius published numerous works of Seneca (1605) and Epictetus, and wrote many treatises in which he attempted to harmonise their thinking with the system of Christian truths.³¹⁴ The result was *Neostoicism*: a set of concepts and ideas, with strong political implications, that spread vigorously throughout Europe and permeated deep into the minds of theorists and noblemen (both Protestant and Catholic) involved in the tasks of government.³¹⁵ These saw in Seneca a classic philosopher who shared with them, apart from the same

³¹² Jan H. Waszink, 'Virtuous Deception: The Politica and the Wars in the Low Countries and France, 1559–1589,' in *Iustus Lipsius Europae lumen et columen*, ed. by Gilbert Tournoy, Jeanine de Landtsheer & Jan Papy, Louvain: University Press, 1999, pp. 248–249.

³¹³ There is a clear connection between the two figures: we should remember that, with his *Annals*, Tacitus, was one of the main sources of information on Seneca, who was almost his contemporary (he died in 64 AD, when Tacitus was ten years old). *Vid.* Miguel Dolç, 'Séneca a través de Tácito,' *Estudios Clásicos* 12, 1968, pp. 463–495.

³¹⁴ Such as *De Constantia* (Leiden, 1584), *Manuductio ad Stoicam philosophiam* (Antwerp, 1604) and *Physiologia stoicorum* (Antwerp, 1604).

³¹⁵ On the modern reception of Stoicism and the role played by Lipsius see: Dal Pra, Mario, 'Giusto Lipsio storico della filosofia,' *Rivista critica di storia della filosofia* I, 1946, pp. 163–188; Isnardi Parente, Margherita, 'La storia della filosofia antica nella *Manuductio in Stoicam Philosophiam* di Giusto Lipsio,' *Annali della Scuola Normale di Pisa*, ser. III, 16, 1986, pp. 45–64; Lagrée, Jacqueline, *Juste Lipse et la restauration du stoïcisme: étude et traduction des traités stoïciens De la constance, Manuel de philosophie stoïcienne, Physique des stoïciens (extraits)*, Paris: J. Vrin, 1994; Levi, A. H. T., 'The relationship of Stoicism and scepticism: Justus Lipsius,' in *Humanism and Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. by Jill Kraye & Martin Stone, London; New York: Routledge, 2000, pp. 91–106; Moreau, Pierre-François (ed.), *Le stoïcisme au XVIe et au XVIIe siècle*, Paris: A. Michel, 1999; Morford, Mark, *Stoics and Neostoics: Rubens and the Circle of Lipsius*, Princeton: University Press, 1991; Oestreich, Gerhard, 'The Main Political Work of Lipsius,' in *Neostoicism and the Early Modern State*, ed. by Brigitta Oestreich & Helmut Koenigsberger, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982, pp. 39–56; Papy, Jan, 'Erasmus's and Lipsius's Editions of Seneca: A "Complementary" Project?,' *Erasmus of Rotterdam Society Yearbook* 22, 2002, pp. 10–36; Idem, 'Manuductio ad Stoicam Philosophiam (1604) de Lipsius e a Recepção do Estoicismo e da Tradição Estóica no Início da Europa Moderna,' *Revista portuguesa de filosofia* 58, 2002, pp. 859–872; Idem, 'Lipsius's (Neo-)Stoicism: Constancy between Christian Faith and Stoic Virtue,' in *Hugo Grotius and the Stoa*, ed. by Hans W. Blom & Laurens C. Winkel, Assen: Van Gorcum, 2004, pp. 47–71; Idem, 'Le sénéquisme dans la correspondance de Juste Lipse. Du *De Constantia* (1583) à la *Epistolarum Selectarum Centuria Prima Miscellanea* (1586),' *Journal de la Renaissance* 6, 2008, pp. 53–80; Saunders, Jason L., *Justus Lipsius: The Philosophy of Renaissance Stoicism*, New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1955; Senellart, Michel, 'Le Stoïcisme dans la constitution de la pensée politique: Les *Politiques* de Juste Lipse (1589),' in *Le Stoïcisme aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles. Actes du Colloque CERPHI (4-5 jun 1993)*, *Cahiers de philosophie politique et juridique*, 25, Caen: Université de Caen, 1994, pp. 109–130; Wayne, Paul, *Séneca y el estoicismo*, México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1995; Zanta, Léontine, *La Renaissance du stoïcisme au XVI siècle*, Paris: H. Champion, 1914.

religion³¹⁶ (and, in the case of the Spanish, the same country), the misfortune of having lived in a turbulent era dominated by suffering and deception. In response to that oppressive world, the *Stoa* offered a practical philosophy³¹⁷ –located halfway between comfort and imperturbability, that allowed the individual to control his passions and navigate without sinking under the ‘whirlwinds and storms of the century,’ in the words of Jerónimo de la Cruz.³¹⁸

This *arts vivendi* also had important political implications.³¹⁹ Firstly, properly associated with Tacitism, it favoured the creation of an autonomous morality based exclusively on the criterion of reason. Secondly, it helped to legitimise deception, conceived as a defensive response to the hostile environment. Seneca encourages the individual to find shelter in himself, to ‘retreat to his inside,’ creating in his chest an intimate space of freedom in which the anxieties of life and politics could not penetrate.³²⁰ To achieve this, the individual must learn to know himself. One must control one’s passions and ‘gain possession of oneself’ (*potestas sui*).³²¹ One must, in short, dissimulate. This would be the reasoning used by the political writers of the late sixteenth century and the seventeenth century to legitimise the prince’s duplicity. How

³¹⁶ The humanism of the late sixteenth century considered Seneca the philosopher of the Antiquity closest to Christianity because of his idea of a personal God and a corporeal soul that would still exist after death. In fact, some of the Church Fathers (Tertullian, Lactantius and Jerome) saw him as a sort of “crypto-Christian” –a hidden, intuitive and undeclared believer, who converted to the faith of Jesus secretly as a result of an alleged epistolary relationship with St. Paul. *Vid.* Zanta, *La Renaissance du stoïcisme*, p. 99.

³¹⁷ This aspect was crucial. Seneca and Epictetus were liked because their ethic was mainly practical, ignoring the theory that did not directly affect the moral life. *Vid.* Alberto Díaz Tejera, ‘Séneca: un estoicismo pragmático,’ in *Séneca, dos mil años después. Actas del Congreso Internacional conmemorativo del bimilenario de su nacimiento (Córdoba, 24-27 de septiembre de 1996)*, ed. by Miguel Rodríguez Pantoja, Córdoba: Universidad de Córdoba; CajaSur, 1997, pp. 17-36.

³¹⁸ ‘*Torbellinos y tempestades del siglo.*’ *Iob evangélico, stoyco ilustrado, Doctrina ética, civil y política*, Zaragoza: en el Hospital Real, 1638. (For further information see Gottigny, Jean, ‘Juste Lipse et Jerónimo de la Cruz,’ *Bulletin Historique Belga de Roma* 41, 1970, pp. 219-277).

³¹⁹ Sénellart, Michel, ‘Le stoïcisme dans la constitution de la pensée politique. Les *Politiques* de Juste Lipse (1589),’ in *Le stoïcisme aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles. Actes du Colloque CERPHI (4-5 juin 1993)*, ed. by Jacqueline Lagrée, Cahiers de Philosophie politique et juridique, 25, Caen: Presses Universitaires de Caen, 1994, pp. 109-130.

³²⁰ ‘*Primum argumentum compositae mentis existimo posse consistere et secum morari.*’ Ep. 2, 1. ‘*Animus ab omnibus externis in se reuocandus est: sibi confidat, se graudeat, sua suspiciat, recedat quantum potest ab alienis, et se sibi applicet*’ *De tranquillitate animi*, 13, 2. We will find the same idea in the writings of Montaigne, Bacon or Gracián.

³²¹ Ep. 93, 2. *Vid.* Blüher, Karl Alfred, ‘Sapientia Ars Vitae. Séneca inspirador de un arte de vivir individualista en el pensamiento moralista europeo de los siglos XVI y XVII,’ in *Séneca, dos mil años después*, pp. 625-636.

could he who cannot govern himself govern others? *'Imperare sibi maximum imperium est.'*³²²

From 1583, Lipsius tried to combine the Tacitean principles and Stoic attitudes to politics with the aim of finding a compromise between the purely utilitarian ideology of Machiavelli and the (excessively naive) natural morality preached by the Church. After six years of hard work, he published in 1589 (just a few months after the appearance of Botero's *Della Ragion di Stato*) his *Politiorum sive civilis libri sex*, which would become the most important political treatise written in the Netherlands during this period.³²³ Conceived as a general handbook for rulers, the work is a palimpsest, made almost exclusively from quotations of classical writers – especially Tacitus and Seneca – conveniently arranged to suit Lipsius' arguments. It calls for a strong monarch, a central state that will guarantee order and a relaxation of the moral admonitions that limited political action to meet the challenges of modern society.³²⁴

³²² Ep. 113, 30. Gracián suggest the same when he writes: *'El Señorío verdadero (...) no consiste en mandar a otros, sino a sí mismo. ¿Qué importa sujete uno todo el mundo, si él no se sujeta a la razón?'* (*El Criticón*, II, Huesca: Ivan Nogués, 1653, chap. 13). On this matter see the article by José Muñoz Pérez, 'El dominio propio,' in *Estudios sobre Séneca. Ponencias y comunicaciones*, Madrid: CSIC, 1966, pp. 221-227.

³²³ Justus Lipsius, *Politiorum sive Civilis doctrinae libri sex, qui ad principatum maxime spectant*, Leiden: Christophe Plantin, 1589. The work will be expanded in the subsequent editions of 1596 and 1605. The most relevant chapters for our topic are 13 and 14 of Book IV. The first English translation appeared five years later as *Six Bookes of Politickes or Civil Doctrine*, trans. by William Jones, London: Richard Field, 1594. I use here the bilingual edition prepared by Jan H. Waszink, *Politica: Six Books of Politics or Political Instruction*, Assen: Royal Van Gorcum, 2004.

³²⁴ On Lipsius' political thought see: Bireley, *The Counter-Reformation Prince*; Brooke, Christopher, 'Justus Lipsius and the Post-Machiavellian Prince,' in *Philosophic Pride: Stoicism and Political Thought from Lipsius to Rousseau*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012, pp. 12-36; De Born, Erik (ed.), *(Un)masking the realities of power: Justus Lipsius and the dynamics of political writing in early modern Europe*, Leiden: Brill, 2011; Enenkel, Karl, 'De Neolatijnse Politica – Justus Lipsius, *Politiorum libri sex*,' *Lampas* 18, 1985, pp. 350-362; Janssens, Marijke, 'Virtue, Monarchy and Catholic Faith. Justus Lipsius' *Monita et exempla politica* (1605) and the Ideal of "Virtuous Monarchy",' in *Ideal Constitutions in the Renaissance*, ed. by Heinrich Kuhn & Diana Stanciu, Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2009, pp. 145-180; Laureys, Marc, et al. (eds.), 'The World of Justus Lipsius: A Contribution Towards his Intellectual Biography,' *Bulletin de l'Institut historique belge de Rome* 68, 1998, pp. 121-136; McCrea, Adriana, *Constant Minds: Political Virtue and the Lipsian Paradigm in England, 1584–1650*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997; Mouchel, Christian (ed.), *Juste Lipse (1547-1606) en son temps: Actes du colloque de Strasbourg, 1994*, Paris: H. Champion, 1996; Tournoy, Gilbert, et al. (eds.), *Justus Lipsius, Europae lumen et columen. Proceedings of the International Colloquium Leuven-Antwerp, 17-19 September 1997*, Supplementa Humanistica Lovaniensia, 16, Leuven: University Press, 1999; Van Houdt, Toon, 'The Spectacle of Power. Lipsius' Model of Princely (and Humanist) Conduct in His *Monita et exempla politica* (1605),' in *Miraculum Eruditionis. Neo-Latin Studies in Honour of Hans Helander*, ed. by in *Miraculum Eruditionis. Neo-Latin Studies in Honour of Hans Helander*, ed. by Maria Berggren et al., Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2007, pp. 13-30.

Lipsius rejects those thinkers who, ‘as if they were in Plato's Republic’, ‘ignorant of this century and the conditions of men,’ ‘only approve the path that reaches the honour and glory through virtue, considering it illicit’ to ever use ‘frauds and malices.’ Aristotle and the Church Fathers say ‘by fraud and deceit states are overthrown.’ But, would it not be possible to use ‘these same means to save them?’ Sometimes, Lipsius claims, ‘when it is not possible to reach the harbour by sailing straight,’ it is necessary and lawful to ‘do it by changing the sails and adopting a different course.’ Given the evils of the world, the prince must have *constantia*, *patientia* and *firmitas*. But also the astuteness ‘to play the fox, when dealing with a fox’, especially ‘if it serves public profit and well-being, which are always connected with the Prince’s profit and well-being.’³²⁵

Thus, Lipsius defends the same idea as Botero: that political action requires an expansion of the common morality. Moreover, he openly declared his sympathy for the realist aspects of Machiavelli's political doctrines, praising his plea for fraud.³²⁶ Christian moral and ethical ideals of piety and probity are valid and necessary, but sometimes they have to be tempered by a realistic assessment of humanity’s capacity for evil, at least in the realm of the politics of states. For this reason, Lipsius proposes that the ruler should adopt a ‘*prudentia mixta*’ that combines moral rectitude with ‘some of the dregs and mud of deception.’³²⁷ After all, ‘who will condemn me for this? Why does it mean I depart from Virtue? Wine does not stop being wine when it is mixed with a little water, nor does Prudence stop being Prudence when it is mixed with a little drop of deceit. This I mean in all cases so long as it is done moderately and with good aims.’³²⁸ In order to determine that right amount and not ‘give free rein’ to ‘deceit and malice,’ Lipsius devotes Chapter XIV of the fourth book to define and delimit three types of fraud: ‘light,

³²⁵ ‘*Per fraudem et dolum regna evertuntur, notat Philosophus [Aristot. V Polit.]: Tu servari per eadem, nefas esse vis? nec posse Principem interdum cum vulpe iunctum, pariter vulpinari? Praesertim si publicus Usus Salusque suadeat: quae semper cum Principis usu ac salute coniuncta?*’ Lipsius, *Politicorum*, IV, 13, pp. 506-507.

³²⁶ Lipsius, *Politicorum*, Preliminary Matter and IV, 13, pp. 230 and 508.

³²⁷ On the notion of *prudentia mixta* see: Oestreich, ‘The Main Political Work of Lipsius,’ pp. 48-49 and Mark Morford, ‘Tacitean *Prudentia* and the Doctrines of Justus Lipsius,’ in *Tacitus and the Tacitean tradition*, pp. 129-151.

³²⁸ Lipsius, *Politicorum*, IV, 13, pp. 506-509.

middle and grave' (*Levis, Media, Magna*).³²⁹ To the first belong 'distrust and dissimulation' (*diffidentia et dissimulatio*), 'which departs only slightly from virtue and contains no more than a little drop of malice'. To the second, 'bribery and deception' (*conciliationem et deceptionem*), an attitude 'that departs further from virtue, and comes very close to sin.' To the third belong 'perfidy and injustice' (*perfidia et iniustitia*), which 'represents a solid and fully-fledged malice'. And Lipsius concludes: 'I recommend the first kind, tolerate the second, and condemn the third.'³³⁰ In a world in which 'there are too many veils of deceit, and the true character of each person is covered in several wrappings,' light fraud (*levis fraus*) is lawful and necessary. In fact, those 'who cannot conceal will never know how to rule,' concludes Lipsius, paraphrasing the already mentioned adagio attributed to Tiberius.³³¹

Similarly, the 'good and legitimate king' is allowed to use 'corruption and deception' (*media fraus*), as long as he 'use them against his enemies, for the common good of all.'

Deception is when you prompt someone to act in your interest by misleading him or lying to him. A number of virtuous authors say that this is acceptable and virtuous behaviour for a Prince. The great Plato thought 'that the rulers must use frequent lies and deceit, to the advantage of their subjects' [Plato, *Resp.* 459 c9]. And our own Pliny said 'to deceive is Wisdom, given the morality of our time' [Plin. *Ep.* 8. 18. 3]. Some poet even wrote: 'I think that a lie, if told for the sake of well-being has nothing injurious' [Diph. *Thes.* Fr. I. I]. And it is clear that Princes readily listen to them. (...) And why should I expand on this topic? In one Word, many agree with Lysander's opinion that 'Truth is better than falsehood, but that Experience shows the dignity and qualities of both'. [Plut. *Lys.* 7.3]³³²

In short, Lipsius legitimates deception as a necessary evil, as 'a necessity itself. For a good Prince has almost no other means to defend himself and his environment against so many conspirators. And for this reason I too have said that this middle sort of deceit is tolerated by me instead of forbidden.'³³³ Lipsius is perfectly aware that he is

³²⁹ Considering that 'deceit is clever planning which departs from virtue or the laws, in the interest of the King and the kingdom'. Lipsius, *Politicorum*, IV, 14.

³³⁰ '*Illam suadeo, hanc tolero, istam damno.*' Lipsius, *Politicorum*, IV, 14, pp. 512-513.

³³¹ Lipsius, *Politicorum*, IV, 13, pp. 510-511.

³³² *Ibid.*, pp. 520-523.

³³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 522-523.

contradicting one of the most established Christian moral rules and that ‘clearly it is difficult for me here to free you, or myself, from guilt.’

Or it must be with what that same high-priest presents: ‘That there are certain kinds of lies which do not involve great guilt, but which, on the other hand, are not without guilt’ [Augs. *In Psalm. 5.7*] Let us consider small acts of corruption and deceit to be of this kind; and only then, when they are committed by a good and legitimate king against evil persons, for the sake of the common good. When not so: then they are often not just sins, but deep sins, however loud some veteran courtiers will laugh at me. ‘He that walks uprightly walks surely’ [Proverbs 10. 9].³³⁴

With these few words, Lipsius clinched the argument. He does not argue that deception in itself is morally good. On the contrary, he recognises that it is evil, but a necessary one that sometimes, and under certain conditions, should be allowed. The ‘necessity of the prince’ and the ‘common good’ of his people justify in themselves committing a sin – whether a venial or a mortal one. Something that, as the Belgian humanist points out, was obvious for the courtiers of this period. Thus, Lipsius lays the ground for the future discussions around deception. His gradation of fraud and his subjection of transparency to the political imperative were revisited and transformed over the following one hundred years by many European authors, becoming two key elements of the lawfulness of deception. Lipsius’s *Politics* had an unqualified success among Calvinists, Lutherans and Catholics. It was reprinted over fifty times between 1589 and 1760 and translated into many languages.³³⁵ In 1590, they were included in the Roman *Index* of Forbidden Books, due to their proximity to Machiavellianism and their defence of religious pluralism.³³⁶ However, this did not prevent Lipsius from continuing to be read and revered by Baroque intellectuals who often chose not to mention his name to avoid troubles with the Inquisition.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 524-525.

³³⁵ For an exhaustive list of the various editions and adaptations, see Waszink’s preliminary study, *Politicorum*, chap. 6, pp. 165-198. For an overview of Lipsius’s influence on subsequent political thinkers see the article by Gerhard Oestreich, ‘Justus Lipsius als Theoretiker des neuzeitlichen Machtstaates,’ *Historische Zeitschrift* 181, no. 1, 1956, pp. 31-78.

³³⁶ *Vid.* Lipsius, *Politicorum*, IV, 2-4.

DECEPTION AMONG SEVENTEENTH CENTURY THEORISTS

The groundwork done by Botero and Lipsius following the path of Tacitism allowed other authors to approach the reason of state in a much more systematic way and justify the use of appearances and deception as integral parts of statecraft. Some of these authors allowed lying. The majority, however, advised other forms of deception that were less polemical and free of the moral condemnation hanging over mendacity since Augustine. Gabriele Zinano talked about ‘*artificio*.’³³⁷ Frachetta spoke of ‘*stratagemmi*.’ Vangelista Sartonio called it ‘*accortezza*’ (sagacity, shrewdness) and considered it lawful when serving the nation’s interests.³³⁸ Filippo Cavriana and Federico Bonaventura allowed the ‘virtuous fraud’ justly executed by the prince and public men.³³⁹ Others supported the use of ‘mental reservation’ and ‘equivocation’ justified by casuistic theologians. Nonetheless, most preferred to use the concepts of ‘simulation’ and ‘dissimulation,’ which contained all of the above and acted as the central axis of the modern debate on political deception.³⁴⁰

I will mention just some examples. In 1592, Girolamo Frachetta extended the notion of the ‘reason of war’ created by Botero and integrated it ‘as part of the reason of State,’

³³⁷ *Della Ragione de gli Stati libri XII, dove si tratta di tutte le spezie e forze de gli artifici, intorno a tutti gli affari de gli Stati. E dei modi di acquistarli e stabilirli*, Venice: Giovanni Guerigli, 1626, bk. II, p. 38.

³³⁸ *Il cittadino di Reppublica regolare sotto il titolo di Pensieri politici ovvero avvedimenti civili*, Bologna: G. Mascheron, 1625, pp. 831-834.

³³⁹ *Discorsi sopra i primi cinque libre di Cornelio Tácito*, Florence: F. Giunti, 1597, p. 78 and *Della Ragione di Stato et della prudenza politica*, Urbino: A. Corvini, 1623, bk. IV, chap. 93.

³⁴⁰ On simulation and dissimulation as political practice in Western Europe see primarily the works by John R. Snyder (*Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge: University of California Press, 2009), Rosario Villari (*Elogio della dissimulazione. La lotta politica nel Seicento*, Rome: Laterza, 1987) and Jean-Pierre Cavaillé (‘*Simulatio/dissimulatio*, notes sur feinte et occultation, xvie-xviiiè siècle,’ in *Il Vocabolario della République des Lettres. Terminologia filosofica e storia della filosofia. Problemi di metodo*, Atti del Convegno Internazionale in Memoriam di Paul Dibon, Napoli, 17-18 maggio 1996, ed. by M. Fattori, Florence: Olschki, 1997, pp. 115-131; *Dis/simulations. Jules-César Vanini, François La Mothe Le Vayer, Gabriel Naudé, Louis Machon et Torquato Accetto, Religion, morale et politique au xviiè siècle*, Paris: H. Champion, 2002; ‘Pour une histoire de la dis/simulation,’ *Les Dossiers du Grihl*, 2009-02, URL: <http://dossiersgrihl.revues.org/3666>; ‘Mensonge et politique au début de l’âge moderne,’ *Les Dossiers du Grihl*, 2013, URL: <http://dossiersgrihl.revues.org/5936>). Equally useful are the article by Michel Sénellart, ‘Simuler et dissimuler: l’art machiavélien d’être secret à la Renaissance,’ in *Histoire et secret à la Renaissance*, ed. by François Laroque, Paris: Presses de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1997, pp. 99-106; and the monograph by Giovanni Macchia, *I moralisti classici da Machiavelli a La Bruyère*, Milan: Adelphi, 1988, esp. the 4th section on *Il potere della dissimulazione*.

allowing the prince to resort to ‘dissimulation and deceits’ ‘in the affairs of the State as of war.’³⁴¹ Two years later, the Neapolitan historian Scipione Ammirato published his *Discorsi sopra Cornelius Tacitus* (1594). In them, he evoked many examples chiefly taken from Tacitus and ancient history to demonstrate that *dissimolazioni* were not only essential to statecraft but also morally acceptable to a Christian ruler.³⁴² After all, he observed, God himself dissimulates the sins of men so that they may repent of them.³⁴³

For another contemporary of his, Tommaso Campanella, the situation was even more dramatic. In a world such as theirs, in which the relationship between *verba* and *res* was irretrievably damaged, the only one who could speak the truth itself was God. On the contrary, men were condemned to lie (*‘Homines vero omnes mendaces’*).³⁴⁴ Following Aristotle, Campanella recognised ‘veracity’ as a ‘half-virtue’ opposed, on one side to the *mendacium*, and on the other to the ‘*vericide*’; that is, a criminal vice that consists in telling always the truth, without considering the circumstances.³⁴⁵

Supported by such arguments, deception made her way among the Italian humanists of the early seventeenth century as an inseparable part of the Christian good reason and state. For Virgilio Malvezzi ‘*dissimulazione*’ was what allows the prince to overcome the primitivism of spontaneity and act according to prudence and reason.³⁴⁶ For Ludovico Settalla, it was an essential complement to secrecy (*secretezza*), ‘opening his forehead and covering his mind, something rather appropriate for the prince.’³⁴⁷ For Torquato Accetto, dissimulation was ‘a veil composed of honest shadows and violent deferences,’

³⁴¹ *L'idea del libro de governi di Stato et di Guerra*, Venice: Zenaro, 1592, p. 52.

³⁴² Scipione Ammirato, *Discorsi... sopra Cornelio Tacito nuovamente posti in luce*, Florence: F. Giunti, 1598, bk. I, disc. 4. The same ideas are found in a subsequent manuscript entitled *Se per alcuno immaginario modo si dà accidente alcuno per lo quale si possa permetter di dir bugia*, edited by Rodolfo De Mattei in *Il pensiero politico di Scipione Ammirato*, Milan: Giuffrè, 1963.

³⁴³ ‘*E perché alcuno non riceva in sé scandalo, che in questo modo si diano insegnamenti del dissimulare, basterà dir loro che di Dio istesso fu scritto che egli dissimola i peccati degli uomini perche si possan pentire.*’ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁴ Campanella, *Universalis Philosophiae seu metaphysicarum rerum iuxta propria dogmata partes tres*, Paris: D. Langlois, 1638, bk. I, proemio 16.

³⁴⁵ Campanella, *Theologicorum libri XXX*, liber X, *Delle virtù e dei vizi in particolare*, ed. by R. Amerio, Rome: Centro Internazionale di studi umanistici, 1978, vol. II, p. 68.

³⁴⁶ Malvezzi, *Il Tarquinio Superbo*, Venice: A. Baba, 1633.

³⁴⁷ ‘*Compagna della secretezza è la dissimulazione, la quale è quella che apre la fronte, e copre la mente, che pure non è disdicevole al buon principe.*’ *Della ragion di stato libri sette*, Milan: Giovanni Battista Bidelli, 1627.

on which depended the health of the republics, but also the beauty, peace and the ‘tranquillity of living’ (*tranquillità del vivere*) of their citizens.³⁴⁸ Similar ideas are found in the treatises of Alessandro Anguissola, Fabio Frezza, Gabriele Zinano o Andrea Collodi, to name but a few.³⁴⁹

Although this intellectual trend was especially popular in Italy, it can also be detected in other parts of the West. In France, Michel de Montaigne (1595) condemned the use of ‘fraud’ (*tromperie*) and ‘dissimulation’ in ordinary men, but tolerated them as ‘legitimate vices,’ ‘good or excusable’ (*bonnes ou excusables*) in the case of the rulers.³⁵⁰ Total honesty, as he explained in the essay *De l'utile et de l'honneste*, is incompatible with utility.³⁵¹ ‘The Public Good requires that we betray and lie and massacre.’³⁵² In his treatise *De la Sagesse* (1601), Pierre Charron agreed: ‘Dissimulation, which is vicious in private individuals, is very necessary for princes, who could not otherwise reign or rule well.’ The sovereign is surrounded by enemies, outside and inside the palace. To survive he must ‘cover his art,’ ‘pretend to love simplicity,’ and, ultimately, use deception for the

³⁴⁸ *Della dissimulatione onesta*, Naples: Egidio Longo, 1641.

³⁴⁹ Alessandro Anguissola, *Del buon governo del principe*, 1612, chap.: Della simulatione et dissimulatione. Apud. Snyder, *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy*, pp. 1-4; Fabio Frezza, *Discorsi politici et morali*, Naples: T. Longo, 1617, pp. 34-44 and 157-158; Gabriele Zinano, *Della Ragione de gli Stati libri XII, dove si tratta di tutte le spezie e forze de gli artifici, intorno a tutti gli affari de gli Stati. E dei modi di acquistarli e stabilirli*, Venice: Giovanni Guerigli, 1626, pp. 10-12; Andrea Collodi, *Disputatio politica ad C. Cornelii Taciti Annal. liber I, de Tiberii dissimulatione*, Luca: Octavianum Guidobonium, 1616.

³⁵⁰ ‘Je ne veux pas priver la tromperie de son rang, ce seroit mal entendre le monde; je sçay qu'elle a servy souvant profitablement (...) Il y a des vices legitimes, comme plusieurs actions, ou bonnes ou excusables, illegitimes.’ *Essais*, bk. III, chap. 1. I use the ed. by Villey-Saulnier, Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1965, vol. II, p. 212.

³⁵¹ ‘Tout ce mien proceder est un peu bien dissonant à nos formes; ce ne seroit pas pour produire grands effets, ny pour y durer; l'innocence mesme ne sçauroit ny negotier entre nous sans dissimulation, ny marchander sans manterie.’ Although he adds: ‘Aussi ne sont aucunement de mon gibier les occupations publiques.’ *Essais*, bk. III, chap. 1. Ed. by Villey-Saulnier, vol. II, p. 211.

³⁵² ‘Le bien public requiert qu'on trahisse et qu'on mente et qu'on massacre.’ *Essais*, bk. III, chap. 1, p. 206. On Montaigne’s views of dissimulation see: Curley, Edwin M., ‘Skepticism and Toleration: The Case of Montaigne,’ *Oxford Studies in Early Modern Philosophy*, vol. II, 2005, pp. 1-33; Heitsch, Dorothea B., *Practising Reform in Montaigne's Essais*, Leiden: Brill, 2000, pp. 109-140; Kruse, Margot, ‘Justification et critique du concept de la dissimulation dans l’œuvre des moralistes du xviie siècle,’ in *La pensée religieuse dans la littérature et la civilisation du xviie siècle en France*, Seattle: Papers on French Seventeenth Century Literature, 1984, pp. 150-153; Lavagetto, Mario, *La Cicatrice di Montaigne. Sulla bugia in Letteratura*, Turin: Einaudi, 1992; Starobinski, Jean, & John Muresianu, ‘Montaigne on Illusion: The Denunciation of Untruth,’ *Daedalus* 108, no. 3, Summer 1979, pp. 85-101.

benefit of ‘the public interest, for the good and rest of his own and the State.’³⁵³ To justify this idea, Louis Machon, faithful follower of Machiavelli, rephrased the famous adage used by St. Augustine (and attributed to Terence): *veritas odium parit* (Truth begets hatred). The prince who cannot lie will never be loved or respected by his subjects.³⁵⁴

In England too, influential intellectuals justified the prince’s deception. Francis Bacon devoted to this issue one of his essays: *Of Simulation and Dissimulation* (1625). Following the teachings of Tacitus and Lipsius, Bacon distinguished ‘three degrees of hiding and veiling of a man’s self. The first refers to concealment (‘closeness, reservation and secrecy’) and is valued positively as ‘the virtue of a confessor.’ ‘For the second, which is dissimulation,’ is equally tolerated; ‘it followed many times upon secrecy, by a necessity; so that he that will be secret, must be a dissembler in some degree.’ ‘But for the third degree, which is simulation, and false profession; that I hold more culpable, and less politic; except it be in great and rare matters.’ Therefore, Bacon tolerated concealment and duplicity as necessary elements of ‘policy and prudence.’ In his view, even ‘the ablest men that ever were,’ who ‘have had all an openness, and frankness, (...) and veracity,’ ‘required dissimulation’ in certain occasions.³⁵⁵

More important was the contribution of Alberico Gentili, a jurist of Italian origins who embraced Protestantism and settled in England from 1590. He taught civil law as Regius Professor at Oxford, practised law in London and served as a standing advocate to the Spanish embassy from 1605 until his death in 1608. In 1588, Gentili published a provocative treatise (*De Iure belli commentatio secunda*) in which he defends the

³⁵³ ‘La dissimulation, qui est vicieuse aux particuliers, est très nécessaire aux princes, lesquels ne sçauroient autrement regner ne bien commander.’ *De la Sagesse*, Bordeaux: Simon Millanges, 1601, bk. III, chap. 2. I use the ed. by Armaury Duval, Geneva: Slatkine, 1827, vol. III, p. 35.

³⁵⁴ Louis Machon, *Apologie pour Machiavelle, en faveur des Princes et des Ministres D’Estat*, Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds fr. 19046-19047, Paris, 1643.

³⁵⁵ *Of Simulation and Dissimulation*. This essay was included in the expanded edition entitled *Essayes or Counsels, Civill and Morall*, London: Iohn Haviland, 1625. On Bacon’s idea on dissimulation see: Dzelzainis, Martin, ‘Bacon, “Of Simulation and Dissimulation”,’ in *A Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture*, ed. by Martin Dzelzainis & Michael Hattaway, Oxford: Blackwells, 2000, pp. 233-240; and Snyder, *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy*, pp. 56-59. For an example of an other Protestant writer that supported dissimulation see Jeremy Taylor, *Ductor dubitantium*, bk. II, no. 105.

lawfulness of fraud, simulation and mendacity in war with such forcefulness that his Oxonian fellows labelled him ‘*macchiavellicus*’.³⁵⁶ Nevertheless, the criticism did not intimidate him and a decade later Gentili extended this licence to every political action. Relying on the ancient Roman law that he knew so well, he defended the use of an ‘officious lie’ in cases of ‘great necessity’, and insisted that the law should be in the light of its ultimate aim: the natural political preservation of the people (*‘Salus populi suprema lex esto’*).³⁵⁷

The ideas outlined by Gentili were resumed and brought to their maximum expression two decades later by one of the most influential jurists and theologians of the seventeenth century: the Dutchman Hugo Grotius. He was born in Holland in 1583 and died in 1645. His life was marked by the heated Dutch War, which pitted Spain against the Seventeen Provinces for more than eighty years and whose end (Peace of Westphalia in 1648) Grotius never saw. Marked by this experience, in 1625 he published *De Jure Belli ac Pacis*, an ambitious work in which the medieval theory of just war was reformulated and the bases of modern international law were set.

Grotius studied the tradition of Roman law and the principles of modern natural law (*ius naturale*) as formulated by the School of Salamanca.³⁵⁸ Moreover, he was a great admirer of Lipsius and an avid reader of Seneca and Tacitus.³⁵⁹ In *De Jure Belli* he combined all these influences to create one of the most striking and original

³⁵⁶ Alberico Gentili, *De iure belli commentatio secunda*, London: Iohannes Wolfius, 1588, II. 3, II. 4, II. 5. On its reception see the book by Diego Panizza, *Alberico Gentili, giurista ideologo nell’Inghilterra elisabettiana*, Padova: Garangola, 1981, pp. 65-66 and 75.

³⁵⁷ Alberico Gentili, *Disputationes duae; I. De actoribus et spectatoribus fabularum non notandis; II. De abusu mendacii*, Hanover: G. Antonium, 1599, pp. 123-210. ‘Let the safety of the people be the supreme law’ (p. 131); ‘in magna necessitate’ (p. 195). In *De armis romanis*, published in the same year, he declared: ‘That which is not permissible by law is made permissible by necessity. Necessity has no law, but it itself makes a law. Necessity makes something approvable that was otherwise to be disapproved of’ *‘Quod non est licitum lege, necessitas facit licitum. Non habet legem necessitas, sed ipsa legem facit. Necessitas facit probabile, quod erat alias improbabile.’* (pp. 115-116). For further information, see Gianfranco Borrelli, ‘Tecniche di simulazione e conservazione politica in Gerolamo Cardano e Alberico Gentili,’ *Annali dell’Istituto Storico Italo-Germanico in Trento* 12, 1986, pp. 87-124.

³⁵⁸ In particular, Grotius quotes abundantly Francisco de Vitoria (*De potestate civili*, 1528) and Francisco Suárez (*Tractatus de legibus ac Deo legislatore*, Coimbra 1612).

³⁵⁹ See: Blom, Hans W., & Laurens C. Winkel (eds.), *Hugo Grotius and the Stoa*, Assen: Van Gorcum, 2004; Damon, Cynthia, ‘Tritus in eo lector’: Grotius’s emendations to the text of Tacitus,’ *Grotiana* 29, no. 1, 2008, pp. 133-149; and Waszink, Jan, ‘Lipsius and Grotius: Tacitism,’ *History of European Ideas* 39, no. 2, 2012, pp. 151-168.

justifications of deception of this age.³⁶⁰ For Grotius there are ‘two kinds of frauds’: a ‘negative’ and a ‘positive kind.’³⁶¹ The negative ones consist in ‘that Fraud which is not evil’; for example, ‘when a man by dissimulation preserves either his own, or another’s life.’

So Cicero overstretched the point, when he said, ‘disguise and dissimulation should be banished out of human life’. For since we are not obliged to discover to others all we know, or desire; it follows, that it is lawful to dissemble some Things before some Men, that is, to hide and conceal them (...) And that this is sometimes necessary and unavoidable especially in Governors, *Cicero* confesses in many places.³⁶²

On the other hand, we have the ‘fraud of a positive kind’, which, ‘when practised in actions, is called a feint, and when used in words [receives the name of] a lie’.³⁶³ These frauds are considered a direct violation of all moral principle, and as such are severely condemned by the ‘Holy Scriptures’, St. Augustine and ‘many Poets and Philosophers.’³⁶⁴ However, Grotius argues, the fact remains that in those same texts we find the case many characters (such as Paul or the Saviour himself) ‘who nevertheless have sometimes lied, without being anywhere blamed for it.’³⁶⁵ Moreover, there are many ‘doctors of the Christian Church’ and classic philosophers and historians who considered that ‘it is allowable in a wise man sometimes to tell a lie.’³⁶⁶ After all, as

³⁶⁰ *Jure belli ac pacis libri tres, in quibus jus naturae et gentium, item juris publici praecipua explicantur*, Paris: N. Buon, 1625, bk. III, chap. 1: Quantum in bello liceat, regulae generales ex jure naturae; ubi & de dolis & mendacio.

³⁶¹ ‘Notandum igitur, dolum alium consistere in actum negativo, alim in actu positivo.’

³⁶² ‘Doli vocem etiam ad ea quae in negativo actu consistunt extendo, Labeone actutore, qui ad dolum sed non malum refert, ubi quis per dissimulationem tuetur sua vel aliena. Haud dubie crude nimis a Cicerone dictum est: ‘ex omni vita simulationem dissimulationemque tollendam’. Nam cum nec quae scias, nec quae velis omnia aperire aliis tenearis, sequitur ut dissimulare quaedam apud quosdam, id est tegere & occultare (...) Et necessariam hanc omnino atque inevitabilem, his praesertim quibus respublica commissa est, non uno loco fatetur ipse Cicero.’ *Jure belli ac pacis*, bk. III, chap. 1, sect. 7.

³⁶³ ‘Dolus qui in actu positivo consistit, si in rebus, simulatio; si in sermone, mendacium vocatur.’ *Ibid.*, sect. 8.

³⁶⁴ ‘Multa enim sunt contra mendacium in sacris literis.’ *Ibid.*, sect. 9. Among others, Grotius mentions several Proverbs: ‘A righteous Man hateth Lying’ (prov. 103), ‘Remove far from me Falshood and Lyes’ (prov. 30) and Psalms: ‘Thou shalt destroy all those that speak Lies’ (Psalms 5. 7). He also quotes maxims by Homer, Sophocles, Cleobulus and Aristotle.

³⁶⁵ ‘In sacris litteris exempla laudatorum hominum sine reprehensionis nota.’

³⁶⁶ ‘Nam et mendacium dicere etiam sapienti aliquando concessum est.’ Among the first, Lipsius quotes Origen, Clemens, Tertullian, Lactantius, Chrysostom, St. Jerome and Cassianus. Among the second

Quintilian pointed out, ‘many things are honest, or dishonest, not simply from the fact, but from the motives of it.’³⁶⁷

The challenge is, hence, ‘to reconcile such a variety of discordant opinions,’ something that Grotius does by separating two concepts until then inextricably linked: lie and deception.³⁶⁸ To do this, Grotius begins by rejecting the interpretation that St. Augustine made of language as a natural reality and emphasises its ‘artificial’ and ‘arbitrary’ nature. ‘Words of their own nature, and independently of the will of men, signify nothing’.³⁶⁹ Communication is therefore an act between men in which God does not participate. This in turn allows him to redefine the Augustinian definition of *mendacium*, no longer understood as a statement *contra mentem* but as breach of the tacit agreement of truth shared by the members of the civil society.³⁷⁰ From this perspective, lying is the act of ‘refusing someone the truth due.’ But, what if that someone has no right to know the truth he is asking for? Then, it should not be considered a ‘lie’, but ‘*falsiloquium*’, a legitimate form of untruth when it serves to protect the natural rights every man and woman has.³⁷¹

Thus, through these two ideas (language as a merely human interaction and the right to not reveal the truth), Grotius frees the lie of his moral condemnation. Verbal equivocations and mental reservations are not needed.³⁷² It was no longer a matter of finding mechanisms to make false statements without incurring a lie, but to claim the

the classic authors: Socrates, Plato, Xenophon, Cicero, Plutarch, Quintilian, the Stoics, Herodotus and Isocrates.

³⁶⁷ ‘*Quintilianus, quem dixi, hanc ipsam partem defendens, pleraque esse ait, quae non tam sactis quam causis eorum vel honesta siant vel turpia.*’ *Jure belli ac pacis*, bk. III, chap. 1, sect. 9.

³⁶⁸ ‘*Tam diffidentium sententiarum conciliatio.*’ *Ibid.*, sect. 10.

³⁶⁹ ‘*Voces natura ipsa et citra hominum voluntatem nihil significare, nisi forte vox sit confusa, qualis in dolore, ipsa rei magis appellatione venit quam locutionis.*’ *Ibid.*, sect. 8.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, sect. 10: ‘Nor is speaking an untruth, unawares, to be considered in the nature of a lie, but the falsehood, which comes within the limits here defined, is the known and deliberate utterance of any thing contrary to our real conviction, intention, and understanding’.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, sect. 11. One hundred and seventy years later, Immanuel Kant devoted one of his most famous essays to this issue: ‘The Doctrine of Virtue,’ in *Die Metaphysik der Sitten*, 1797. See the trans. by Mary Gregor, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, Cambridge: University Press, 1996.

³⁷² Grotius accepts as lawful the doctrine of verbal equivocation, provided it is used honestly under certain circumstances; for example ‘to avoid an urgent and impertinent question’ (*Jure belli ac pacis*, bk. III, chap. 1, sect. 10). On the contrary, he condemns ‘mental Reservations, which even common Sense is ashamed of; and which, if allowed, will introduce plain Contrarieties; so that he that affirms any Thing, may be said to deny it, and he that denies a Thing, may be said to affirm it.’ (*Ibid.*, sect. 17).

right to lie itself, under certain circumstances. Grotius mentions several cases in which *falsiloquium* could be used without committing a sin.³⁷³ One of them is precisely the absolute prince, who: ‘possessing preeminent authority, orders another, in a subordinate capacity, to execute some device or stratagem, conducive either to his individual, or to the public welfare, which Plato seems to have had particularly in view, in allowing those in authority to say falsehoods.’³⁷⁴ Just as doctors can lie for the good of their patients, so can the prince lie for the sake of his subjects or the preservation of the state. Examples include Joseph or the great Solomon, ‘when to discover the true mother, he commanded the living child to be divided, when he intended nothing less.’³⁷⁵ Grotius concludes: ‘As Quintilian said: “Sometimes the common Good requires that deception should be maintained”.’³⁷⁶

This reintroduction, on new bases, of the noble or good lies condemned by Augustine, was paralleled and echoed by many jurists (Protestants, as well as Catholics)³⁷⁷ and political theorists throughout the seventeenth century, who used it to create, discreetly but effectively, a political, moral and legal justification for the deception of the rulers.

In summary, we witness, in the last decades of the sixteenth and the beginning of the

³⁷³ When the educator deals with a child or a madman (sect. 12); when the doctor deceives his patient (sect. 14), when ‘unfounded or fictitious motives [are used] to console a friend in distress’ (sect. 14), ‘where it may be the only means of saving the life of an innocent person, of obtaining some object of equal importance, or of diverting another from the perpetration of some horrid design’ (sect. 16), when dealing with an enemy (sect. 17).

³⁷⁴ ‘*Quartum & superiori affine est, quoties qui habet jussuperemines in omnia jura alterius, eo jure bono ipsius sive proprio, sive publico utilitur. Et hoc maxime spectasse videtur Plato, qui imperium habentibus concedit falsum dicere.*’ *Jure belli ac pacis*, bk. III, chap. 1, sect. 15.

³⁷⁵ ‘*Et in Solomone, qui sapientiae dinitus datae specimen dedit, cum apud mulieres de partu litigantes voces eas protulit quae voluntatem scindendi infantis significarent, cum animus ei longissime a tali voluntate abesset, & verae matri suum partum attribuere vellet.*’ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁶ ‘*Quintiliani est dictum: ‘aliquando exigit communis utilitas ut etiam falsa defendantur.’ Ibid.* I believe he is referring to this maxim: ‘*Non semper autem, etiam si frequentissime*’ (*Institutio Oratoria*, bk. II, chap.17).

³⁷⁷ The most prominent was Samuel Pufendorf (*De jure naturae et gentium*, London: Sumtibus Adami Junghans iprimbat Vitus Haberegger, 1672, bk. IV, chap. 1). For an analysis of the doctrines of lying created by the jurists of modern natural law during sixteenth and seventeenth centuries see: Annen, Martin, *Das Problem der Wahrhaftigkeit in der Philosophie der Aufklärung*, Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1997; and Cavaillé, Jean-Pierre, ‘Le Droit de mentir: Pufendorf et Barbeyrac lecteurs de Grotius,’ *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres*, 1997-1, pp. 37-48.

seventeenth centuries, a transcendental change in the history of modern political thought, symptomatic itself of even more profound transformations in the level of mentalities. That optimistic view of society characteristic of the first humanism died a victim of the numerous wars, religious persecutions and abuses of power with which the dual process of confessionalisation and social discipline manifested itself in the West.³⁷⁸ In opposition to the ideal of a set of citizens educated in the civil virtues and devoted to a *vita activa* in their community, emerged a pessimistic perception of society that interprets reality through competition and conflict. ‘Man is the greatest enemy of man’, said Saavedra Fajardo.³⁷⁹ ‘*Homo homini lupus est*,’ added Hobbes.

In this context, the old political language of Aristotelianism went into crisis. Politics was no longer the art of ruling according to justice and virtue, and became an opaque art, full of secrets, distrust³⁸⁰ and deceit, dominated by one supreme goal: to protect the state. To protect it at all costs; both from the other states and its own subjects. In pursuit of such conservation, the general rules of religion and law, although still recognised, were relegated to a second place in certain circumstances. Morality was subordinated to practicality. ‘The Prince,’ wrote Giovanni Antonio Palazzo in 1604, ‘can, for the reason of state, transgress human laws, not being subjected to them, as the human laws tend to reveal themselves unreasonable after a while, being human actions, most of the time,

³⁷⁸ On these topics see, by way of introduction, the pioneer works by: Foucault, Michel, ‘Disciplinary power and subjection,’ in *Power*, ed. by Steven Lukes, Oxford: University Press, 1986, pp. 229-242; Oestreich, Gerhard, *Neostoicism and the early modern state*, Cambridge: University Press, 1982; Reinhard, Wolfgang, ‘Konfession und Konfessionalisierung in Europa,’ in *Bekenntnis und Geschichte. Die Confessio Augustana im historischen Zusammenhang*, München: Vögel, 1981, pp. 165-189; Idem, ‘Zwang zur Konfessionalisierung? Prolegomena zu einer Theorie des konfessionellen Zeitalters,’ *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung* 10, 1983, pp. 257-277; Idem & Heinz Schilling (eds.): *Die katholische Konfessionalisierung*, Munich: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1995; Schilling, Heinz, ‘Die Konfessionalisierung im Reich. Religiöser und gesellschaftlicher Wandel in Deutschland zwischen 1555 und 1620,’ *Historische Zeitschrift* 246, 1988, pp. 1-45. Trans. into english as ‘Confessional Europe,’ in *Handbook of European history 1400-1600*, ed. by Thomas A. Brady *et al.*, Leiden: Brill, 1995, vol. 2.

³⁷⁹ ‘*Ningún enemigo mayor del hombre que el hombre.*’ *Idea de un Príncipe Político Christiano*, empresa 46.

³⁸⁰ Saavedra Fajardo attributed the following words to Louis XIV, King of France: ‘*La política destes tiempos presupone la malicia y el engaño en todo, y se arma contra él de otros mayores, sin respeto a la religión, a la justicia y fe pública.*’ (*Idea de un Príncipe Político Christiano*, empresa 67). The Milanese theorist Ludovico Settala devotes an entire chapter of his treatise (*Della ragion di stato libri sette*, chap. 13) to the necessary mistrust that the prince should have of his ministers.

imperfect.³⁸¹ In this new intellectual framework, deception was fully legitimised as an integral part of the *Realpolitik*.

Surprisingly, this huge shift took place in a relatively short period of time. If at the mid-sixteenth century Machiavelli and *the politicians* were stigmatised for defending the right of the prince to deceive and act hypocritically, at the end of that century these were considered lawful practices. A paradigmatic example is the one of ‘pretence’ or ‘dissimulation’, which in just forty years (between 1589 and 1625) went from being one of the most terrible sins to being a ‘new virtue’, regarded as ‘a remarkable quality’ of modern rulers.³⁸²

What role did Iberian theorists play in this intellectual process? Did they simply follow the European trend, or, on the contrary, were they at the forefront of it? What was their view on political deception? These and other issues will be discussed in the following chapters.

³⁸¹ ‘Il Principe può per ragioni di stato trasgredire l’humane leggi, non essendo a quelle soggetto, come anco perché sogliono le leggi umane col tempo scoprirsi irragionevoli, essendo il più delle volte l’attioni humane tutte imperfette.’ Giovanni Antonio Palazzo, *Del governo e della ragion vera di Stato*, Naples: Giovanni Battista Sottile, 1604. A subsequent edition, used here for the quotes, bears the title: *Discorsi del governo e della ragion vera di Stato*, Venice: Giovanni Antonio, 1606, p. 378.

³⁸² By 1590, Montaigne speaks of a ‘nouvelle vertu de faintise [hypocrisy] et de dissimulation qui est à cette heure si fort en crédit’ (*Essais*, bk. II, chap. 17). A few years later, Pierre Charron will refer to it as that ‘qualité notable des courtisans, tenue en crédit parmi eux comme vertu’ (*De la Sagesse*, bk. III, chap. 2, p. 34). In Italy, Pio Rossi will claim that ‘fingere e dissimulare (...) al tempo d’hoggi sono stimate virtù, e tengono notabili qualità fra le comuni opinioni’ (*Convito morale per gli Etici, Economici e Politici*, Venice: apresso i Guerigly, 1639, p. 181).

CHAPTER IV

DECEPTION IN EARLY MODERN IBERIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

There are a terrible lot of lies going
about the world, and the worst of it
is that half of them are true.

WINSTON CHURCHILL

The total absence of Spain (the dominant political and economic power in early modern Europe) from intellectual accounts of the period has become almost customary in English language historiography.³⁸³ For centuries, Iberia has been portrayed as an intellectually moribund and culturally isolated place of no academic interest. This is an incorrect image that many researchers have begun to challenge in recent decades. In the following chapters, I intend to contribute to this movement by illustrating the crucial role that Iberian intellectuals played in the acceptance of deception in theological and political discourses. My claim is that, although the debate on the lawfulness of deception arrived to the Iberian Peninsula relatively late compared to Italy, it reached there its highest levels of intensity and sophistication. No other European territory would show more systematic and radical support to political deception than the Iberian kingdoms. Spanish theorists managed to achieve that by creating an alternative theory (one opposed to the arguments of Machiavelli and

³⁸³ See, for example: Brooke, Christopher, *Philosophic Pride: Stoicism and Political Thought from Lipsius to Rousseau*, Princeton: University Press, 2012; Burns, Jimmy H., & Mark Goldie (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450-1700*, Cambridge: University Press, 1991; Garber, Daniel, & Michael Ayers (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*, Cambridge: University Press, 1998; Oestreich, Gerhard (ed.), *Neostoicism and the Early Modern State*, Cambridge: University Press, 1982.

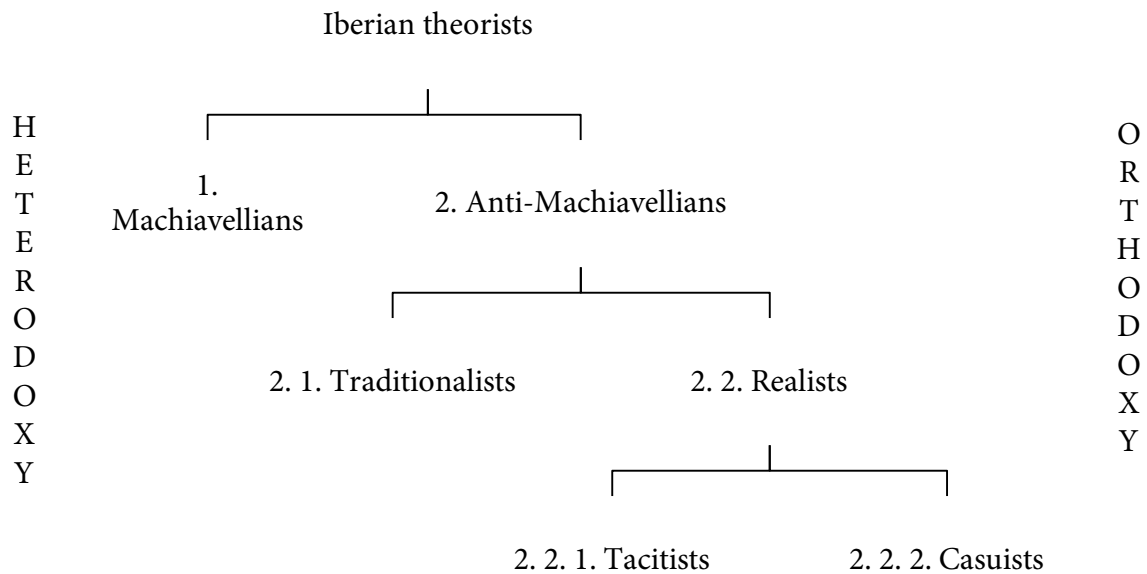
different to the theories of Lipsius and Botero) based on the principles of casuistry, neostoicism and the doctrine of the reason of state. In order to identify and understand such theory, I go beyond the canonical works written by Pedro de Rivadeneira, Diego Saavedra Fajardo, and Baltasar Gracián, and I examine a large number of treatises published mainly during the seventeenth century. To my knowledge, nobody has systematically examined most of these texts before.

THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY'S VIEWS

The controversy on the lawfulness of political deception that originated in Italy reached Iberia by the mid-sixteenth century and acquired immense importance between 1590 (with the reception of Botero's *Della Ragione di Stato*) and the 1660s. Iberian thinkers considered the use of deception one of the most conspicuous and dangerous features of Machiavelli's theory and 'the firmest foundation on which false reason of state rests.'³⁸⁴ That is why they devoted thousands of pages to this matter, to the point of making it central to the modern debate on the relationship between morality and politics.

It is possible to classify four currents of opinion:

³⁸⁴ Rivadeneira, *Tratado de la religión y virtudes que debe tener el príncipe cristiano*, pp. 293-294. The same thought other European anti-Machiavelist. For example, Reginald Pole wondered: 'Does this doctrine in its entirety teach anything other than deceit, duplicity, lying and life-long hypocrisy? (...) And are the sons of kings to be educated in this way, so that they are able to pretend and dissemble about everything?' (Reginald Pole, *Apologia ad Carolum Quintum*, in *Epistolae*, ed. by A. Qurini, Brescia, 1744, vol. I, chap. 31).



1. *Machiavellians*

On one side, we have the so-called ‘Machiavellians’ (*maquiavelistas*) aristocrats and intellectuals who, despite ecclesiastical censorship, read Machiavelli’s writings enthusiastically and accepted without concern the idea that the preservation of the state should be put ahead of any ethical or legal considerations.³⁸⁵ Juan de Mariana, the most distinguished historian of the period, described in 1599 the position of ‘Machiavellian politicians’:

Men of great intelligence and [with] reputations of being very prudent claim that the prince must use much dissimulation to rule the people. They say that other men have to follow the wide road of honesty (...) but not the prince, who is responsible for the health of a variable crowd, that is multiple, and inconsistent, and not always have the same will or judge things with the same success. Thus, they argue, the prince should take all forms, as Proteus, and assume the most diverse personalities, since he has to please everyone and [pretend to] approve everyone’s words and actions. Provided that he loves justice in his mind (...) he can conceive the greatest frauds and do evil

³⁸⁵ Vid. Maravall, Jose Antonio, ‘Maquiavelo y maquiavelismo en España,’ *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia* CLXV, 1969, pp. 183-218; Puigdomènech, Helena, *Maquiavelo en España. Presencia de sus obras en los siglos XVI y XVII*, Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 1988, esp. pp. 81-133.

things that he considers useful to contain the subjects in the circle of their duties.³⁸⁶

Thus, continues Mariana:

These men create a prince of deception, fraud and lies. They order him to feign probity, and allow him to use all kinds of faults and cruelties under certain circumstances (...) Things that would be condemned in common people but that, according to them, are to be praised when it comes to emperors and kings.³⁸⁷

To support such views, Mariana explains, Machiavellian politicians appeal to the examples of Hercules, Achilles, and Tiberius, taken from Tacitus. They evoke the old maxim attributed to Louis XI of France '*Qui nescit dissimulare nescit regnare*' (he who does not know how to dissimulate does not know how to rule) and ensure that 'the princes who followed that maxim retained royal power until the end of their lives.'³⁸⁸

According to them, the prince should not always follow the same path, he should instead adapt to the times and nature of people, making no difference between truth and lie, as long as he acts for the public good and the stability of the empire.³⁸⁹

Later authors, such as Juan Márquez, Juan Antonio de Vera y Zúñiga, and Diego de

³⁸⁶ 'Varones de grande y excelente ingenio y que tienen fama de muy prudentes sostienen que el príncipe debe usar mucho disimulo para gobernar los pueblos. Dicen que los demás hombres han de dirigirse por el camino ancho y trillado a lo que es honesto y útil, pero no los príncipes a quienes está confiada la salud de una muchedumbre variable, múltiple, inconstante y que no siempre tiene la misma voluntad ni juzga de las cosas con el mismo acierto. Tome el príncipe, añaden, todas las formas como un Proteo y asuma las más diversas personalidades, pues a todos debe agradar y de todos aprobar las palabras y los hechos. Con tal que el rey ame en su interior la equidad, y se manifieste benigno y tratable (...) puede concebir en su ánimo los mayores fraudes y ejecutar maldades que crea que han de servir para contener a los súbditos en el círculo de sus deberes.' Juan de Mariana, *De rege et regis institutione. Libri III. Ad Philippum III. Hispania Regem Catholicum*, Toledo: Pedro Rodríguez, 1599. Trans. and ed. by Luis Sánchez Agesta, *La dignidad real y la educación del rey*, Madrid: Centro de Estudios Constitucionales, 1981. The quote on bk. II, chap. 10.

³⁸⁷ 'Componen así estos varones al príncipe de dolo, fraude y de mentira, mandan que aparente probidad y le conceden que, según las circunstancias, pueda entregarse a todo género de liviandades y a la crueldad y la avaricia, cosas todas que pueden afrentar a los particulares, pero que, según ellos, han sido y son motivos de alabanza cuando se trata de emperadores y reyes.' *Ibid.*

³⁸⁸ '... los príncipes se guiaron por esta máxima conservaron hasta el fin de su vida la potestad real.' *Ibid.*

³⁸⁹ 'Según ellos, no debe el príncipe observar una misma conducta regularizada y ordenada, sino que debe acomodarse a los tiempos, a las personas y a la clase de estas, no haciendo ninguna diferencia entre la verdad y la mentira, con tal que todo lo refiera a la utilidad pública y estabilidad del imperio.' *Ibid.*, bk. I, chap. 2.

Saavedra Fajardo, offered similar descriptions.³⁹⁰ Iberia is full of ‘impious politicians’ who claim that ‘the king must cultivate equally vices and virtues, measure everything in terms of utility, and ignore honesty completely, if somehow it opposes what may be useful for the king and the people.’ However, Mariana warns, although ‘this is the opinion of many, [it is] not usually confirmed by words, because caution prevents it, but by example.’³⁹¹ Those who advocate deception as a political tool do not often write books or give speeches on the subject since that would probably lead them to Inquisitorial prison. On the contrary, they behave with ‘dissimulation,’ following Machiavelli’s advice. They put these principles into practice and do not engage in intellectual controversies. That is why the spread of the doctrines of deception during this first period (1531-1599) should not be seen in the relatively few treatises that support it, but rather, in the many treatises that were written against it.

2. *Anti-Machiavellians*

These anonymous Machiavellians were challenged, from the late sixteenth century, by a group of authors who, from very different theoretical and political positions, tried to destroy (by distorting) the dangerous doctrine of the Florentine secretary. Machiavelli’s acceptance of the immorality of certain measures employed by a ruler to ensure the conservation of the state was considered unacceptable by the majority of Iberian writers, who believed that politics should never go against Christian morality. ‘The rule of State, without the reins of the Gospel and religion, would run out of control,’ wrote Quevedo in 1662.³⁹² Thus, between 1595 and 1665 these authors published numerous works in which they systematically attacked Machiavelli, to the extent that Anti-Machiavellian rhetoric became one of the most conspicuous features of Iberian political thought of the

³⁹⁰ Vid. Márquez, Juan, *El gobernador cristiano*, Salamanca: Francisco de Cea Tesa, 1612, p. 231; Saavedra Fajardo, Diego de, *Idea de un príncipe político cristiano*, empresa 43; Vera y Zúñiga, Juan Antonio de, *El embajador*, Seville: Francisco de Lyra, 1620, fols. 86v-87r.

³⁹¹ Mariana, *De Rege*, bk. II, chap. 10.

³⁹² ‘*La materia de Estado, sin las riendas del Evangelio y de la Religión, correrá desbocada.*’ Francisco de Quevedo, *Política de Dios y gobierno de Cristo*, Madrid: Diego Díaz, 1662, chap. 23, sect. 2.

Baroque period.³⁹³ However, not all criticism of Machiavelli was the same. Iberian Anti-Machiavellianism was not a monolithic phenomenon but a heterogeneous one, composed of many different views and full of contradictions. Broadly speaking, we can distinguish (at least) two different currents, which to a certain extent opposed one another.

2. 1. Traditionalists

On the one hand, there was a more “traditionalist” current, composed of those authors who displayed an irreconcilable and absolute hostility towards Machiavelli’s views. They condemned the ‘atheism’ and ‘amorality’ of his doctrines, refused to accept any change in the medieval political model, and flatly rejected dis/simulation and any other form of deceit as behaviours opposed to Christ’s teachings. In general, the supporters of this current were clergymen who had little or no contact at all with the court: Luís de Granada, Juan de Torres, Antonio Navarro, Mateo López Bravo, Fernando Matute, and Luisa María de Padilla Manrique, to name but a few.³⁹⁴ The traditionalist current was particularly influential in the last third of the sixteenth century, during the period of the so-called ‘first Counter-Reformation,’ in which the Church and certain states attempted

³⁹³ On this topic see: Álvarez, José L., ‘Sobre Maquiavelo en España,’ *Revista de Derecho Público* 3, 1943, pp. 155-160; Bertini, Giovanni Maria, ‘La fortuna di Machiavelli in Spagna,’ *Quaderni Ibero-Americani* 2, 1946, pp. 21-26; Bleznick, Donald W., ‘Spanish Reaction to Machiavelli in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,’ *Journal of History of Ideas* 19, 1958, pp. 542-550; Cantarino, Elena, ‘Tratadistas político-morales de los siglos XVI y XVII,’ *El Basilisco* 21, 1996, pp. 4-7; Ceñal, Ramón, ‘Antimaquiavelismo de los tratadistas políticos de los siglos XVI y XVII,’ in *Umanesimo e Scienza Politica*, ed. by E. Castelli, Milan: Carlo Marzorati, 1951, pp. 61-67; Fernández de la Mora, Gonzalo, ‘Maquiavelo visto por los tratadistas españoles de la Contrarreforma,’ *Arbor* 13, 1949, pp. 417-449; Fernández-Santamaría, José Antonio, *Razón de estado y política en el pensamiento español del barroco (1595-1640)*, Madrid: Centro de Estudios Constitucionales, 1986, pp. 9-43; Howard, Keith David, *The Early Modern Reception of Machiavelli in Spain*, Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2014; Maravall, José Antonio, ‘Maquiavelo y maquiavelismo en España,’ pp. 183-218; Tierno Galván, Enrique, ‘El tacitismo en las doctrinas políticas del Siglo de Oro español,’ *Anales de la Universidad de Murcia: Curso 1947-48*, Murcia: Universidad de Murcia, 1949, pp. 895-988.

³⁹⁴ Fray Luís de Granada, *Traducción de la Escala Espiritual de S. Juan Clímaco*, Lisbon: Ionannes Blavio de Colonia, 1562, chap. 12; Torres, Juan de, *Philosophia moral de principes, para su buena criança y gouierno y para personas de todos estados*, Burgos: Philippe Junta y Bapista Varesio, 1596, part. 2, chap. 7-8; Navarro, Antonio, *Primera parte del conocimiento de sí mismo, utilísimo tratado para todo género de estado*, Madrid: Juan de la Cuesta, 1606, fols. 52v-53r; López Bravo, Mateo, *Discurso político del Rey y la razón de gobernar*, Madrid: n. pub., 1616, p. 118; Matute, Fernando, *El Triunpho del Desengaño. Contra el engaño y astucia de las edades del Mundo, para todas profesiones y para todos los estados*, Naples: Lázaro Escorigio, 1632, pp. 525-526; Padilla Manrique, Luisa María de, *Elogios de la Verdad e invectiva contra la mentira*, Zaragoza: Pedro Lanaja, 1640, pp. 65-66 and 438-439.

to strengthen the relationship between politics and religion. However, from the early seventeenth century on, the traditionalist anti-Machiavellianist movement lost ground, until being relegated to a third level of influence.

2. 2. *Realists*

Thus, by 1600 the prominence shifted to a new generation of more “realistic” authors who, not wanting to break with Christian moral principles, understood the need to abandon obsolete medieval theories for a more modern, pragmatic, and sophisticated approach to the art of government. It is difficult to assign them a precise profile. In general, they were men of the world; clergymen or laymen who spent long periods in Court or served in diplomatic missions of the Church, experiences that allowed them to know the miseries of power and the intricacies of politics. The realist authors stood between the Machiavellians and the traditionalists. On the one hand, they refused to accept the separation between religion and politics proposed by Machiavelli, because it meant going against some of the foundations of the Western culture. On the other hand, they rejected as unviable the view of traditionalists, refusing to consider Christian government simply in terms of a rigid and orthodox moral theology. Their aim was thus to formulate a ‘true’ but also ‘pragmatic’ reason of state that could be useful to the prince and acceptable in the eyes of God.

Most of the realists publicly rejected *Il Principe* as a set of lies, but the truth is that they absorbed many of its ideas. As Gabriel Naudé observed: ‘Whilst Machiavelli’s political writings have been banned, his doctrine is punctually applied [by many], even by those who censor and condemn it.’³⁹⁵ Machiavelli’s claim to a greater political realism, his idea of fortune, his pessimistic view of human relations, and his defence of deception as an essential element of statecraft, were tacitly assimilated by a significant number of Iberian thinkers. I have in mind figures such as Pedro de Rivadeneira, Juan Márquez, Alvia de Castro, Mártir Rizo, Saavedra Fajardo, Francisco de Quevedo, and

³⁹⁵ *Apud*. Vittorio Dini, *Il governó della prudenza. Virtù dei privati e disciplina dei privati e disciplina dei custodi*, Milan: Franco Angeli, 2000, p. 118.

many others. Men who, although they considered themselves enemies of Machiavelli, accepted many of his ideas and his theoretical framework, and integrated them in their political thought. As Juan de Mariana explained, these realist authors:

Consider equity and other virtues necessary for the prince, and believe that he should never neglect them or betray justice at his whim. Although he could lie or commit fraud, forced by the urgency of circumstances, because otherwise he would be involved in great dangers and would cause serious damage to the Republic.³⁹⁶

Realists agreed with Machiavellian politicians that a good ruler must be prepared to ‘deceive and lie’ when the situation demands it, and they devoted many pages of their treatises to finding lawful ways to do so. The main difference was that, while ‘politicians’ (*políticos*) considered deception an inherent part (and therefore legal and permanent) of government, realists considered it an ‘exceptional’ resource to be used only when ‘forced by the *necessitas*’ and ‘only as a remedy.’³⁹⁷ Thus we can consider this realist current a form of “Machiavellian Anti-Machiavellianism” because although it rejected some of his main ideas, it accepted others and used them to create a new model of statecraft.

Among these realist authors we find intellectuals of all types. It is not surprising, therefore, that the arguments they used to harmonise Machiavelli’s ideas with Christian morality were also quite different. Roughly, we can distinguish between two trends: on the one hand, a tacitean current, that followed the paths opened by Botero, Lipsius and other European tacitists. On the other hand, an original Iberian current that relied on scholasticism and casuistry.

2. 2. 1. Tacitists

Many realist authors followed the path opened by Botero and Lipsius and resorted to

³⁹⁶ ‘Consideran como necesarias al príncipe la equidad y las demás virtudes, sin concederle que pueda faltar a ellas por su antojo ni separarse de lo que exige la justicia, y sí tan sólo que pueda mentir y usar de fraude, obligado por lo apremiante de las circunstancias, pues si fuese demasiado tenaz en seguir el debido camino, se vería envuelto en grandes peligros y sumergiría en graves daños a la república.’ Mariana, *De Rege*, bk. II, chap. 10.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

tacitean³⁹⁸ and neostoic³⁹⁹ ideas to support their theories of a ‘good’ reason of state and honest deception. Iberian tacitists never constituted a homogeneous group, but shared a common intellectual project in which the criticism of Machiavelli was relegated to the background and efforts focused on trying to formulate a ‘true’ and, at the same time, ‘pragmatic’ reason of State –an art of government that could guarantee the preservation and stability of power without breaking with the moral principles dictated by religion.

This current gained relevance under the reign of Philip II, through the support of his Secretary of State Antonio Pérez (d. 1611), who funded the translation of Tacitus’s works and legitimised deception as an essential part of statecraft.⁴⁰⁰ Some of his most famous followers included Fernando Alvia de Castro, Baltasar Álamos de Barrientos, Juan Pablo Mártir Rizo, Joaquín Setanti, Diego de Saavedra Fajardo, and Fadrique Furio Ceriol. The Count-Duke of Olivares himself devoutly read Tacitus, gathered in the court a group of intellectuals interested in tacitean principles and tried to run imperial policy

³⁹⁸ On this matter see: Antón Martínez, Beatriz, *El tacitismo en el siglo XVII en España. El proceso de receptio*, Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 1992; Fernández-Santamaría, *La razón de estado*, pp. 163-203; Maravall, José Antonio, ‘La corriente doctrinal del tacitismo político en España,’ *Cuadernos hispanoamericanos* 238-240, 1969, pp. 645-667; Momigliano, Arnaldo, ‘Il ‘Tácito Español’ di B. Alamos de Barrientos e gli “Aphorismos” di B. Arias Montano,’ *Journal of Roman Studies* 37, 1947, pp. 61-66; Sanmartí Boncompie, Francisco, *Tácito en España*, Barcelona: CSIC, 1951.

³⁹⁹ On the influence of neo stoicism in Iberia see: Antón, Beatriz, ‘La ‘politización’ de Séneca desde el Tacitismo,’ in *Séneca, dos mil años después. Actas del Congreso Internacional conmemorativo del bimilenario de su nacimiento (Córdoba, 24-27 de septiembre de 1996)*, ed. by Miguel Rodríguez Pantoja, Córdoba: Universidad de Córdoba, 1997, pp. 689-695; Carrasco Martínez, Adolfo, ‘El estoicismo, una ética para la aristocracia del barroco,’ in *Calderón de la Barca y la España del Barroco*, Madrid: Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales, 2001, pp. 305-330; Castro, Américo, ‘Séneca no era español, ni los españoles son senequistas,’ in *La realidad histórica de España*, México: Porrúa, 1948, pp. 642-645; Ettinghausen, Henry, *Francisco de Quevedo and the Neostoic Movement*, Oxford: University Press, 1972; García Rua, José Luís, ‘¿Senequismo español?,’ in *Homenaje a Alonso Zamora Vicente*, Madrid: Castalia, vol. III, tomo 1, 1991, pp. 25-30; González-Haba, María Josefa, ‘Séneca en la espiritualidad española de los siglos XVI y XVII,’ *Revista de Espiritualidad* 10, 1951, pp. 352-354; Isar, Herbert E., ‘La question du prétendu ‘sénéquisme’ espagnol,’ in *Les tragédies de Sénèque et le théâtre de la Renaissance*, ed. by J. Jacqout, Paris: CNRS, 1964, pp. 47-60; Pérez de Ayala, Ramón, *Nuestro Séneca y otros ensayos*, Barcelona: EDHASA, 1966. These works show the major presence of Seneca in Iberia. And yet, in his recent book *Philosophic Pride: Stoicism and Political Thought from Lipsius to Rousseau* (Princeton: University Press, 2012) Christopher Brooke does not mention any Iberian author.

⁴⁰⁰ See his *Norte de principes, virreyes, presidentes, gobernadores. Y advertimientos políticos sobre lo publico y particular de una monarquía, fundados en materia y razón de Estado, y Gobierno* (Madrid, 1601) and his *Aphorismos de las Segundas Cartas*, in *Las obras y relaciones de Ant. Perez, secretario de Estado, que fue del Rey de España Don Phelippe II, deste nombre*, Geneva: Juan di Tornes, 1644, esp. 188, 204, and 206.

according to them.⁴⁰¹ His European contemporaries were well aware of this. In 1640, the humanist Nicolas Perrot d'Ablancourt published in Paris a French translation of the *Annals*. He dedicated the text to Cardinal Richelieu, urging him to read the works of Tacitus carefully to understand the imperial grandeur of Spain and, therefore, the centre of its weaknesses. 'It is him who has inspired the whole policy of Spain and Italy (...) it is him that the Habsburg princes read when they seek advice in their most troubled moments.'⁴⁰²

2. 2. 2. *Casuists*

Nevertheless, not all Iberian political realism was based on the teaching of Tacitus. The Roman historian was rejected by a number of intellectuals, who saw in him a clear precursor of Machiavelli, and feared that the spread of his writings would confuse and corrupt the pious customs of Spanish society.⁴⁰³ Thus began the alternative realist current that tried to build a 'good reason of state' resorting not to tacitean arguments, but to a skilful combination of scholastic and moral philosophy, Augustinian pessimistic anthropology, and Jesuitical casuistry. This intellectual movement originated and developed in the Iberian Peninsula between the decades of 1590 and 1620, and exerted a significant influence in Europe until the end of the century. Its main initiator was Martín Azpilcueta, whom we discussed in the preceding chapters. Its best exponent was the Jesuit theologian Pedro de Rivadeneira.

⁴⁰¹ Vid. John H. Elliott, *El conde duque de Olivares: el político en una época de decadencia*, Barcelona: Crítica, 1990, p. 47.

⁴⁰² 'C'est lui qui a engendré toute la Politique d'Espagne et d'Italie; c'est dans ses doctes écrits qu'on s'est instruit en l'art de régner; c'est lui que les Princes de la Maison d'Autriche consultent encore tous les jours dans la nécessité de leurs affaires.' *Les Oeuvres de Tacite, de la Traduction de Nicolas Perrot Sieur d'Ablancourt*, Lyon: Molin et Barbier, 1693, Epistre.

⁴⁰³ Some of their objections were explained in detail by Pedro Ponce de León in his *Censura sobre los anales y las historias de C. C. Tácito para consultar si será bien imprimir en español su traducción*, Ms. 13086, Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid. Ed. in the *Seminario Erudito de Valladares de Sotomayor*, Madrid: Blas Román, 1788, vol. 13, pp. 270-292 and in the *Anales de la Universidad de Murcia, curso 1947-48*, pp. 895-988.

RIVADENEIRA'S VIEW ON DECEPTION

Pedro de Rivadeneira (d. 1611)⁴⁰⁴ was the first Iberian thinker who systematically refuted Machiavellian political doctrines and offered a compelling alternative based on Gospel teachings.⁴⁰⁵ The Jesuit vehemently condemned all of Machiavelli's ideas, except one: the legitimacy of certain forms of deception, which he considered a necessary evil. To justify this point, Rivadeneira resorted to the same argument used by the politicians he condemned so strongly: the defensive one. 'There is no doubt that men, and more kings, live among enemies, and that there are many who with the arts of Machiavelli and fine hypocrisy try to deceive them (...), being false friends and true enemies.' In such a hostile environment, 'he who wants to be virtuous has to be prudent.' To ensure that 'they are not deceived, and that the sincerity and simplicity of their goodness is not mocked,' princes should use deception to further their interest. 'Because [in the same way that] when walking among enemies they need to carry weapons, when being surrounded by dissimulators they must use some dissimulation.'⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰⁴ On Rivadeneira's political thought and its influence over European Anti-Machiavellianism see: Bireley, *The Counter-Reformation Prince*; Dierse, Ulrich, 'Pedro de Ribadeneira und Diego de Saavedra Fajardo: Aspekte der spanischen Machiavelli-Rezeption,' in *Spaniens Beitrag zum politischen Denken in Europa um 1600*, ed. by Reyes Mate & Friedrich Niewöhner, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1992, pp. 99-120; Forte, Juan Manuel, 'Pedro Ribadeneira y las encrucijadas del antimaquiavelismo en España,' in *Maquiavelo y España. Maquiavelismo y antimaquiavelismo en la cultura española de los siglos XVI y XVII*, ed. by Jose Manuel Forte & Pablo López Álvarez, Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2008, pp. 167-179; Guidotti Ruini, María Gloria, *Il padre Ribadeneira e l'antimachiavellismo*, Madrid: Editorial de la Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1988; López Muñoz, Miguel Ángel, 'La filosofía política de Pedro de Ribadeneira y su influencia jurídica en la historia de España,' *Bajo Palabra. Revista de Filosofía*, II Época, no. 5, 2010, pp. 321-330; Santos López, Modesto, 'Ribadeneira: la Razón de Estado al servicio de la Contrarreforma,' *Pensamiento: Revista de investigación e Información filosófica* 53, no. 206, 1997, pp. 243-262; Truman, Ronald W., *Spanish Treatises on Government, Society, and Religion in the Time of Philipp II*, Leiden: Brill, 1999, part 5.

⁴⁰⁵ During the sixteenth century dissimulation was barely discussed by Iberian political theorist. We found numerous references in the private correspondence of nobles and diplomats, and brief allusions in some treatises such as the *Relox de príncipes* by Antonio de Guevara (Valladolid: Nicolas Tierri, 1529, chap. 18, 36 and 38) and the *Libro primero del Espejo del Príncipe Christiano* by Francisco de Monzón (Lisbon: Antonio Gonçalvez, 1544, fol. 191). But there is no attempt to study or legitimise this practice in depth.

⁴⁰⁶ 'Y porque no hay duda sino que los hombres, y más los reyes, viven entre enemigos, y que hay muchos que con las artes de Maquiavelo y una fina hipocresía pretenden engañarlos es bien que consideren cómo se deben haber con los otros príncipes, cuando son amigos falsos y enemigos verdaderos, para que por su parte no sean engañados, y la sinceridad y llaneza de su bondad no quede burlada, y por otra, para que por recatarse de ellos no hagan contra la ley de Dios, que andando entre enemigos necesario es que vayan armados, y que con los disimulados usen alguna disimulación.' *Tratado de la religión y virtudes*

According to Rivadeneira, the prince should not lie or renege on his word. Nor is he allowed to act against justice, charity, and religion. He could, however, feign ignorance or indifference to a particular matter, pretend to trust those he did not trust, and hide zealously his intentions and views, even from his closest ministers. He could also ‘remain quiet and keep his actions in great secret (as should be done in the government of the state), even though others are thereby misled.’ ‘When necessity or utility demands it,’ the prince could even use words and actions in ‘such a cunning and deceptive way, that the enemy understands something different or even contrary to what he intends to do; because this is not lying, but doing things with prudence for the good of the Republic.’⁴⁰⁷

Of course, none of these arguments were entirely new. What Rivadeneira did was apply the casuist doctrines of verbal equivocation and mental reservation to political thought, something already formulated by Martín de Azpilcueta twelve years earlier. As a Jesuit, Rivadeneira had studied Azpilcueta’s writings at the seminary, including his *Commentarius in cap. humanae* (1583), where he had argued that these techniques were not only valid for those subjected to unlawful and invasive interrogations (ie. a priest asked for a secret of confession). Furthermore, equivocation and reservation could also be applied by any Christian in ‘countless’ circumstances of everyday life and, of course, by a king in court. In the conclusions of his *Commentary*, Azpilcueta stated that the prince who practices a ‘useful dissimulation’ made up of ambiguities and mental reservations and no lies, does not sin nor commits any fault. He mentioned the case of a ‘certain monarch’ who managed to preserve his power by pleasing his allies thanks to the ‘good art’ of dissimulation. And the case of ‘another great monarch’ who wanted his son to learn a single Latin maxim: ‘*Qui nescit dissimulare nescit regnare*,’ considering

que debe tener el príncipe cristiano para gobernar y conservar sus Estados. Contra lo que Nicolás Maquiavelo y los políticos de estos tiempos enseñan, Madrid: Pedro Madrigal, 1595. I quote the ed. by Vicente de la Fuente, *Obras escogidas del padre Pedro de Rivadeneira*, Madrid: Imprenta de los Sucesores de Hernando, 1910, pp. 449-587. The quote on bk. II, chap. 4, p. 525.

⁴⁰⁷ ‘... callar y guardar en sus consejos y acciones grandísimo secreto (como en el gobierno de los estados se deben hacer), aunque del secreto tomen ocasión algunos para engañarse.’ ‘Cuando la necesidad o utilidad grande lo pide,’ the prince could even use words and actions ‘con tal maña y artificio, que el enemigo pueda atender otra cosa diversa y aún contraria de lo que se pretende hacer; porque esto no es mentir, sino hacer las cosas con prudencia y bien de la República.’ *Ibid.*

that in it the whole science of government was concentrated.⁴⁰⁸

Supported by these ideas, and quoting Azpilcueta's words, Rivadeneira concluded that a distinction should be made:

Between two ways (*artes*) of simulating and dissimulating: one, practiced by those who, without [good] reason or goals, lie and pretend that there is what there is not, or that there is not what there is. And another way, practiced by those who, without bad deception and lies, suggest one thing for another with prudence, when demanded by need or utility.⁴⁰⁹

The first practice is unlawful for all men. However, the second is permissible for the prince, who 'must live with great concern and secrecy and dissimulation, armed with all the weapons, so the other princes and false friends cannot harm him.' All this, though, should be done with moderation, so 'in any simulation or dissimulation that the Christian uses, he is always (...) very tempered and in great control of himself, not being drawn by the pestiferous doctrine of Machiavelli and breaking the law of God and religion.'⁴¹⁰

Rivadeneira's treaty enjoyed great popularity during the first half of the seventeenth century. It had several editions and was translated into Italian, Latin, French, and English. His 'true reason of state' of Christian inspiration exerted a long and profound influence in Europe, guiding the anti-Machiavellian movement. Rivadeneira's view on

⁴⁰⁸ 'Duodecimo, videri etiam nobis hanc doctrinam et artem bonam voluisse quendam alium etiam maximum cum primis Monarcham persuadere filio suo primogenito, quem ab studio literarum ob quendam secretum defectum retrahebat, dicens nolo filium meum aliud latine calere quam illud apophthegma, «Qui nescit dissimulare nescit regnare», quos nos olim cuidam maximo cum primis principi simulatores omnes odio habenti, non sine fructu scripsimus in responso cuiusdam grauis quaestionis sibi reddi iusso, quod tamen apophthegma praefati Monarchae intelligendum est de arte bona simulandi et dissimulandi, quam ut supra diximus, Hieronymus appellat utilem, quae absque mendacio verborum vel factorum ex aliqua iusta causa exercetur, et non de illa nequissima quae sine aliqua iusta causa per dolum malum et astutiam vulpinam et mendacia verborum vel factorum seruilis passim per nonnullos colitur per supradicta.' *Commentarius in cap. Humanae Aures*, quaest. 3, sect. 15

⁴⁰⁹ '... entre dos artes de simular y disimular: la una, de los que sin causa ni provecho mienten y fingen que hay lo que no hay, o que no hay lo que hay; la otra, la de los que sin mal engaño y sin mentira dan a entender una cosa por otra con prudencia cuando lo pide la necesidad o utilidad.' Rivadeneira, *Op. cit.*, bk. II, chap. 4, p. 525.

⁴¹⁰ 'El príncipe debe vivir con gran recato y secreto y disimulación, y armado de todas las armas, para que los otros príncipes y amigos fingidos no le puedan ofender.' 'En cualquiera simulación o disimulación que el príncipe cristiano usare, esté siempre (...) muy en los estribos y sobre sí, para no dejarse llevar de la doctrina pestífera de Maquiavelo y quebrantar la ley de Dios y su religión.' *Ibid.*, p. 525.

dis/simulation was equally important,⁴¹¹ primarily because it broke with the traditional separation *simulatio* - *dissimulatio* that had dominated medieval thought. For Rivadeneira there were 'two arts': a good dis/simulation and bad dis/simulation. Its lawfulness depended not on technique itself, but on 'the necessity or utility'; that is, on the goal of deception. The Christian prince could use 'both simulation or dissimulation' as long as he did it for defensive purposes or for the common interest of his kingdom.⁴¹² Of course, such 'necessity or utility' (*necesidad o utilidad*) was determined by the circumstances of each case, and that is where Casuistry appeared. Aside from the objectives pursued, the goodness or badness of deception depended on the dose with which it was applied.

Just as the theriac is made of the viper, and acts as an antidote against the snake's venom when applied in small quantities and mixed with other healthy medicines, simulation [can be good], if used only when requested by need, in little doses and according to the laws of Christianity and prudence.⁴¹³

Thus, Rivadeneira endorsed the qualitative interpretation of deception developed by Lipsius a few years earlier according to which dissimulation is not intrinsically good and neither is simulation intrinsically evil. On the contrary, the morality of both acts depended on the way and the circumstances in which they were applied. Deception was lawful as long as it was demanded by 'need' and applied 'in the right dose.' Finding the right method that met those requirements would be the duty of the Christian prince and the mission of the later political writers. Rivadeneira's view on deception was not too different from the one held by Machiavelli. Both thinkers allowed it as an essential mechanism of the new political praxis. The main difference lay in the arguments used to

⁴¹¹ Fernández-Santamaría, José Antonio, 'Simulación y disimulación: El problema de la duplicidad en el pensamiento político español del barroco,' *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia* 177, 1980, pp. 741-770.

⁴¹² Rivadeneira, *Op. cit.*, bk. II, chap. 4, p. 524.

⁴¹³ 'Así como de la víbora se compone la triaca, que es medicina contra la ponzoña de la misma víbora; pero para que aproveche es menester que sea poca la cantidad, y que vaya corregida y preparada con otros medicamentos saludables; así de esta simulación y ficción artificiosa se debe usar solamente cuando lo pide la necesidad, y que sea poca la cantidad con su dosis y tasa, y condicionada con las leyes de cristiandad y prudencia.' *Ibid.*, p. 526.

justify it. For Machiavelli, who advocated a total separation between reason and faith, insincerity was neither good nor bad, but simply indispensable for the effective exercise of power. Botero and Lipsius, more “moderate” thinkers, believed that insincerity was bad, but tolerable when applied in small doses, timely and defensively, for the common good. On the other hand, Rivadeneira justified deception as Azpilcueta did, that is, without breaking with ‘the laws of Christianity and prudence,’⁴¹⁴ finding methods and circumstances in which dis/simulation was not a sinful act. He never denied the pre-eminence or inviolability of Christian morality. On the contrary, he justified deception as an important part of it. That would be the key of his success. By saying that ‘Christian prudence teaches dissimulation’ Rivadeneira assimilated Machiavelli’s advocacy of deception to the political and moral Christian system –a system that would remain dominant in Europe at least until the late eighteenth century. This would enable subsequent Iberian authors to defend the lawfulness of deception without conflicting with the Church, allowing them to reach levels of acceptance unknown in the rest of the West.

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY’S CONSOLIDATION AND EXPANSION OF DECEPTION

Building on the theoretical foundations established by Botero, Lipsius and Rivadeneira, Iberian intellectuals joined, from 1600 on, the debate on the lawfulness of political deception. A debate that, although it arrived to Spain relatively late compared to Italy, reached its highest levels of intensity and sophistication. In fact, no other European kingdom would show more systematic and radical support to political deception than the Iberian monarchies. The reason for this are to be found, on the one hand, in the particular cultural context of the Iberian Peninsula, so prone to casuistry, neoestoicism, and tacitean ideas. And, on the other hand, in its historical context. From the last decades of the sixteenth century, a number of events encouraged politicians and intellectuals to believe that the decline of the Spanish Empire was close. The disaster of the Armada Invencible

⁴¹⁴ Rivadeneira, *Op. cit.*, bk. II, chap. 4, p. 526.

(1588), the defeat of Rocroi (1643), and the failure of the Thirty Years' War (1648), were revealing symptoms of the loss of military hegemony in Europe. This situation was compounded by the demographic crisis caused by the epidemics of 1596–1602, the expulsion of the Moriscos (1609), the casualties of war, the financial exhaustion caused by these conflicts, poor harvests, and the deterioration of Atlantic trade and the mismanagement of public funds. This rapid accumulation of disasters suggested to many that the end of the Spanish monarchy was near. The sense of decadence increased and crystallised in an entire doctrine, inspired by the teachings of Polybius, which largely transformed the political thought of the Baroque.⁴¹⁵ 'The republic,' wrote Jerónimo de Ceballos in 1623, 'goes into decline either because of the bad government of its rulers, or because of natural causes caused by [the passing of] time (...), because everything that had a beginning, has to dwindle to an end, as the sun goes from dawn to sunset.'⁴¹⁶

In such a situation, the priorities of political writers quickly changed. It was no longer a matter of debating the abstract and theoretical nature of the state, as in the first decades of the century, but of finding realistic solutions for the specific problems that were leading to the collapse of the Empire. And among those solutions, deception stood out as a great technique, capable of ensuring the conservation of power within the limits of Christian morality. From the reign of Phillip III onwards, the main Iberian intellectuals did not question the lawfulness of deception, but rather focused their efforts in defining its limits and finding the most effective ways to apply it.

The topic became almost a *topos* of the political genre. Between 1595 and 1700 more than 70 treatises appeared in the Iberian Peninsula that legitimated and supported the political use of deception by the rulers. Some of them devoted just a few lines to the issue; others, several chapters. Their diffusion and success were such that by middle of the century the very word 'politics' became, in addition to the 'science of government,' a

⁴¹⁵ Vid. John H. Elliott, *Spain and Its World 1500-1700: Selected Essays*, New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1989, part IV, pp. 213-273.

⁴¹⁶ 'La República va en declinación o por mal gobierno de los que la tienen a su cargo, o por causas naturales que proceden del mismo tiempo, que no tiene en nada constancia ni duración, porque todo lo que tuvo principio ha de ir declinando a su fin, como el nacimiento del Sol a su ocaso.' Jerónimo de Ceballos, *Arte real para el buen gobierno de los reyes y príncipes, y de sus vasallos, en el que se refieren las obligaciones de cada uno, los principales documentos para el buen gobierno*, Toledo: Diego Rodríguez, 1623, fol. 4r.

synonym for ‘hypocrisy,’ ‘cunning,’ or ‘dis/simulation.’⁴¹⁷ And the old maxim generally attributed to Louise XI king of France (*Qui nescit dissimulare, nescit regnare*) became an unofficial motto of early modern politics.⁴¹⁸

We could distinguish three phases determined by the historical context:

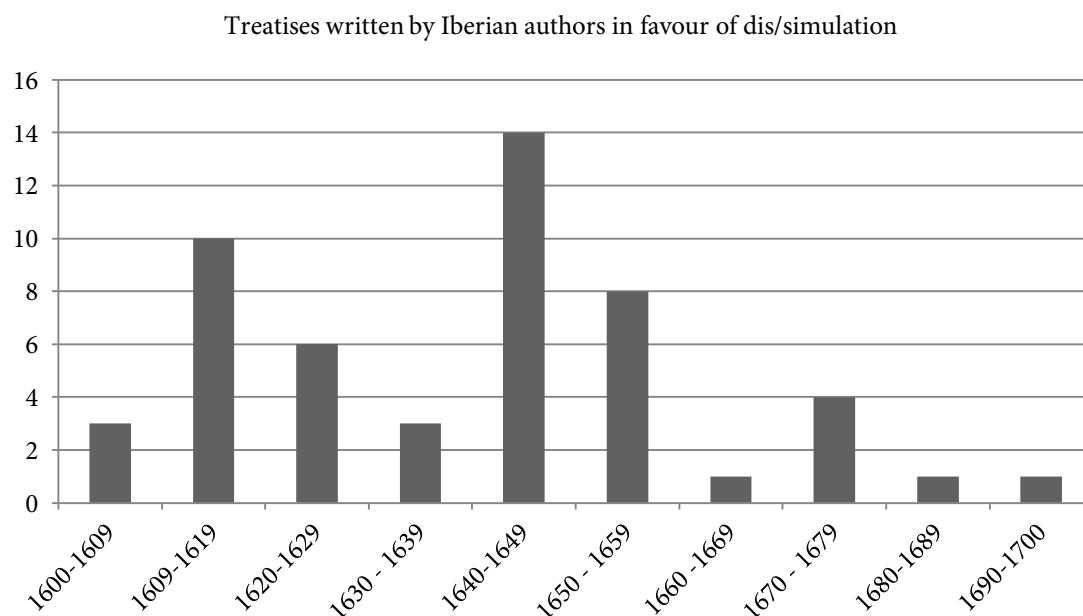
I. Between 1598 and 1621 (the reign of Philip III) there took place the first big major wave of publications and the meeting of the tacitean and casuist currents. During the early years of the century, several treatises appeared in Iberia that legitimised the prince’s deception from purely casuist⁴¹⁹ or tacitist⁴²⁰ approaches.

⁴¹⁷ Vid. Buck, August, ‘Die Kunst der Verstellung im Zeitalter des Barocks,’ *Festschrift der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft der Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main*, Wiesbaden, 1981, pp. 85-103, esp. pp. 87-88; Sternberger, Dolf, *Drei Wurzeln der Politik*, Frankfurt: Insel, 1978.

⁴¹⁸ For a discussion of the origins of this motto see: Bakos, Adriana E., “‘Qui nescit dissimulare, nescit regnare’: Louis XI and Raison d’état during the Reign of Louis XIII,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 52, no. 3, 1991, pp. 399-416; Fernández-Santamaría, *La razón de estado*, pp. 93-94, footnote 33. Some examples of its use by Iberian authors in: Vera y Zúñiga, *El Embaxador*, p. 99; Ramírez de Prado, *Consejo y consejero de príncipes*, p. 43; Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un príncipe político cristiano*, empresa 43; Nieremberg, *Venerable padre Juan Eusebio Nieremberg*, p. 442; Rebolledo, *Selva militar*, p. 334; Quevedo, *Vida de Marco Bruto*, p. 609; Abreu de Melo, *Avizós pera o Paço*, p. 39; Portocarrero y Guzmán, *Theatro monarchico de España*, p. 307.

⁴¹⁹ The three most important are: Juan de Mariana, *De rege et regis institutione*, bk. II, chap. 11; Juan Márquez, *El gobernador cristiano*, Salamanca: Francisco de Cea Tesa, 1612, bk. I, chap. 14 and bk. II, chap. 7; Juan de Santa María, *Tratado de república y policía cristiana para reyes y príncipes, y para los que en el gobierno tienen sus veces*, Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1612, chap. 29.

⁴²⁰ Among others: Álamos de Barrientos, Baltasar, *Tácito español ilustrado con aforismos*, written in 1594, first printed in Madrid: Luis Sanchez, 1614; Fernández de Medrano, Juan, *República Mixta*, Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1602, pp. 33-35; Narbona, Eugenio de, *Doctrina politica civil: escrita por aphorismos*, Madrid: viuda de Cosme Delgado, 1604, fols. 37r-40r; Setanti, Joaquín de, *Centellas de varios conceptos*, Barcelona: Sebastián Matevat, 1614.



However, from the 1610s on, these currents narrowed and the border that separated them became permeable and diffuse. The treatises by Fernando Alvia de Castro, Lorenzo Ramírez de Prado, and Juan de Salazar are representative in this regard.⁴²¹ In their pages, the *exempla* borrowed from the Holy Scriptures are combined with the teachings of Tacitus, Seneca and other classical authors, while the doctrines of Rivadeneira are skilfully combined with the ideas of Botero and Lipsius. Thus, tacitism and casuistry were consolidated as the two pillars on which the doctrine of political dissimulation was built.

II. The period between 1621 and 1665 (the reign of Phillip IV) could be called the “golden era” of political deception. During those years, the theories of lawful dis/simulation flourished, helped by the progressive loss of power of the Spanish monarchy, and the support of the Count-Duke of Olivares, who devoutly read Lipsius and gathered around him a group of tacitean intellectuals. From a quantitative viewpoint, stands out the large number of treatises published in the 1640s. This can be explained, at least in part, by the deep political crisis experienced by the Spanish monarchy in those

⁴²¹ See, for example: Alvia de Castro, Fernando, *Verdadera razón de estado. Discurso político*, Lisbon: Pedro Craesbeeck, 1616, chap. 9-10; Ramírez de Prado, Lorenzo, *Consejo y Consejeros de Príncipes*, Madrid: Luis Sanchez: 1617, bk. III, chap. 2; Salazar, Juan de, *Política española*, Logroño: Diego Mares, 1619, proposit. 8, sect. 3.

years. As is well known, the revolt of the Catalans (1640-1652), the Portuguese Secession (1640), the anti-Spanish revolts of Naples (1647) and Sicily (1648), and the prolongation of the conflict in the Netherlands and the worsening of the war against France, all put in serious danger the survival of the composite monarchy. Aware of the situation, many Iberian intellectuals decided to write and publish treatises on how to save the Republic. Among the techniques recommended, we can find deception. These authors tried to regulate its use and enhance its effectiveness, making sure that moral scruples would not hamper the “preservation” of the state. Thanks to them, the doctrine of lawful dis/simulation reached its maximum degree of refinement. I am thinking of Spanish writers such as Mártir Rizo, Saavedra Fajardo, Vicente Mut, Francisco de Quevedo, and Baltasar Gracián. But also of the Portuguese tacitists, such as António Carvalho de Parada, Diogo Henriques, and Sebastião César de Meneses, who published important treatises in the 1650s.⁴²²

III. Finally, between 1665 and 1700 (the reign of Charles II) we observe the stagnation and decline of the practice, triggered by the crisis of the reason of state and the inevitable fall from grace of moral casuistry from the 1660s. During this period, the doctrine of lawful deception remained in full force. Proof of this is that both the *Cartilla política* (1666) by Diego Felipe de Albornoz and *El Ayo y Maestro de Príncipes, Séneca* (1674) by Juan Baños de Velasco, two works dedicated to the education of the King Charles II, strongly advised the use of dissimulation. However, the number of works that address the topic decreased, and the arguments displayed were usually mere repetitions of ideas formulated in preceding decades. Nevertheless, there are some outstanding exceptions, such as the treatises by Juan Palafox, Francisco Garau, Anastasio Uberte, Alfonso de

⁴²² Carvalho de Parada, António, *Arte de Reynar*, Brussels: Paulo Craesbeeck, 1643; César de Meneses, Sebastião, *Summa Politica*, Lisbon: Antonio Alvares, 1649; Henriques de Vilhegas, Diogo, *Advertencias eruditas para Príncipes y Ministros*, Madrid: n. pub., 1641; Idem, *El Príncipe en la idea*, Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1656; Sousa Macedo, Antonio de, *Armonia Politica dos documentos divinos com as conveniencias de Estado: Exemplar de Principes no Governo dos Gloriossimos Reis de Portugal*, Haia: Samuel Brown, 1651; Silva e Sousa, António da, *Instrucçam Politica De Legados*, Hamburgo: n. pub., 1656; Abreu de Melo, Luís de, *Avizos pera o Paço*, Lisbon: Officina Craesbeeckiana, 1659. For a general introduction of these authors see: Martim de Albuquerque, *Um Percurso da Construção ideológica do Estado. A recepção lipsiana em Portugal: estoicismo e prudência política*, Lisbon: Quetzal, 2002.

Like most European thinkers, Iberian writers accepted the Augustinian condemnation of mendacity as something intrinsically evil. The prince, they argued, must never lie, 'because the prince's lie is not allowed by God nor men.'⁴²⁴ This prohibition was justified with the same arguments advanced by medieval theologians. First, *mendacium* was a sin that corrupted the soul of the speaker. If Christians are required to follow the path of truth taught by Christ, then the prince is even more considered the incarnation of the divine power on earth and a mirror of virtue for his subjects. If he lies, (this is the second argument) his subjects would imitate him. This 'would frustrate the purpose for which the words were created, namely, so men can express their thoughts to others.'⁴²⁵ The coherence between what is said and what is taught 'is the foundation of justice and contracts (...) without it, the world could not exist, because (...) men would not trust each other.'⁴²⁶

What neighbour would trust his neighbour, what merchant would believe another merchant, what friend would trust his friend, if they do not think that they are treated with truth, and that the word would be kept and that *yes* means *yes* and *no* means *no*? As Giles of Rome says, the prince's rule should straighten the kingdom and its citizens. But, if that rule is bent and corrupted, how can he do that? (...) How can the prince protect sincerity

⁴²³ Palafox y Mendoza, Juan, *Dictámenes espirituales, morales y políticos*, Madrid: Pablo de Val, 1665, aphorisms 159-161; Idem, *Historia Real Sagrada, luz de Príncipes y súbditos*, Madrid: Melchor Alegre, 1668, bk. V, p. 101; Idem, *El Pastor de Noche Buena*, Vich: Viuda e Hijos de Juan Dorca, 1644, chap. 8; Garau, Francisco, *El Olimpo del sabio instruido de la naturaleza*, Barcelona: Cornellas, 1675, pp. 156-159; Uberte Valaguer, Anastasio Marcelino, *Prevenciones de discretos del no ser para el ser político*, Naples: Jacinto Passaro, 1678, pp. 32-34 and 42-44; Lancina, Juan Alfonso de, *Commentarios políticos a los Anales de Cayo Vero Cornelio Tácito*, Madrid: Melchor Álvarez, 1687; Portocarrero y Guzmán, Pedro, *Theatro monarchico de España que contiene las más puras como católicas máximas de Estado, por las cuales así los príncipes como las repúblicas aumentan y mantienen sus dominios y las causas que motivan su ruina*, Madrid: Juan García Infanzón, 1700, disc. 2, chap. 36, pp. 304-308.

⁴²⁴ 'Porque mentira en el Príncipe ni Dios ni los hombres lo permiten.' Narbona, *Doctrina politica civil*, aphorism 80. The same idea in: Mártir Rizo, *Norte de príncipes*, fol. 98v; Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un príncipe político cristiano*, empresa 43; Garau, *El Olimpo del sabio instruido*, max. 17-20; Mallea, *Gobierno del Príncipe Cathólico*, p. 168.

⁴²⁵ '... frustraría el fin para que las palabras fueron instituidas, conviene a saber, para que los hombres por ellas manifiesten sus conceptos a los otros.' Martín Brezmes Díez de Prado, *Teatro moral dividido en dos partes. En la primera se trata de las quarenta y cinco proposiciones que condeno Alexandro VII en dos Decretos. En la segunda se trata de las sesenta y cinco proposiciones que condenó Inocencio XI en otro Decreto*, Salamanca: Gregorio Ortiz, 1685, part 2, p. 179.

⁴²⁶ '... es fundamento de la justicia y toda contratación (...) sin el cual no se podría conservar el mundo, porque no estando seguros de que lo que se promete se ha de cumplir, no se fiarían los unos de otros.' Santa María, *Tratado de república y policía cristiana para reyes y príncipes*, p. 388.

(...) if he himself tears it down with his actions?⁴²⁷

However, this does not mean that the Iberian authors believed that the prince should be totally transparent and honest. Quite the contrary. Although they rejected many of Machiavelli's ideas, they shared his existential pessimism. Since the snake deceived 'our first mother Eve,' explained Juan de Santa María, deception and distrust have governed social relations.⁴²⁸ Duplicity was considered part of human nature. In Saavedra Fajardo's view, 'man is the ficklest of animals. He knows how to dissimulate and conceal his feelings. With words, laughs, and tears he hide what lies in his heart.'⁴²⁹ Such behaviour existed from the beginning of time, but it was increased by the turn of the sixteenth century. The world languished in a 'continuous war (...) between appearances and the soul. What the tongue says, is denied in the chest. What words applaud is contradicted by the heart. There is never a concordance between the outer and the inner. So wise men can no longer trust (...) a face.'⁴³⁰ 'Human malice is shed on every man.'⁴³¹

In such a scenario, recommending absolute honesty to the prince would be reckless. 'It is not the virtue of truth to say everything you feel at any moment, but to say it only when it is prudent.'⁴³² In his *Cartilla política y christiana* (1666) Diego Felipe de Albornoz recognised that

⁴²⁷ '¿Qué vecino se fiará de su vecino, qué mercader de otro mercader, qué deudo de su deudo o qué amigo de su amigo, si no es presuponiendo que le trata verdad y que la ha de cumplir su fe y palabra y que su sí, es sí, y que su no, es no? Pues si el príncipe, como dice Egidio Romano, es la regla que ha de enderezar a todo el reino y reglar a los demás, [pero] si esta regla es tuerta y torcida, cómo los enderezará? (...) Podrá asentar en su réplica aquella columna tan importante de la fidelidad, sobre la cual todo el edificio de su gobierno se debe sustentar, siendo él mismo el que con sus acciones la derriba y echa por el suelo?' Rivadeneira, *Op. cit.*, bk. II, p. 523.

⁴²⁸ 'nuestra primera madre Eva.' Santa María, *Tratado de república y policía cristiana para reyes y príncipes*, pp. 387-388.

⁴²⁹ 'El hombre es el más inconstante de los animales. Sabe disimular y tener ocultos largamente sus afectos. Con las palabras, la risa y las lágrimas encubre lo que tiene en el corazón.' Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un príncipe político cristiano*, empresa 46.

⁴³⁰ '... continua guerra (...) entre lo aparente y el alma. Lo que la lengua dice, lo desmiente el pecho. Lo que las palabras aplauden, desdice el corazón. Jamás lo visto y los afectos están concordes. De suerte, que ya el sabio no puede fiarse del sereno de un agrado, ni del horror del semblante.' Mut, *El príncipe en la guerra y en la paz*, p. 27.

⁴³¹ 'La malicia de los hombres está derramada en todos.' Mártir Rizo, *Norte de príncipes*, fol. 96v.

⁴³² 'No es virtud de la verdad decir todo lo que se siente, sino decirlo cuando es prudencia; y no lo es siempre.' Juan Eusebio Nieremberg, *Obras y días: manual de señores y príncipes*, Madrid: Alonso Martin, 1629, fol. 191r. See also: Enríquez de Villegas, *El Príncipe en la idea*, p. 131.

it would not be a good advise to recommend [the Prince] telling always the truth, because it would be very harmful clarity, because a mouth without doors (...) would be like a city without walls.⁴³³

According to the diplomat Bernardino de Rebolledo, men did not live in that ‘ideal republic unaware of deception described by Plato or Thomas More,’ but in a ‘dark time’ when ‘human behaviour is composed of artifices and duplicities.’⁴³⁴ In that world, added Pedro Portocarrero, ‘it would be very risky to be sincere, since everything is full of lies and men only attend the school of deception.’⁴³⁵

Therefore, it did not make sense to continue defending the medieval Christian model of statecraft that demanded full transparency. If Iberian political theorists wanted to build a new and viable theory of government it was necessary to compromise and find a ‘common way between truth and lies.’⁴³⁶ That (third) way would be dis/simulation, which would become now ‘the greatest art that the Christian prince must use.’⁴³⁷ As we shall see, the legality of *simulatio* was hotly debated in this period. On the contrary, *dissimulatio* was unanimously accepted by the main writers of the seventeenth century as an indispensable technique compatible with the principles of Christian morality (which, theoretically, would continue to condemn lying as something intrinsically evil) and the ‘good’ reason of state. In particular, Iberian thinkers focused their analysis on three aspects of the matter: the causes and objectives that motivated deception (*ánimo con el que se disimula*), ‘the duration of it,’ and the methods employed.⁴³⁸ In the

⁴³³ ‘No aconsejaría bien a V. Majestad quien por hacerle muy verídico le persuadiese a descubrir siempre la verdad, porque sería una claridad muy nociva, que un boca sin guardas (dicen los Proverbios Sagrados) es lo mismo que una ciudad sin muros.’ Diego Felipe de Albornoz, *Cartilla política y christiana*, Madrid: Melchor Sánchez, 1666, fol. 85v.

⁴³⁴ ‘Tampoco aconsejará / la sinceridad tan clara / a quien en tiempo tan obscuro vive, / como si en la República viviera / que Platón o Tomás Moro describe, / de todo engaño ajena, / y no en siglo que tanto la condena. / Está el humano trato / compuesto de artificios y dobleces.’ Rebolledo, *Selva militar y política*, p. 330.

⁴³⁵ ‘Es muy arriesgado vivir en el Mundo a lo natural, por estar lleno de mentira, y los hombres no cursar otra escuela que la del engaño, y así decía Livio: Arriesgado es, que en el Mundo, lleno de fraudes, viva segura la sinceridad.’ Portocarrero y Guzmán, *Theatro monarchico de España*, pp. 306-307.

⁴³⁶ ‘... medio entre la Verdad y la Mentira.’ Albornoz, *Op. cit.*, fol. 85v.

⁴³⁷ ‘... el mayor arte que el príncipe debe usar.’ Diogo Enríquez de Villegas, *Advertencias eruditas para Príncipes y Ministros*, 1641, aphorism 84. Published by Antonio Valladares in *Seminario Erudito* 34, 1797, vol. 34. The quote on p. 273.

⁴³⁸ Alvia de Castro, *Verdadera razón de estado*, fol. 52r.

following chapters I will discuss in detail these aspects and the fascinating cultural and mental shifts that brought them about.

CHAPTER V

REASONS TO DECEIVE

In human relationships, kindness and lies are worth a thousand truths.

GRAHAM GREENE

Sixteenth-century writers argued that the lawfulness of deception depended, first, on the causes that motivated it and the goals pursued. They recognised four reasons that made dissimulation something noble and necessary for the prince: 1) his need to defend himself against a hostile world full of liars, 2) his need to present himself differently to different subjects, 3) his obligation to protect state secrets, 4) his will to punish certain crimes and forgive others.

1. SELF-DEFENCE AGAINST A DECEPTIVE WORLD

‘The most tolerable and necessary dissimulation,’ claimed authors of the time, is the one that ‘aims for self-defence, and not to hurt other people.’⁴³⁹ The prince lives in a palace, surrounded by ambitious aristocrats who want to prosper at his expense. He is the guarantor of royal grace and, therefore, he is in the centre of all the intrigues and betrayals of the court. Many want to trick and deceive him, using false pretences and misleading words. How can the prince protect himself from such effective weapons?

⁴³⁹ ‘La disimulación más permitida y necesaria,’ is the one that ‘*mira a la defensa propia, no al daño ajeno.*’ Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un príncipe político cristiano*, empresa 44.

The response of the Iberian authors was unanimous: making use of them for his own defence. In Mariana's words: 'Confront fraud with fraud, and to the courtier's lie, the fiction of the prince.'⁴⁴⁰ According to Juan de Santa María, the court was inhabited by

foxes (...) which never go straight, but zigzag from one side to the other, as those who are duplicitous in their thoughts and intentions (...) With them it is necessary [to use] a lot of prudence and sagacity, so they become confused and trapped in their own snares.⁴⁴¹

The great political theorist Saavedra Fajardo captured this idea in one of his most famous emblems: '*Ut sciat regnare*,' which displays a lion's skin, with a tangle of serpents in place of a mane, hanging under a canopy in an unadorned room. The prince, he explains, must be

like the serpents, symbols of the prudent and vigilant majesty (...), because this cunning in protecting one's head, in closing one's ears to the siren's song, as well as in other things, aiming for self-defence rather than to harm others.⁴⁴²

The prince cannot use dissimulation to attack his enemies, but he may use it as a 'means of [self]defence' to protect himself from unfair questioning, 'to caution or to prevent deception, or for other lawful purposes.'⁴⁴³ In a world corrupted by deceit where everyone lies, explained Francisco de Quevedo, 'dissimulation in princes is an honest treason against traitors.'⁴⁴⁴ 'To deceive one who tries to deceive you is discretion,

⁴⁴⁰ 'Opóngase fraude a fraude, y a la mentira del cortesano la ficción del príncipe.' Mariana, *De Rege et regis institutione*, bk. II, chap. 10.

⁴⁴¹ '...raposas (...) que nunca van por el camino derecho, sino cruzado a una y otra parte, como quien lleva doblados pensamientos de lo que quiere hacer (...) Es menester para con estos [usar] mucha prudencia y sagacidad, armarles el lazo en que caigan, y queden enredados y presos como gusanos en la trama que ellos mismos urdieron.' Santa María, *Tratado de república y policía cristiana para reyes y príncipes*, pp. 337-338.

⁴⁴² '... las sierpes, símbolo de la majestad prudente y vigilante (...) porque su astucia en defender la cabeza, en cerrar las orejas al encanto, y en las demás cosas, mira a su defensa propia, no al daño ajeno.' Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un príncipe político cristiano*, empresa 43.

⁴⁴³ 'medios de defensa (...) para cautelarse o prevenir el engaño, o para otros fines lícitos.' Blázquez Mayoralgo, *Perfecta razón de estado*, fols. 54v-55r.

⁴⁴⁴ 'La disimulación en los príncipes es traición honesta contra traidores.' Francisco de Quevedo, *Marco Bruto*, [1644], ed. by Luis Astrana Marín, *Obras completas*, Madrid: Aguilar, 1932, p. 609.

defending yourself from an enemy [is] a lawful right.⁴⁴⁵ This argument of self-defence was one of the most common among Iberian writers, as it allowed them to transmute deception (something bad in principle) into a necessary and good act, compatible with Christian values and the natural right to self-protection.

Against whom should the Prince apply these techniques? Everyone. The Christian monarch must dissimulate when dealing with those ‘cunning and fraudulent princes’ identified as rivals, but also with those considered allies.⁴⁴⁶ In his essay on the *Amistades de Príncipes* (1637), Moles Fadrique, a member of the Order of Saint John, emphasised this idea:

In the same way that dissimulating with equals or subordinates is a weakness; not dissimulating with powerful people is reckless (...) The lower prince has to pursue friendship with his superiors, (...) imitating the weak ivy that rises by linking with the sturdy elm.⁴⁴⁷

He must please him at all times and conceal his jealousy and ambitions, ‘showing happiness for his superior’s progress, praising and inflating it.’⁴⁴⁸ Similarly, the prince must act with dissimulation when dealing with his ministers and closest collaborators, so none can ever know for certain what he thinks or feels at each moment.⁴⁴⁹ It does not matter if he considers them good friends.⁴⁵⁰ According to Núñez de Castro:

⁴⁴⁵ ‘Engañar a quien engaña, es discreción, como defenderme de mi enemigo [es] derecho y ley.’ Ferrer de Valdecebro, *Gobierno general, moral y político*, p. 175.

⁴⁴⁶ ‘príncipes astutos y fraudulentos.’ Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un príncipe político cristiano*, empresa 43.

⁴⁴⁷ ‘Así como disimular con los iguales, o menores, es flaqueza; así, no disimular con los mayores, es temeridad (...) El príncipe inferior ha de solicitar la amistad del superior, (...) imitando a la débil yedra que se levanta enlazada al olmo robusto.’ Moles Fadrique, *Amistades de Príncipes*, Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1637, fols. 26r-30v.

⁴⁴⁸ ‘Por mucha envidia que tenga el Príncipe menor, muestre alegrarse de los buenos progresos del mayor, alabándolos y engrandeciéndolos.’ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁹ Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un príncipe político cristiano*, empresas 44 and 49; Garau, *El Olimpo del sabio instruido*, pp. 15-19; Campo y Gallardo, *Monarchia perfecta*, chap. 9.

⁴⁵⁰ Medieval treatises on friendship (*amiticia*) strongly condemned the use of dissimulation among friends. Some early modern authors continued this idea and considered deception lawful only when dealing with enemies (for example: Baños de Velasco, Juan, *L. Anneo Séneca, ilustrado en blasones políticos y morales, y su impugnador impugnado de sí mismo*, Madrid: Mateo Espinosa, 1670, pp. 74-77; Fuentes y Biota, Antonio, *Alma o aphorismos de Cornelio Tacito*, Amberes: Jacobo Meursio, 1651, p. 201). Many others, on the contrary, recommended the prince the use of dissimulation also with the closest friends and ministers (see, for example: Rebolledo, *Selva militar y política*, p. 335; Narbona, *Dotrina politica civil*, aphorism 83; Suárez de Figueroa, *El Pasajero*, p. 132; Fadrique, *Amistades de Príncipes*, fols. 61v-62r).

Uncovering the heart to others, even if they are close friends, (...) represents a great risk (...) Samson would not have lost his eyes if he had not uncovered his chest (...) Thus, when dealing with matters of state, princes should try to make decisions by themselves, without requesting too much advice, so secrets are not disclosed.⁴⁵¹

Iberian political theorists considered the court a deceptive place where nothing is what it seems. The men who live there are masters of deception, and 'the greater the monarchies are, the more they are subject to lies.'⁴⁵² The prince must protect himself. His attitude is not the dissimulation of a courtier (since he does not have to gain the favour of anyone) but a direct consequence of it. The new politics were conceived as a 'necessary art for those who rule, to govern [men] and protect himself from them.'⁴⁵³ We find here the same escape to the inner self that we saw in the religious sphere. To interact with others and, at the same time, to hide from them: that is the fundamental principle of early modern sociology both for the prince's relations with his subjects, and the subjects among themselves.

2. A MATTER OF PRUDENCE: WHEN ONE HAS TO BE MANY

The self-protection argument was linked in turn to multiplicity. By the early sixteenth century courtly literature postulated that, in order to deal with the plurality of characters, factions, and interests that coexisted in court, the single individual was forced to dissimulate. According to Baldassare Castiglione:

He who must be flexible to be conversant with so many ought to guide himself with his own judgement. And knowing the difference of one man

⁴⁵¹ 'Dejarse ver el corazón, aunque sea de los más amigos, mucho tiene de docilidad, pero mas de riesgo (...) No hubiera perdido Sansón los ojos, si no hubiera descubierto el pecho (...) Procuren pues los Príncipes en cuanto dieren lugar las materias de Estado, aconsejarse solo de si mismos, y tomar por si muchas resoluciones; porque no salga de si lo que contiene este secreto.' Núñez de Castro, *Libro historico politico*, bk. I, chap. 6, pp. 54-56.

⁴⁵² 'Cuanto son mayores las monarquías, más sujetas están a la mentira.' Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un príncipe político cristiano*, empresa 12.

⁴⁵³ '... necesario al que gobierna para saber regirle [al hombre] y guardarse de él.' *Ibid.*, empresa 46.

and another, every day adjust his manner according to the disposition of those he is conversant with.⁴⁵⁴

This justification of dissimulation as an essential adaptive skill was, in turn, adopted by political theorists who applied it to the figure of the prince. After all, no one was more forced to deal with the multiplicity of the court than the ruler.⁴⁵⁵ Early modern writers were fully aware that ‘the greatness and power of the king is not in himself, but in the will of his subjects.’⁴⁵⁶ As Juan Alfonso de Lancina explained, ‘sovereignty over men consists in an opinion.’⁴⁵⁷ An opinion that, in general, is made more of appearances ‘than truths.’⁴⁵⁸ ‘The love of vassals is the strongest defence of the realms.’⁴⁵⁹ It was therefore necessary that the monarch had positive reputation and knew how to please various figures in the kingdom, from the opulent nobleman to the humble beggar. Saavedra Fajardo explained it this way:

The spirits of men are as varied as are their faces and, although there is only one reason, there are different paths to reach it (...) Therefore, you cannot negotiate with everyone with the same style; [on the contrary], it is appropriate to adapt it according to the nature of the individual you are dealing with (...), dissimulating and accommodating to time and people.⁴⁶⁰

For the prince, who needed to adapt to varying circumstances before a wide range of

⁴⁵⁴ ‘*Chi ha da accommodarsi nel conversare con tanti, bisogna che si guidi col suo giudizio propio e, conoscendo le differenze dell’uno e dell’altro, ogni dì muti stile e modo, secondo la natura di quelli con chi a conversar si mette.*’ *Il Cortegiano*, Venice: Aldine, 1528, bk. II, chap. 17.

⁴⁵⁵ ‘Who needs more prudence than who deals with the majority of the difficult matters? Who requires more strength than who must preserve the Republic? Who needs more circumspection in his actions than who has as witnesses all the subjects, without any of hiding from their view?’ (Andrés Mendo, *Príncipe perfecto y ministros ajustados*, p. 55).

⁴⁵⁶ ‘*La grandeza y el poder del rey no está en sí mismo, sino en la voluntad de los súbditos.*’ Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un príncipe político cristiano*, empresa 38.

⁴⁵⁷ ‘*La soberanía entre los hombres consiste en una opinión.*’ *Commentarios políticos*, chap. 74, no. 1, p. 151.

⁴⁵⁸ Enríquez de Villegas, *El Príncipe en la idea*, p. 320.

⁴⁵⁹ ‘*El amor de los vasallos es la más firme defensa de los reinos.*’ Narbona, *Doctrina politica civil*, aphorism 176.

⁴⁶⁰ ‘*Son los ánimos de los hombres tan varios como sus rostros; y aunque la razón en sí mismo una, son diferentes los caminos que cada uno de los discursos sigue para alcanzarla, y tan notables los engaños de la imaginación, que a veces parecen algunos hombres irracionales; y así, no se puede negociar con todos con un mismo estilo; conveniente es variarle según la naturaleza del sujeto con quien se trata (...) disimulando y acomodándose al tiempo y a las personas.*’ Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un príncipe político cristiano*, empresa 30.

subjects, ‘dissimulation is often not only convenient, but compulsory.’⁴⁶¹ He must act ‘like a chameleon’ making ‘inconstancy his virtue (...) and pretence, dissimulation, deception, and fraud the main operations of his metier.’⁴⁶² The modern prince was associated with Apollo, the god of discretion; Janus, the two-faced deity of wisdom; Hercules, whose dress was made from lion (strength) and fox (dissimulation) skin; and the ‘discreet Proteo,’ a mythological creature that, without mutating his nature, could change his appearance so that everyone saw him according to their own image of perfection.⁴⁶³ As Alonso Núñez de Castro explained:

Proteus, able to change his faces, served Classic philosophers as the symbol of the perfect prince, because events are so varied, so different the questions, and the difficulties so many, that if the prince could not multiply himself, he would not be able to attend them all.⁴⁶⁴

We find here again the opportunistic and pragmatic conception of politics that Machiavelli installed in Western thought. As we saw, most seventeenth century Iberian writers considered themselves Anti-Machiavellians. However, it is undeniable that they assumed his pragmatic and accommodative conception of statecraft that determined the efficiency of the ruler by his ability to adapt to circumstances, thereby instituting a certain moral relativism.⁴⁶⁵ According to Saavedra Fajardo, ‘Political science consists in

⁴⁶¹ ‘La disimulación es muchas veces no solo conveniente, pero forzosa.’ Mártir Rizo, *Norte de príncipes*, fol. 119r.

⁴⁶² ‘Como un camaleón,’ making ‘que sea su virtud la inconstancia (...) y la operación principal de su oficio [el] fingir, disimular, engañar y suplantar.’ Barbosa Homem, *Discursos sobre la verdadera y jurídica razón de Estado*, fol. 263v.

⁴⁶³ Vid. Álvarez-Ossorio Alvarino, Antonio, ‘Proteo en Palacio. El arte de la disimulación y la simulación del cortesano,’ *El Madrid de Velázquez y Calderón Villa y corte en el siglo XVII*, ed. by José Miguel Morán Turina, Madrid: Caja Madrid, 2000, vol. I, pp. 111-138, esp. pp. 134-137; Brown, Jonathan, & John H. Elliott, *A palace for a King. The Buen Retiro and the Court of Phillip IV*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980, p. 45.

⁴⁶⁴ ‘Proteo, fácil de mudar semblantes, les sirvió a los antiguos de jeroglífico para idea de un Príncipe perfecto, porque son tan varios los sucesos, tan diferentes las dudas, y el concurso de dificultades tanto, que no haciéndose muchos el Príncipe, es fuerza que no pueda atender a todos.’ Núñez de Castro, *Libro historico politico*, bk. I, chap. 6, p. 58. Other examples in: Andrea Alciato, *Emblemata*, Augsburg: Heinrich Steyner, 1531, embl. 182: De quo quisque suo somniat arbitrio; and Baltasar Gracián, *Oráculo manual y arte de prudencia*, Huesca: Juan Nogués, 1647, aphorism 77.

⁴⁶⁵ The same utilitarian view was defended by certain jurists, such as Grotius and Gentili. According to the latter, politics, as a practical science, must constantly choose between the just and the good. In those cases, ‘si periculum adsit vel corporum vel fortunarum, honestati huic, de qua agimus, utilitatem praeferemus’ (Gentili, *De jure belli*, bk. III, chap. 12, p. 574).

knowing how to recognise storms and make use of them.⁴⁶⁶ Andrés Mendo (d. 1684), a Jesuit priest that worked as preacher at the royal court and accompanied the Duke of Osuna in his travels to Catalonia and the Duchy of Milan, held a similar view:

Who swims in the sea does not go against the current when a wave comes, but rather plunges his head and lets it pass over, so he avoids its force. [Equally], when having waves of calamities, it is better to plunge the head, and let them pass, waiting for a better time, occasion and fortune.⁴⁶⁷

Like Machiavelli, many Iberian writers considered that:

Giving general political precepts to all people, and for all time, is an obvious mistake and remarkable ignorance, because the times change [constantly] and what could serve to enlarge [the state] today, could further its destruction tomorrow.⁴⁶⁸

To govern means to adapt to a changing world, so a good prince must learn to play with moral norms, depending on the need. 'Justify the cause, mixing what is lawful and honourable with what is perhaps helpful.'⁴⁶⁹ This was especially necessary when it came to the use of deception for the sake of the state. According to Pedro Portocarrero y Guzmán (d. 1705), a clergyman that served as Patriarch of West Indies for fifteen years:

What is commonly considered inappropriate is often lawful, when the situation and necessity demand it. The key is to know how to take measures so dissimulation does not touch a lie; because one is never lawful (...) The prudent and wise man mixes the useful with the honest, says Tacitus.⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁶ 'Toda la ciencia política consiste en saber conocer los temporales y valerse de ellos.' Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un príncipe político cristiano*, empresa 46.

⁴⁶⁷ 'El que nada en el mar, cuando viene una ola, no se pone a brazo partido con ella, sino baja la cabeza y déjala pasar por encima, con que se libra de su furor. En habiendo olas de calamidades, se ha de bajar la cabeza, y dejar que pasen, esperando tiempo, ocasión, bonanza y coyuntura.' Mendo, *Príncipe perfecto y ministros ajustados*, chap. 54.

⁴⁶⁸ 'Dar preceptos generales políticos a todos, y para todos tiempos, es yerro conocido, y notable ignorancia, porque los tiempos se mudan y lo que hoy puede ser de aumento, sirve mañana de destrucción.' Mártir Rizo, *Norte de príncipes*, fol. 97v.

⁴⁶⁹ 'Justifique la causa / mezclar a lo que es lícito y honroso / tal vez lo provechoso.' Rebolledo, *Selva militar y política*, p. 330.

⁴⁷⁰ 'Aquello que comúnmente se tiene por torpe, muchas veces cuando la ocasión, y necesidad lo piden, es lícito. El punto está en saber tomas las medidas, para que no se roce el disimulo con la mentira: porque esta nunca es lícita (...) El hombre prudente y sabio mezcla lo útil con lo honesto, dice Tácito.' Portocarrero y Guzmán, *Theatro monarchico de España*, p. 306.

To justify this political pragmatism, Iberian authors never quoted Machiavelli, whose works the Inquisition had banned since 1559. Some of them resorted to the classics: Thucydides ('Nothing is unfair to the prince, if it is useful'), Sallust ('Nothing is more glorious than security; for everything is lawful to a prince'); Pliny ('It is lawful to deceive, according to times and occasions'), and Seneca ('In any republic or monarchy where the prince could only use honesty, a plebeian would reign').⁴⁷¹

But first and foremost the lawfulness of dissimulation was justified through its association with one of the most powerful ideas of Western political tradition: prudence.⁴⁷² This concept, which the Greeks called *phronesis*, had great importance in classical political thought. Greco-Latin authors conceived *prudentia* as deliberative knowledge that allowed individuals to discern between good and evil, thus reaching moral excellence (*areté*). As such, it was considered an essential virtue among politicians and public administrators, since it allowed them to choose in every situation the best option, not for themselves (*meros*) but for the community (*holos*).⁴⁷³

Medieval Scholasticism inherited this conception, and made prudence a Christian virtue par excellence, which 'depended on all the others.' In his *Summa theologiae*,

⁴⁷¹ 'Al príncipe nada es injusto, como sea útil.' 'Nada ay mas glorioso que la seguridad por ella todo es lícito al príncipe.' 'Es lícito engañar, según los tiempos y ocasiones.' 'En cualquier Republica, o Monarquía, a donde al Príncipe no le fuere lícito mas que lo honesto, reinara un plebeyo.' Apud. Portocarrero y Guzmán, *Theatro monarchico*, p. 308.

⁴⁷² For a history of this concept see, among others: D'Ors y Pérez, Álvaro, 'Historia de la prudencia (Con ocasión del tercer centenario del *Oráculo manual y arte de prudencia* de Baltasar Gracián),' *Boletín de la Universidad de Santiago* 49-50, 1947, pp. 41-55; Dini, Vittorio, 'La prudenza da virtù a regola di comportamento: tra ricerca del fondamento razionale ed osservazione empirica,' in *Sagezza e prudenza. Studi per la ricostruzione di un'antropologia in prima età moderna*, ed. by Vittorio Dini & Giampiero Stabile, Naples: Liguori, 1983; Garver, Eugène, *Machiavelli and the History of Prudence*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987; Lazzeri, Christian, 'Prudence, éthique et politique de Thomas d'Aquin à Machiavel,' in *De la prudence des Anciens comparée à celle des Modernes*, ed. by André Tosel, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1995, pp. 79-128; Palacio, Leopoldo E., *La prudencia política*, Madrid: Instituto de Estudios Políticos, 1945; Peña Echeverría, Javier, 'Prudencia política y razón de Estado. La prudencia política en algunos autores españoles de los siglos XVI y XVII,' in *Poder y modernidad: concepciones de la política en la España moderna*, ed. by Javier Peña Echeverría & Luis Carlos Amezuá, Valladolid: Universidad, 2000, pp. 65-104; Taranto, Domenico, *Le virtù della politica. Civismo e prudenza tra Machiavelli e gli antichi*, Naples: Bibliopolis, 2003.

⁴⁷³ I will mention just two examples: Aristotle (*Politics*, bk. III, 1277a) and Cicero ('*ut medicina valetudinis, navigationis gubernatio, sic vivendi ars est prudentia*.' In *De Finibus Bonorum Et Malorum*, bk. V, sect. 16). For more on this topic see, for example: Berto, Enrico, 'Phronesis et science politique,' in *Aristote politique. Études sur la 'Politique' d'Aristote*, Paris: Presses Universitaires Françaises, 1993, pp. 435-458; and Aubenque, Pierre, *La prudence chez Aristote*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1993.

Thomas Aquinas gave the Aristotelian *phronesis* a clear theological dimension, defining it as a '*recta ratio agibilium*' inspired by the Holy Spirit to help men 'have a balanced life according to moral precepts.'⁴⁷⁴

Early modern theorists challenged this idea. They continued to consider prudence as 'the mother of good fortune'⁴⁷⁵ and 'the guide and teacher of all the moral virtues of a Christian prince.'⁴⁷⁶ However, they significantly changed its meaning. With Machiavelli, prudence ceased to be a virtue that moderated passions to guide man to moral perfection. Instead, it became an art, a technique that, without ignoring ethical considerations, focused on practical issues, helping the prince to adapt to changing and misleading circumstances (*fortuna*) to achieve the conservation of the state.⁴⁷⁷

This modern virtue was made of many (and often ambiguous) skills, such as sharpness (*agudeza*), ingenuity (*ingenio*), caution (*cautela*), artifice (*artificio*), industry (*industria*), art (*arte*), discretion, and, of course, dissimulation.⁴⁷⁸ The beginnings of this transformation can be traced back to the writings of the Italian humanist Giovanni Pontano, who served as advisor in the court of Ferdinand of Aragon in Naples. In his treatise *De Prudentia*, written between 1495 and 1499, Pontano highlighted the technical aspects of prudence, including *discretio*, *apparatio*, *simulatio et dissimulatio*:

The power of fortune is so great and human affairs are so varied and inconsistent, that it is necessary in certain circumstances of time and place not only to simulate and dissimulate, but also to make use of deceit.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, II, II, quaest. 47-56.

⁴⁷⁵ '... madre de la buena dicha.' Baltasar Gracián, *El político don Fernando el Católico*, Huesca: Juan Nogués, 1646, p. 61

⁴⁷⁶ '... la guía y maestra de todas las virtudes morales del príncipe cristiano.' *Tratado de la religión y virtudes*, bk. II, chap. 23.

⁴⁷⁷ 'La prudenza consiste in sapere conoscere la qualità degli inconvenienti e pigliare il meno tristo per buono' (*Il Principe*, chap. 21).

⁴⁷⁸ Vid. Jeremy Robbins, 'Prudence and the compass of deceit,' *Bulletin of Spanish Studies* 82, Issue 8, 2005, pp. 97-130. Reprinted in *Arts of Perception: The Epistemological Mentality of the Spanish Baroque, 1580-1720*, New York: Routledge, 2007.

⁴⁷⁹ 'Es tan grande la fuerza de la fortuna, de la variedad e inconstancia de las cosas humanas, que es necesario según las circunstancias de lugar y tiempo no sólo simular y disimular, sino también servirse de engaños.' Pontano, *De prudentia*, bk. IV, sect. 86.

Early modern Iberian authors continued down this road and established an indissoluble association between the two principles. According to the Castilian historian Juan Pablo Mártir Rizo (d. 1642):

Prudence and dissimulation are so united that who knows how to dissimulate well is prudent, and prudence is nothing but conducting things with dissimulation.⁴⁸⁰

In *El Discreto*, Baltasar Gracián describes a carriage driven by *Prudencia* in which *Espera* and *Disimulación* travel.⁴⁸¹ In his collection of emblems, Saavedra Fajardo chose as the symbol of dissimulation the figure of a lion, a biblical metaphor of royal authority and prudence.⁴⁸² A similar image appears in the allegorical tale by Juan de Palafox y Mendoza (d. 1659), a Castilian clergymen that held important positions in the Church of Mexico (Bishop of Puebla) and acted as the Viceroy of New Spain in 1642. Palafox tells the story of a pastor from Bethlehem, ‘rich in cattle but poor in virtues,’ that begins a pilgrimage in search of spiritual perfection. On his way he visits Prudence, who in turn recommends him ‘to speak to a friend of hers, who lived in the same building, but in a different room, called Dissimulation.’⁴⁸³ These are just some examples of the many that could be quoted.⁴⁸⁴ The association of prudence and dissimulation appeared in many Iberian political treatises. In their pages, dissimulation was characterised as the

⁴⁸⁰ ‘*Prudencia y disimulación están tan unidas que el que sabe bien disimular es prudente, y la prudencia no es otra cosa sino conducir las acciones a su fin con disimulación, hasta que llegue el tiempo de ejecutar bien lo que se disimula.*’ Mártir Rizo, *Norte de príncipes*, fol. 98r.

⁴⁸¹ Baltasar Gracián, *El Discreto*, Huesca: Juan Nogués, 1646, chap. 3, 86.

⁴⁸² Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un príncipe político cristiano*, empresa 43.

⁴⁸³ ‘... *que hablase con una señora muy su amiga, que vivía dentro de su mismo cuarto, aunque en diverso aposento, que se llamaba Disimulación.*’ Palafox y Mendoza, *El pastor de noche buena*, pp. 7 and 95.

⁴⁸⁴ Abreu de Melo, *Avizós pera o Paço*, pp. 39-40; Alvia de Castro, *Verdadera razón de estado*, fol. 54r; Blázquez Mayoralgo, *Perfecta razón de estado*, fol. 74v; Enríquez de Villegas, *El Príncipe en la idea*, p. 88; Fernández de Medrano, *República mista*, p. 35; Lancina, *Comentarios Políticos*, para. 203, no. 2, p. 304; Mut, *El príncipe en la guerra y en la paz*, p. 27; Niremberg, *Obras y dias: manual de señores y principes*, pp. 442-443; Rebolledo, *Selva militar y política*, p. 339; Salazar, *Política española*, proposit. 8, sect. 3; Santa María, *Tratado de república y policía cristiana*, p. 313; Silva e Sousa, *Instrução Política de Legados*, chap. 25, no. 1, pp. 688-699.

‘daughter of prudence,’⁴⁸⁵ the ‘joy of prudence,’⁴⁸⁶ the ‘act of prudence,’⁴⁸⁷ the ‘royal expression of prudence,’⁴⁸⁸ establishing a synonymy between the two terms.

To compound the process, Iberian writers covered political dissimulation with a varnish of selfless sacrifice. The prince’s right to deceive was never conceived of (or at least, not described) as a privilege. It was not a prerogative of the high rulers that others should envy. Quite the opposite. For the prince, ‘dissimulation is often not only advisable but mandatory.’⁴⁸⁹ It is a miserable attitude imposed by his duty and circumstances. A ‘compulsory fraud (...) to ensure justice without violating religion.’⁴⁹⁰ ‘A consequence of the distrust’ that governs the court and the world.⁴⁹¹ The Mallorcan astronomer and historian Vicente Mut (d. 1687) described it as ‘the heaviest martyrdom,’ a ‘sacrifice they are making of themselves.’⁴⁹² To Bernardino Rebolledo, duplicity was a ‘royal skill’ that princes ‘are forced to use sometimes (...) with regret and sorrow.’⁴⁹³ In his allegorical story, Juan Palafox describes Dissimulation as ‘a deeply felt and measured lady,’ whose ‘dress was a bit made of a dark cloth, called Suffering.’⁴⁹⁴ According to Andrés Mendo, the prince must:

Wait for the occasion (...) suffering patiently and dissimulating until the appropriate occasion came. That is why King Ferdinand the Catholic used as a symbol an anvil that remains immobile while being hit by a hammer; because it is necessary to suffer like an anvil the blows of adverse fortune, with dissimulation and patience.⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁸⁵ ‘Hija de la prudencia.’ Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un príncipe político cristiano*, empresa 43.

⁴⁸⁶ ‘Alegría de la prudencia.’ Gurmendi, *Doctrina Phisica y moral de príncipes*, fol. 62r.

⁴⁸⁷ ‘Acto de prudencia.’ Francisco Gutiérrez de los Ríos y Córdoba, *El hombre practico o Discursos varios sobre su conocimiento y enseñanza*, Bruselas: Felipe Foppen, 1686, p. 104.

⁴⁸⁸ ‘Máxima real de la prudencia.’ Garau, *El Olimpo del sabio instruido de la naturaleza*, p. 156.

⁴⁸⁹ ‘La disimulación es muchas veces no solo conveniente, pero forzosa.’ Mártir Rizo, *Norte de príncipes*, fol. 128v.

⁴⁹⁰ ‘forzoso (...) fraude en la necesidad, no para quebrantar la fe, sino para asegurar la justicia.’ Blázquez Mayoralgo, *Perfecta razón de estado*, fol. 55r.

⁴⁹¹ ‘Un efecto de la desconfianza.’ Rebolledo, *Selva militar y política*, p. 335.

⁴⁹² ‘el más pesado martirio, (...) sacrificio que están haciendo de sí mismos.’ Mut, *El principe en la guerra y en la paz*, p. 27.

⁴⁹³ ‘Real destreza (...) con que se hace forzoso valerse en ocasiones, (...) con pesar y sentimiento.’ Rebolledo, Bernardino *Selva militar y politica*, p. 335.

⁴⁹⁴ ‘... dueña muy sentida y mesurada,’ whose ‘traje exterior, era de una tela un poco obscura, que llamaban Sufrimiento.’ Palafox y Mendoza, *El pastor de noche buena*, p. 95.

⁴⁹⁵ ‘Aguardar la ocasión, ceder al tiempo, sufrir con paciencia y disimular hasta la sazón oportuna. Por eso tomó por símbolo el rey Don Fernando el Católico un brazo con un martillo que da en un yunque

As can be observed, Iberian authors never depicted deception as a kind of freedom, but rather the lack of it, determined by a duty to protect power and, thereby, the state. For the prince, dissimulation was not a privilege, but altruistic suffering and self-sacrifice performed for the collective good.⁴⁹⁶ This was reminiscent of the stoic notions of patience and individual suffering, but also the case of Christ, who died to save humanity. In that sense, Iberian authors' views deviated from Machiavelli's. The Machiavellian prince used deception for offensive purposes and without any qualms. By contrast, the 'good Christian prince' uses it reluctantly and never for his personal interest. He may use 'deception and fraud (...) that revert to the good of the vassals,' because he 'who aims to the public welfare is not guilty of lying.'⁴⁹⁷ But he must avoid dissimulation when dealing with personal matters of 'his own interest.'⁴⁹⁸ This limitation, already established by Justus Lipsius, was accepted and repeated by virtually all writers of the seventeenth century, who saw in it one of the main differences between 'honest dissimulation' and the pernicious variation formulated by 'the impious Machiavelli.'⁴⁹⁹

The second main difference had to do with religion. Machiavelli had encouraged his prince to feign pious devotion to any faith if that could help him maintain power. This idea was fully rejected by most Iberian authors. For them, dissimulation was lawful only 'when it did not go against any precept of the religion.'⁵⁰⁰ No circumstance or purpose could justify duplicity:

inmóvil, porque es necesario sufrir, como yunque, los golpes de la adversa fortuna, con disimulación y paciencia.' Andrés Mendo, *Príncipe perfecto y ministros ajustados*, chap. 54.

⁴⁹⁶ See, for example: Figueroa, *Aviso de Príncipes*, chap. 139; Fernández de Medrano, *República Mista*, p. 35; Abreu de Melo, *Avizós pera o Paço*, pp. 39-40. It is worth noticing dissimulation was already associated to patience by earlier authors. For example, Antonio de Guevara (*Libro llamado Relox de príncipes*, 1529, chap. 38).

⁴⁹⁷ '... engaños y fraudes (...) que aprovechen en bien de los vasallos,' since 'no es culpable la mentira que al bien público aspira.' Rebolledo, *Selva militar y política*, p. 339.

⁴⁹⁸ 'de la utilidad propia.' Ramírez de Prado, *Consejo y Consejeros de Príncipes*, p. 46.

⁴⁹⁹ Lipsius, *Politicorum sive Civilis doctrinae*, pp. 516-517; Mallea, *Gobierno del Príncipe Cathólico*, p. 168; Portocarrero, *Theatro monarchico de España*, pp. 306-308. Nevertheless, it is important to consider couple of things in this regard. First, that this perception was inaccurate, since Machiavelli only allowed deception when it was useful for the state. Second, that in a time of absolute monarchies like that one, the border between the personal interests of the king and the state's was at the very less diffuse and often non-existent.

⁵⁰⁰ '...cuando no se atropella algún precepto, ni va contra la Religión.' Figueroa, *Aviso de Príncipes*, p. 315.

In those things related to faith, we are obligated by divine decree not only to believe but also to confess in all truth and simplicity, without understanding a single word or gesture with a different meaning; not even for a short moment, although it would save our life.⁵⁰¹

With a few exceptions, all Iberian intellectuals agreed on this point: the prince must not dissimulate in matters of faith. First, because it is morally wrong. Second, because it is not convenient for his public image: ‘using religion as a mask for his interest makes him hated and suspected by everybody.’⁵⁰²

3. DECEPTION IS THE MOTHER OF SECRECY

The third reason used to justify political deception was the state’s need for secrecy. Early modern writers encoded the viability of the Republic in a necessary asymmetry between the knowledge possessed by the ruler and facts possessed by the ruled. Such view implied two things. First, the right to withhold information from the subjects (secrets of state). Second, the right to hide some of the ‘recondite arts employed by [the ruler] to acquire and preserve the state’ (*arcana imperii*).⁵⁰³ Of course, this idea was not new. In fact, it was widely developed in the time of the Roman Empire by writers such as Tacitus⁵⁰⁴ and Plutarch, who ‘teaches that a citizen is not entitled to know the secrets (*arcana imperii*) used by princes to govern.’⁵⁰⁵ Ernst H. Kantorowicz traced its evolution through medieval jurisprudence, which recognised and emphasised the importance of

⁵⁰¹ ‘En lo que toca a la fe, (...) por derecho divino tenemos obligación no sólo de creer sino de confesar con toda verdad y sencillez lo que creemos, sin dar a entender con la menor palabra ni el más ligero ademán cosa en contrario ni por un momento de tiempo, aunque en ello se redimiese la vida.’ Mallea, *Gobierno del Príncipe Cathólico*, p. 168.

⁵⁰² ‘La religión usada por máscara de sus designios, le hace odioso y sospechoso a todos.’ Mártir Rizo, *Norte de príncipes*, fols. 44v-45r.

⁵⁰³ Arnold Clapmarius, *De arcanis rerum publicarum libri VI*, Frankfurt: Berner, 1624, bk. I, chap. 5.

⁵⁰⁴ *Vid. Annals*, bk. II, 36 and 59, and *Histories*, bk. I, 4.

⁵⁰⁵ ‘... enseña que a un ciudadano particular no es dado escudriñar en curiosidad los secretos con que gobiernan los príncipes.’ Ponce de León, *Censura sobre los anales y las historias de C. C. Tácito*.

secrecy (*poridad*) both in political and religious practices.⁵⁰⁶ Then it was inherited by early modern thinkers like Machiavelli, Botero, Ammirato, and Naudé, who made it the keystone of their theories of statecraft.⁵⁰⁷

The same happened in Iberia, where many theorists defended the need to protect power behind a wall of opacity and argued that ‘secrecy is the most powerful nerve in the king’s reign.’⁵⁰⁸ Just as the mysteries of the Bible and religion should be hidden from the ignorant laymen, the policy of the kingdom was to be hidden from the eyes of common people.⁵⁰⁹ ‘The subjects should not penetrate the secrets, desires and operations of princes,’ wrote Fadrique Moles.⁵¹⁰ ‘Knowing to conceal a secret and dissimulate a desire,’ added Francisco Garau, ‘is political prudence, required for the government.’⁵¹¹ Juan Alfonso Lancina (d. 1703), a Castilian jurist who held important positions in the Spanish government of Naples and wrote numerous works of tacitist inspiration, held the same opinion.

Princes have some peculiar secrets in their houses that they do not communicate to anyone, not even to their own advisors. These are the foundations of the Empire, and once discovered, his authority is endangered.⁵¹²

⁵⁰⁶ Ernst H. Kantorowicz ‘Mysteries of State. An Absolutist Concept and Its Late Mediaeval Origins,’ *Harvard Theological Review* 48, Issue 1, January 1955, pp. 65-91.

⁵⁰⁷ Vid. Chrétien-Goni, Jean- Pierre, ‘Institutio arcanae: Théorie de l’institution du secret et fondement de la politique,’ in *Le Pouvoir de la raison d’état*, pp. 135-143; and Donaldson, Peter S., *Machiavelli and Mystery of State*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

⁵⁰⁸ ‘El más poderoso nervio en el gobierno del rey es el consejo secreto, porque viene a ser un instrumento inmediato de la ejecución determinada en el entendimiento y ajustada con las empresas en la ocasión (...) porque (...) consejo y silencio todo es uno.’ Blázquez Mayoralgo, *Perfecta razón de estado*, fol. 93v. See also: Castillo de Bobadilla, Jerónimo, *Política para Corregidores y señores de vasallos, en tiempo de paz y de guerra, y para perlados en lo espiritual y temporal...*, Madrid: Luis Sánchez, 1597, bk. II, chap. 5, p. 487; Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un príncipe político cristiano*, empresa 62; Mur, Luís de, *Triunfos de la Esclavitud. Virtudes de Moysén y dureza de Faraón*, Zaragoza: Diego Dormer, 1640, p. 47; Garau, *El Olimpo del sabio instruído*, chap. 36; Lancina, *Comentarios Políticos*, para. 22, no. 3, p. 36.

⁵⁰⁹ Vid. Carlo Ginzburg, ‘High and Low: The Theme of Forbidden Knowledge in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,’ *Past and present* 73, 1976, pp. 28-41.

⁵¹⁰ ‘Los súbditos no han de penetrar los secretos, deseos y operaciones de los príncipes.’ Moles, *Amistades de príncipes*, fol. 37v.

⁵¹¹ ‘Saber encubrir un secreto y disimular un deseo es una forma esencial del ejercicio de la autoridad, una “prudencia política, necesaria al gobierno.” Garau, *El Olimpo del sabio instruído*, p. 156.

⁵¹² ‘Tienen ciertos arcanos los Príncipes peculiares de sus casas, que ni a sus mismos Consejos los comunican. Éstos son los cardines donde estriba el imperio, y una vez descubiertos pelagra la autoridad.’ Lancina, *Comentarios Políticos*, para. 30, no. 1, p. 44.

This vindication of secrecy and opacity as instruments of government was applied to the entire state apparatus. Saavedra Fajardo captured this in his *Empresa* 'Nulli patet.' It displays a hive, symbol of the state, in whose interior the civil servants (the bees) make their honey, hidden from the eyes of the world. 'Learn from this the importance of silence and impenetrable secrecy of actions and decisions, and the damage that could happen if the artifice and the government's plans are disclosed.'⁵¹³

Secrecy and opacity became accepted practices in early modern politics and the core of many of its theoretical formulations. The state was associated with the metaphorical images of an above-ground mine, whose enormous complexity is hidden from the public eye, or a machine, such as the Trojan horse, or a clock, made of secret mechanisms.⁵¹⁴ Public officials were forced to swear to secrecy and severe penalties were fixed for those who did not fulfil their oath. Equally, the prince, considered at that time the human incarnation of the State, was encouraged to protect the secrets of the Republic at all costs. He was to be a tomb, avoiding communicating the information he had in words or gestures. He should do so for three reasons. First, for courtly prudence; in the palatial world in which he lives, telling the truth to others was a lack of decorum as well as an unnecessary risk (like 'bleeding his own heart')⁵¹⁵ that could only produce a negative outcome. Second, for reasons of political prudence: in an absolute monarchy, where all the power is concentrated in a single figure, the preservation of the state depends on the prince's ability to remain quiet and hide that information that must not fall into the wrong hands. 'Secrecy is the soul of business, and what repels rival

⁵¹³ 'Aprendan todas de ti la importancia de su oculto silencio y de un impenetrable secreto en las acciones y resoluciones, y el daño de que se descubra el artificio y máximas de gobierno.' Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un príncipe político cristiano*, empresa 62.

⁵¹⁴ Vid. Hernando de Soto, *Emblemas moralizadas*, Madrid: Juan Iñiguez de Lequerica, 1599, emblem: Con industria se vence al enemigo; Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un príncipe político cristiano*, empresa 51; Garau, *El Olimpo del sabio instruído*, p. 237; Garau, *El Olimpo del sabio instruído*, p. 237. More on this topic in: González García, José María, 'Una máquina política perfecta: el reloj barroco,' in *Metáforas del poder*, Madrid: Alianza, 1998, pp. 143-170; Keller, Vera, 'Mining Tacitus: secrets of empire, nature and art in the reason of state,' *The British Journal for the History of Science* 45, 2012, pp. 189-212.

⁵¹⁵ '... sangrarse del corazón.' Gracián, *Oráculo manual y arte de prudencia*, Huesca, Juan Nogués, 1647, aphorism 181.

attacks.⁵¹⁶ If the enemies of the prince do not know his political projects, they would hardly be able to boycott them or detect weakness if he fails to carry them out.⁵¹⁷ Therefore, no one should know what goes through his mind. No one should be able to penetrate the mask of his face and reach his true thoughts.

Thus, Iberian authors recovered the old courtier *topos* that extolled silence as virtuous conduct and sublimated it until it became a matter of state.⁵¹⁸ ‘How many republics suffered destruction for not protecting properly a bad secret?’⁵¹⁹ Treatises endlessly insisted on ‘the many damages that often result from the disclosure’ of sensitive information and encourage the prince to hide his opinions and projects from everyone, including his closest advisers and ministers.⁵²⁰ He should ‘cover up himself,’⁵²¹ ‘Uncovering himself would lead him to ruin; (...) he shall therefore drown his secrets in the bottom of his heart.’⁵²²

Finally, the prince should deceive and conceal to improve his public image. As we saw, early modern theorists were aware that royal authority relied on the image that subjects had of the prince. Public opinion was a major power already in those days so enjoying a good reputation was essential for the ruler.⁵²³ A good way to achieve this was to resort to multiplicity. Another, equally effective measure, consisted in enveloping the prince and the State in the vaporous cloud of secrecy. As the Jesuit theologian Francisco Garau (d. 1701) noted in 1675: ‘It can not be denied that the more curtains cover it, the

⁵¹⁶ ‘El secreto es el alma de los negocios, y el que desvía las prevenciones contrarias.’ Joaquín Setanti, *Centellas de varios conceptos*, Barcelona: Sebastián Matevat, 1614, centella 312.

⁵¹⁷ Garau, *El Olimpo del sabio instruído*, pp. 226.

⁵¹⁸ Vid. Pedraza, Pilar, ‘El silencio del príncipe,’ *Goya* 197-188, 1985, pp. 37-46; Pinkus, Karen, *Picturing silence. Emblem, Language, Counter-Reformation Materiality*, Michigan: University Press, 1996.

⁵¹⁹ ‘Cuántas republicas lloraron su destrucción por fiar mal un secreto?’ Núñez de Castro, *Libro historico politico*, bk. I, chap. 6, p. 52.

⁵²⁰ ‘... los muchos y graves daños que suelen proceder del descubrirse.’ Baltasar Álamos de Barrientos, *Tácito español, ilustrado con aforismos*, Madrid: Luis Sánchez, 1614, aphorism 34. Ed. by Jose Antonio Fernández-Santamaría, Madrid: Centro de Estudios Constitucionales, 1987, p. 59.

⁵²¹ ‘... encobrir a si mesmo.’ César de Meneses, *Summa Política*, p. 47.

⁵²² ‘Lo mismo es descubrirse, que perderse (...) Ahogue pues en el profundo de su corazón sus secretos.’ Garau, *El Olimpo del sabio instruído*, pp. 226.

⁵²³ Vid. José Antonio Maravall, *La teoría española del Estado en el siglo XVI*, Madrid: Instituto de Estudios Políticos, 1944, p. 223.

more venerable an image is.' Human beings 'are always fascinated by the mysterious.'⁵²⁴ Mystery exalts, dignifies, and inspires respect. The German sociologist George Simmel explained in the early twentieth century the mechanism of this anthropological principle that tends to attribute an intrinsic importance to secret things:

Since exclusion of others from a possession may occur especially in the case of high values, the reverse is psychologically very natural, viz., that what is withheld from the many appears to have a deep and special value (...) The natural impulse to idealization, and the natural timidity of men, operate to one and the same end in the presence of secrecy; viz., to heighten it by phantasy, and to distinguish it by a degree of attention that published reality could not command.⁵²⁵

What early modern theorists suggested was to employ this valorisation of the power of secrecy, used by politics and religion since Antiquity, to provide the absolute monarch with greater dignity, strengthening his authority and the veneration of his subjects. According to Joaquín Setantí (d. 1617), who was a talented writer and an important official of the administration of Barcelona: 'The king is always more respected the less he is seen and treated.'⁵²⁶ 'Making the majesty mysterious is a cautious [measure] of who governs,' said Lancina.⁵²⁷ Francisco Garau argued that 'if the Sun let the eyes stare at him they would probably find some stains, like in the Moon. If he is considered pure it is because he cannot be looked at.'⁵²⁸ The prince, who is the human incarnation of the solar disk, should do something similar 'being dark and opaque in his statements,' dissimulating his feelings and ambitions, reducing his public appearances and

⁵²⁴ 'No puede negarse que es mas venerable una Imagen, quando más cortinas la sacramentan (...) [Al hombre] siempre le causa veneración lo misterioso.' Garau, *El Olimpo del sabio instruido*, pp. 156 and 228.

⁵²⁵ Georg Simmel, 'The Sociology of Secrecy and of Secret Societies,' pp. 464-465.

⁵²⁶ 'Al Rey siempre se le tiene mas respeto quanto menos se ve y trata.' Joaquín Setantí, *Aphorismos sacados de la Historia de Publio Cornelio Tácito por el doctor Benito Arias Montano para la conservación y aumento de las monarquías, hasta ahora no impreso*, Barcelona: Sebastián Matevat, 1614, aphorism 43.

⁵²⁷ 'El hacer misteriosa la majestad, es cautela de quien gobierna.' Lancina, *Comentarios Políticos*, para. 213, no. 1, p. 320.

⁵²⁸ 'Si el Sol se dexara manosear de los ojos, quizás le hallara algunas manchas, como en la Luna, la vista. Vive ahora acreditado de limpio, a fuerza de no dejarse mirar.' Garau, *El Olimpo del sabio instruido*, pp. 237.

distancing himself from the people, 'with such art that he cause admiration.'⁵²⁹

Who does not let others measure him already has certain immensity, not for real being, but for the benefit of the art (...) We consider immense the flow of a river because we never see its end (...) Things always seem bigger to absent people, until they get to see and touch them.⁵³⁰

An almost theatrical conception of power was therefore established and conceived of as a game of appearances. In line with the baroque worldview, policy was configured as a play, a prestidigitation act. The authority of princes and the conservation of their states depended on an aura of mystery and distance that blurs and protects them. Saavedra Fajardo explained it this way:

We would lose our respect for princes and republics if we knew what happens inside them (...) The empires that hid their councils and decisions inspired respect; the others, disdain. How beautiful seems a deep river! How ugly the one that shows the stones of its riverbed! No one dares to wade across the first, but everyone fords the second. The great things that are conceived with opinion are lost at sight. From a distance admiration is greater (...) When the [government's] resolutions are released to the public, they seem composed and arranged with great judgment. They represent the majesty and wisdom of the prince, and therefore we suppose [that they were determined by] considerations and causes that we cannot understand, and sometimes we imagine some that never existed. If we could listen the basics and designs employed during the meetings, we would probably laugh at them. This happens in theatre, where the characters enter the scene disguised and cause respect, while in the backstage everything is uncovered and their vileness can be [easily] recognised.⁵³¹

⁵²⁹ '...ser obscuro y cerrado en sus dictámenes.' '...con tal arte que cause admiración.' Lancina, *Comentarios Políticos*, para. 305, no. 3, p. 200.

⁵³⁰ 'Quien no se deja medir, ya tiene algo de inmenso, no por evaluación de su ser, sino por beneficio de la arte (...) Inmenso llamamos el caudal de un río, porque nunca le vemos acabar de pasar (...) Siempre parecen mayores a los ausentes las cosas, hasta que se llegan a ver y tocar.' Garau, *El Olimpo del sabio instruido*, pp. 236. The old maxim, 'the deepest rivers are always the quietest,' usually attributed to Quintus Curtius, was now recovered by many authors. See, for example, Juan de Covarrubias y Horozco, *Emblemas Morales*, Zaragoza: Alonso Rodríguez, 1604, emblem: El Ebro y el Clamores.

⁵³¹ 'Perderíamos el concepto que tenemos de los príncipes y de las repúblicas si supiésemos internamente lo que pasa dentro de sus consejos (...) los imperios ocultos en sus consejos y designios causan respeto; los demás desprecio. ¡Qué hermoso se muestra un río profundo! ¡Que feo el que descubre las piedras y las obras de su madre! A aquél ninguno se atreve a vadear, a éste todos. Las grandezas que se conciben con la opinión se pierden con la vista. Desde lejos es mayor la reverencia (...) Cuando salen en público sus resoluciones, parecen compuesta y ordenadas con gran juicio. Representan la majestad y la prudencia del Príncipe, y en ellas suponemos consideraciones y causas que no alcanzamos, y a veces les damos muchas que no tuvieron. Si se oyera la conferencia, los fundamentos y los designios, nos riéramos de ellas. Así sucede en los teatros, donde salen compuestos los personajes y causan respeto, y allá dentro en el

It is precisely based on this theatrical conception of politics, made of secrets and ruses, where early modern authors built their justification of political dissimulation. Just as the casuists legitimised the use of the insincerity as a method to protect the secrecy of confession, political theorists justified deception as a mechanism to protect the secrets of the state. There are certain ‘issues of public interest’, wrote Eugenio Narbona, ‘that cannot be addressed openly.’⁵³² When dealing with them, the ‘good prince’ should use deception and dissimulation. He could ‘conceal his attempts,’ ‘hide his will in any business,’ ‘keep the secret motives of what he does,’ ‘concealing his goals, if he wants the means to be effective.’⁵³³ According to the Portuguese friar Miguel Solares, the prince:

Must act like Alcibiades (...) who mastered his actions (...) and adapted to any fortune, without expressing what he felt about things, as he was reborn in each occasion, because it is a virtue of the great princes (...) knowing to dissimulate so no one understands him.⁵³⁴

Of course, this duplicity inevitably led to deception and hypocrisy. Garau expressed it this way:

The gates of the palace have two faces, one looking at the people, one facing to the inside: it presents one reason to all; and another one to itself (...) sacredly buried in its councils.⁵³⁵

escenario se reconoce su vileza, todo está resuelto y confuso.’ Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un príncipe político cristiano*, empresa 44.

⁵³² ‘Hay casos de causa pública que con trato descubierto no pueden hacerse.’ Narbona, *Doctrina política civil*, aformismos 79-80.

⁵³³ ‘... celar sus intentos,’ ‘disimular el animo y voluntad que tuviere en cualquier negocio,’ ‘guardando y encubriendo las secretas causas de lo que hace,’ ‘recatando los fines, si quiere que sean eficaces los medios.’ Alvia de Castro, *Verdadera razón de estado*, fol. 57v; Portocarrero y Guzmán, *Theatro monarchico de España*, p. 304; Setanti, *Aphorismos sacados de la Historia de Publio Cornelio Tácito*, p. 52; Mur, *Tiberio, ilustrado con morales y políticos discursos*, pp. 41-42; Solórzano Pereira, *Emblemata Regio-política*, emblem 21.

⁵³⁴ ‘Qual Alcibiades (...) tão senhor das suas ações e operações que em qualquer fortuna se acomodava, sem sair com o que sentia em cada cousa, como se nascera para cada uma delas por ser virtude de grande Príncipe e digno de império saber dissimular sem que lhe entendam.’ Miguel Solares, *Portugal Libertado*, ed. by Cândido dos Santos, Porto: Faculdade de Letras, 1974, p. 110.

⁵³⁵ ‘Las puertas de Palacio tienen dos caras, una que mira al pueblo, otra que mira hacia dentro: un motivo para todos; otro solo para si. Una razón para todos en todo; mas la propia de sus órdenes sagradamente sepultada en sus consejos.’ Garau, *El Olimpo del sabio instruido*, p. 233.

As we see, the prince described by early modern authors was in the antipodes of the one imagined by medieval men, who encouraged their rulers to be always honest and transparent in their intentions and clear in their words. In fact, the snake, condemned during the Middle Ages as the biblical symbol of betrayal and lie, the complete opposite of the good Christian, now became a role model for the 'good prince.' Saavedra Fajardo recommended the prince Balthasar Charles to adopt the 'dubious course of the snake,' which moves:

Twisting from one side to another with such uncertainty that even his own body does not know where the head is going. [The snake] points at one direction and moves to the opposite, not leaving traces of its steps nor disclosing the intention of its trip. Equally hidden must be the councils and plans of the princes. No one has to know where they are aimed at.⁵³⁶

Unlike Machiavelli, Iberian writers did not believe that the prince should be content with pretending virtues. He should possess them. To simulate to have a merit that is not really possessed 'it is not art, but an injury to truth.' 'It is a betrayal of the civil life,' because it aims to steal the people's applause and admiration from those who truly deserve them.⁵³⁷ On the contrary, 'concealing his defects' and 'denying his own vices' is not a sin, but a form of 'prudence' and 'good sense' (*cordura*) that all rulers concerned about the preservation of the State should observe.⁵³⁸ According to Quevedo:

Nothing should be less showed than what is most desired. The exterior hypocrisy, while being a sin in moral, is a great political virtue. I call it the wind that supports the chameleon of power.⁵³⁹

⁵³⁶ 'El dudoso curso de la culebra,' which moves 'torciéndose a una parte y otra con tal incertidumbre, que aun su mismo cuerpo no sabe por dónde le ha de llevar la cabeza. Señala el movimiento a una parte, y le hace a la contraria, sin que dejen huellas sus pasos ni se conozca la intención de su viaje. Así ocultos han de ser los consejos y designios de los príncipes. Nadie ha de alcanzar adonde van encaminados.' Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un príncipe político cristiano*, empresa 44.

⁵³⁷ 'No es arte, sino injuria de la verdad,' 'es hacer traición al trato de la vida civil.' Vid.: Enríquez de Villegas, *El Príncipe en la idea*, p. 86; Mut, *El príncipe en la guerra y en la paz*, p. 27; Mur, *Tiberio, ilustrado con morales y políticos discursos*, p. 18.

⁵³⁸ '...encubrir sus defectos,' 'desmentir sus vicios.' Mut, *El príncipe en la guerra y en la paz*, p. 27; Baños de Velasco, L. *Anneo Séneca, ilustrado en blasones políticos y morales*, pp. 506-507; Palafox y Mendoza, *Dictámenes espirituales, morales y políticos*, dict. 159-160.

⁵³⁹ 'Nada se ha de mostrar menos que lo que se desea más, la hipocresía exterior, siendo pecado en lo moral, es grande virtud política. Llámola el viento del que se sustenta el camaleón del poder.' Quevedo, *Vida de Marco Bruto*, 'Segunda oración de Porcia.'

In order to deceive successfully, the prince must learn to transform 'his heart into a forest,' concealing his feelings 'at his convenience.'⁵⁴⁰ He cannot 'be the master of many, he who does not know how to be the master of himself.'⁵⁴¹ 'In none he shall exercise his empire more severely than in himself.'⁵⁴² There emerges here the old Stoic principle of *potestas sui*, updated now by renewed interest in Seneca and the new codes of good manners defined in courtly treatises and civility manuals. It is an essential part of royal dignity to dissimulate, 'for education and prudence. He must have the same face in the happy and the adverse moments, to preserve the first and get rid of the second ones.'⁵⁴³

Most authors agreed with this point. In fact, this pseudo-divine temperance achieved through dissimulation became the most conspicuous attribute of the Iberian monarchs in Baroque imagery. 'The kings of Spain,' wrote Salazar, 'receive with the same face prosperous and adverse events,' 'so that they never abandon themselves in the blows of fortune.'⁵⁴⁴ In his *Emblemata Regio-política* (1653), Juan de Solórzano Pereira represented Ferdinand II of Aragon under the form of an anvil hit by a hammer. According to Solórzano, Ferdinand was an example of great prudence, because he was willing to receive and suffer any blow in silence.⁵⁴⁵ And he was not the only one. His successors in the throne, the Habsburg kings, also knew how to hide their fears and sorrows:

So did (...) Philip II when he heard of the little success that his powerful navy had in 1588 over England; and ten years before (in 1578) in knowing the unfortunate death of his nephew, King Sebastian of Portugal, and the loss of nearly all his army in Africa; and [equally acted] before him his father,

⁵⁴⁰ 'hacer de su corazón un bosque,' 'conforme le conviene.' Lancina, *Comentarios Políticos*, para. 297, no. 2, p. 452.

⁵⁴¹ Garau, *El Olimpo del sabio instruído*, pp. 156.

⁵⁴² 'No puede ser dueño de muchos, quien no sabe serlo de sí.' Mariana, *De rege et regis institutione*, bk. I, chap. 5.

⁵⁴³ '... por recato de prudência: ter o mesmo semblante nas cousas adversas, e felices, por conservar umas, e dar passo noutras.' César de Meneses, *Summa Política*, p. 46.

⁵⁴⁴ 'Los Reyes de España, con un mismo rostro reciben los sucesos prósperos que los adversos,' 'de modo que no salen de si en los golpes de fortuna.' Salazar, *Política española*, proposit. 8, sect. 3, pp. 179-180.

⁵⁴⁵ Juan de Solórzano Pereira, *Emblemata Regio-política*, Madrid: Domingo García Morrás, 1653, emblem 43: *Tempori cede*.

Charles V, in the defeat of his navy in Algiers.⁵⁴⁶

At the same time that the prince hid his sentiments and weaknesses under a veil of secrecy and dissimulation, he had also to attempt to discover the things that people hide from him employing the same methods. Penetrating the inner space of others is as important as protecting his.⁵⁴⁷ Only those rulers who could unravel ‘the dissimulated feelings’ (*las pasiones disimuladas en el fingimiento*) of their ministers and advisors would be able to distinguish their friends from their enemies and differentiate flattery from honesty. Early modern politics were conceived as ‘the science of knowing human feelings, of friends and enemies, whether princes, ministers, or vassals.’⁵⁴⁸ Heavily influenced by the doctrines of the physician-philosopher Huarte de San Juan, seventeenth century intellectuals believed that thoughts were inevitably reflected in the body,⁵⁴⁹ making it possible to know what was concealed in hearts by the examination ‘of the sensible [things], the laughter, the eyes, the face and the actions.’⁵⁵⁰ Thus, political theorists such as Saavedra Fajardo encouraged the prince to pay close attention to ‘the particular humors that composed the bodies (organs by which the souls act), and the manifestations that they produce of their inclinations and appetites.’ For many, such careful observation of tempers and bodies was ‘the principal duty of prudence in

⁵⁴⁶ ‘Así lo hizo (...) Felipe II cuando tuvo aviso del poco efecto que su poderosa y real armada hizo el año de 1588 yendo sobre Inglaterra; y diez años antes (que fue el de 78) hizo lo mismo, en sabiendo la desgraciada muerte del infeliz Rey de Portugal Don Sebastián, su Sobrino, y perdida de casi todo su lúcido ejército en África; y antes de el Carlos V, su padre, por el suceso de la infeliz armada de Argel.’ Salazar, *Política española*, proposit. 8, sect. 3, p. 180. The same ability was attributed to certain Portuguese kings, such as John III, who showed ‘silence and dissimulation’ when facing any ‘mistake or confusion.’ Manuel de Sousa Coutinho, *Anais de D. João III*, bk. I, chap. 3, sect. 13-23, ed. by Maria Rodriguez Lapa, Lisbon: Livraria Sa da Costa, 1938, vol. I, p. 18.

⁵⁴⁷ Mut, *El príncipe en la guerra y en la paz*, p. 18.

⁵⁴⁸ ‘... la ciencia del conocimiento de los afectos humanos, de amigos y enemigos, ya sean príncipes o ministros o vasallos.’ Barrientos, *Tácito español, ilustrado con aforismos*, en la *Dedicatoria* al Duque de Lerma, fols. 26v-32r.

⁵⁴⁹ In fact, in this period several treatises appeared that helped to discover the hidden feelings after a careful examination of the face. One of the most popular one was *El sol solo y para todos sol* by Esteban Pujasol, who provided for the reader ‘a philosophy and anatomy of the characters (*ingenios*), with which any individual, looking at himself in a mirror, at a friend, or at another face, could infer its natural complexion and temperament.’ (*El sol solo y para todos sol, de la filosofía sagaz y anatomía de ingenios*, Barcelona: Pedro Lacavallería, 1637).

⁵⁵⁰ ‘... de lo sensible, de la risa, los ojos, el semblante y las acciones.’ Mut, *El príncipe en la guerra y en la paz*, p. 28.

princes, or in anyone who deal with them.’ Without ‘this knowledge (...) the prince would not know to govern, nor the courtier would achieve his goals.’⁵⁵¹

Obviously, the prince must ‘use this secret machine, with the same discretion and care as Louis XI.’⁵⁵² He should make these inquiries as discreetly as possible, hiding his intentions so no one discovers his effort to penetrate the others’ dissimulation. The Dominican friar Blas Verdu (d. 1560), who taught philosophy in Valencia and served as rector of the *Colegio Imperial* of Tortosa, explained it like this:

You should show that you are simple and well intentioned. Do not show great intelligence or sharpness in penetrating hearts, discerning thoughts, and detecting malice: because subjects and vassals dislike having rulers who also rule on their thoughts, being thoughts the space where the spirits afflicted in the external world seek refuge.⁵⁵³

Politics thus became a tangled game of deception, in which dissimulators attempted to penetrate the dissimulations of the others, and honesty became lost in an endless masquerade.

4. DECEPTION AS A WAY TO FACILITATE PUNISHMENT AND FORGIVENESS

Iberian authors justified deception as a necessary way of ignoring issues that the prince could not (or did not want to) address. According to the dictionaries of the time, in early modern Iberia ‘to dissimulate’ meant ‘to hide or conceal (from the latin *Occultare*)’

⁵⁵¹ ‘... los humores particulares de que están compuestos los cuerpos; órganos por donde obran las almas, y las muestras que han dado de sus inclinaciones y apetitos.’ ‘Es el principal oficio de la prudencia en los príncipes, o quien tratare con ellos.’ Without ‘este conocer con la experiencia los naturales (...) ni el príncipe sabrá gobernar, ni el negociante alcanzar sus fines.’ Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un príncipe político cristiano*, empresa 30.

⁵⁵² ‘Los Príncipes’ must ‘saber valerse de esta maquina secreta, / tan recatada y advertidamente / como hizo Luis onceno en paz y guerra.’ Rebolledo, *Selva militar y política*, p. 337.

⁵⁵³ ‘... importará mostrar que eres sencillo y bien intencionado: guarda no descubras grande solercia y agudeza, en penetrar corazones, discernir pensamientos, y advertir malicias: porque sienten mucho los súbditos y vasallos tener gobernadores, que les presidan también à los pensamientos, siendo los pensamientos la plaza donde toma espacio un corazón afligido en el fuero exterior.’ Blas Verdú, *Avisos de discreción para acertadamente tratar negocios*, Barcelona: Sebastián Matheaud, 1612, chap. 3, fols. 155v-156r.

but ‘sometimes it also means to excuse, to allow, to forgive (from the latin *Indulgere*).’ The noun ‘dissimulation’ expressed the action of ‘hiding and concealing one’s intention artificially’ but ‘also pretending not to understand, to feign ignorance of what is known or has been seen, to tolerate industriously what it is done or said.’⁵⁵⁴ This second form of dissimulation has its roots in ancient political tacitism and in the classical legal tradition. The Justinian *Digest* recognised the lawfulness of the ‘*comparativa permissio*,’ a dispensation *contra legem* that allowed rulers not to apply the law by pretending to ignore the fact that it was breached. For example, someone could pretend not to hear an insult (*injuria*), ‘abolishing it by dissimulation’ (*dissimulatione aboletur*), thereby avoiding unnecessary conflicts or those difficult to resolve.⁵⁵⁵

Medieval canon law inherited this principle from the *ius commune* and associated it with the Christian virtues of forgiveness and mercy. Relying on *dissimulatio*, church authorities could, on account of the difficulty or undesirability of enforcing the law in certain cases, feigned ignorance of a situation or action that was outside the margins of orthodoxy. They could dissimulate indefinitely or just until the circumstances were more appropriate for intervention. We find this *dissimulatio* in the *Five Compilations* of papal Decretals (*Quinque compilationes antiquae*), which recommended bishops to use this technique of passive pretence to bear with certain illegalities in order to avoid greater evils. It was specially used in cases of invalid marriages, allowing ecclesiastical authorities to pretend to be unaware of the forbidden consanguinity that existed in certain unions. Later *dissimulatio* was included in the *Decretals* of Pope Alexander III and Gregory IX, becoming a principle accepted by most medieval canonists.⁵⁵⁶ In the

⁵⁵⁴ ‘Disimular es ocultar o esconder. (del lat. Occultare).’ ‘Suele usarse alguna vez por dispensar, permitir, perdonar (del lat. Indulgere).’ ‘Disimulación es encubrir y ocultar artificiosamente la intención; (...) también no darse por entendido, afectar ignorancia de lo que se sabe o se ha visto, tolerar industriosamente lo que se hace o dice.’ *Diccionario de la lengua castellana en que se explica el verdadero sentido de las voces...*, Madrid: Imprenta de la Real Academia Española, 1732, vol. III, pp. 308-309. The same duality of meanings appears in all Spanish dictionaries, from the *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española* (Madrid: Luís Sánchez, 1611) by Sebastián de Covarrubias to the latest edition of the *Real Academia*.

⁵⁵⁵ See Justinian, *Digest*, 47, 10, 11. 1, and *Institutiones Justiniani*, 4. 4. 12.

⁵⁵⁶ On this topic see: Brys, Joseph, *De dispensatione in iure canonico praesertim apud decretistas usque ad medium saeculum decimum quartum*, Bruges: Brugis Pintificius, 1925; Lefebvre, Charles, ‘Dissimulation,’ in *Dictionnaire de Droit Canonique*, ed. by Raoul Naz, Paris: Letouzey, 1949, vol. IV,

centuries that followed, the Catholic Church practiced it widely, ‘allowing and dissimulating some mistakes in the common people,’⁵⁵⁷ something that was heavily criticised by Protestant Reformers.⁵⁵⁸

With regard to political thought, medieval theorists generally condemned this way of turning a blind eye, believing that the prince should never, under any circumstances, tolerate the sins and crimes of his subjects. According to Francesc Eiximenis (d. 1409):

All the evil that is found in subjects should be imputed to bad rulers, who want to please them so much in order to preserve their power that they consent and dissimulate all their errors, without thinking about the great sin they commit by allowing the soul’s perdition (...) that they had been entrusted, or thinking in the Final Judgment before the Lord, who would demand all the souls they have left to lose.⁵⁵⁹

However, this state of opinion began to change by the fifteenth century, when some authors recommended that the prince use dissimulation in order to tolerate certain affronts and seem merciful and forgiving to his people. As Diego Valera suggested to John II of Castile in 1441:

Benign [is the ruler] (...) that uses clemency pardons or reduces a punishment, following the footsteps of our true Redeemer, who while on the cross prayed for those who crucified him. And certainly, it is something

cols. 1296-1307; Mitchell, Paul, ‘Dissimulatio,’ in *Iniuria and the Common Law*, ed. by Eric Descheemaeker & Helen Scott, Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2013, pp. 97-118; Oliviero, Giuseppe, *Dissimulatio et tolerantia nell’ordinamento canonico*, Milan: Giufre 1953.

⁵⁵⁷ ‘... permitiendo y disimulando algunos yerros en el pueblo común de los vulgares.’ Ciruelo, Pedro, *Reprobación de supersticiones y hechicerías*, Salamanca: P. Castro, 1538, p. 81; Castro, Antonio de, *Fisonomía de la virtud, y del vicio al natural sincolores, ni artificios*, Valladolid: Ioseph de Rueda, 1676, p. 235.

⁵⁵⁸ According to Calvin, it was not possible to protect the message of Christ ‘*connivendo, tacendo, dissimulando*,’ turning a blind eye on the many superstitions and heretical errors present in the West. Such licentious attitude of the Catholic Church, he claimed, was responsible for the proliferation of every early modern heresy (Jean Calvin, *De Christiani hominis officio in sacerdotiis papalis Ecclesiae vel administrandis vel abiiciendis*, Basel: Thomas I Platter, 1537. I quote the ed. of Basel: Balthasarem Lasium, 1667, pp. 426-428).

⁵⁵⁹ ‘*Todo el mal que se hallaba en los súbditos debe ser imputado a los malos regidores, que tanto los quieren complacer por tal que los sostengan en sus regimientos, que toda desventura consienten y disimulan, no piensan el gran pecado que comenten dejando ir a perdición las ánimas de los súbditos que les son encomendadas, ni piensan en el fuerte juicio de Nuestro Señor, que les demandará ánimas que han dedadas perder.*’ Francesc Eiximenis, *Llibre de les dones*, [1396], ed. by Gracia Lozano López, Madison: Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, 1992, fol. 148r.

typical from great hearts to forget injuries, and it takes great prudence to dissimulate certain things.⁵⁶⁰

The chronicler Diego Enríquez del Castillo held a similar opinion:

Kings should never remember their own injuries, but rather forget them with dissimulation, because otherwise they would be vengeful, and therefore not worthy to reign.⁵⁶¹

In the sixteenth century more authors adhered to this view. According to Antonio de Guevara:

Men are weak and therefore they inevitably commit some weaknesses. Rational princes can and must dissimulate them, forgetting all their errors, except those that go against the gods, which, if possible, should be punished even before they were conceived; because we can not call 'princes' but 'tyrants' those who are inclined to avenge the injuries [made against them] but are lazy to punish those [made against] the gods.⁵⁶²

Thus, the old resource of 'royal wrath' (*ira regia*), so typical of the early Middle Ages, was gradually replaced by the ideas of self-control and dissimulation:

For the prince, dissimulating and knowing to dominate the anger caused by some disservices or annoyances against him (...) is prudence and a virtue, for being so forgiving. Not being carried away by anger is a virtue, as stated the Holy Spirit when it said (...) that the king and the wise should not be choleric.⁵⁶³

⁵⁶⁰ 'Benigno [es aquel rey] que pugnido y estimulado de sus propias ofensas, usando de clemencia perdona o algo de la pena remite, siguiendo los pasos de nuestro verdadero Redentor, el cual siendo en la cruz, rogó por los que lo crucificaban. E sin duda, Señor, propio oficio de gran corazón es menospreciar las injurias, e mucha prudencia es a tiempo disimular las cosas.' Diego de Valera, *Tratado de las epístolas enviadas por Mosén Diego de Valera en diversos tiempos e a diversas personas*, ed. by Mario Peña, Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, 1959, p. 4.

⁵⁶¹ 'Los reyes nunca se avían de acordar de sus propias injurias, más disimuladamente olvidarlas, porque de otra guisa sería vindicativos y por ello no merecedores de reinar.' Enríquez del Castillo, *Crónica de Enrique IV*, [c. 1502], ed. by Aureliano Sánchez Martín, Valladolid: Universidad, 1994, p. 232.

⁵⁶² 'Los hombres, como son flacos, no puede ser menos sino que cometan algunas flaquezas, y en tal caso los príncipes que son cuerdos todas las flaquezas que cometen los hombres pueden y deben con ellos disimular, excepto las que son en deservicio de los dioses, las cuales, si fuese posible, antes que fuesen pensadas habían de ser punidas; porque no se puede llamar príncipe sino tirano el que en vengar sus injurias es solícito y en castigar las de los dioses es perezoso.' Guevara, *Libro llamado Relox de príncipes*, chap. 18, p. 144.

⁵⁶³ 'El disimular el Príncipe, y saber vencer la ira que tuviere de algunos deservicios y disgustos que se le hicieren, no de calidad que sea necesario haya luego demostración, prudencia y aun virtud será, por serlo el perdonar, y si la irascible no esta en nuestra mano, virtud y valor será no pecar en ella, que así lo dio a

As Rosario Villari explained, for early modern authors ‘dissimulation was the equivalent to the rejection of primitivism and spontaneity.’⁵⁶⁴ It was a sign of courtly decorum and elegance, but also of political pragmatism. The intelligent man should not be carried away by anger, but wait patiently for the appropriate time.⁵⁶⁵ Even when the prince was planning to punish a vassal, he should apply dissimulation, so his victim could not expect it and try to avoid his punishment. That was, apparently, the technique used by Isabel of Castile, described by her contemporaries as a ‘mistress of dissimulation and simulation’ (*magistra dissimulationum simulationumque*).⁵⁶⁶ According to Fernando del Pulgar, the queen often ‘concealed and dissimulated her ire (...) and for that reason the lords of the kingdom and the people in general much feared her, and tried to avoid her indignation.’⁵⁶⁷ However, it was from the late sixteenth century when this form of dissimulation was largely theorised and legitimised through the works of Justus Lipsius and many Iberian writers. These men realised that the preservation of the modern state not only demanded that the prince dissimulate his own mistakes and defects, but also the mistakes and defects of his subjects. Juan de Mariana explained it this way:

Docility should always be united to clemency, which is the most excellent of the virtues and what makes great princes like the immortal God, whose main and biggest mercy consist in dissimulating the errors of men; because if his punishments were equivalent to our sins, He would have destroyed mankind a long time ago.⁵⁶⁸

entender el Espíritu Santo cuando dijo que (...) el Rey y el sabio no ha de ser colérico, ni arrebatado. Alvia de Castro, *Verdadera razón de estado*, fol. 54r.

⁵⁶⁴ Villari, *Elogio della dissimulazione*, p. 44.

⁵⁶⁵ That is why Torquato Accetto said that anger was ‘the biggest enemy of dissimulation’ (*il maggior naufragio della dissimulazione*) (Accetto, *Della dissimulazione onesta*, chap.15).

⁵⁶⁶ Alfonso de Palencia, *Cuarta década de Alonso de Palencia*, [c. 1480], ed. by José López de Toro, Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 1970, vol. II, p. 167.

⁵⁶⁷ ‘... encubría la ira, e disimulábala; y por esto que de ella se conocía, así los grandes señores del reino como todos los otros en general la temían mucho, y guardaban de caer en su indignación.’ Hernando del Pulgar, *Crónica de los Reyes Católicos*, [c. 1482], chap. 24. I quote the ed. by Juan de Mata Carriazo, Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1943, vol. I, p. 78. On Isabella’s dissimulation see: Robert B. Tate, ‘Políticas sexuales: de Enrique el Impotente a Isabel, maestra de engaños (*magistra dissimulationum*),’ in *Actas del primer congreso Anglo-Hispano*, ed. by Ralph Penny, Alan Deyermond, & Richard Hitchcock, Madrid: Castalia, 1993, vol. III, pp. 165-177.

⁵⁶⁸ ‘Con la mansedumbre debe ir siempre unida la clemencia, virtud la más excelente entre todas, y la que hace semejantes a Dios inmortal a los grandes príncipes; cuyo principal y más grande elogio consiste en

The same view was held by Francisco de Gurmendi, a Basque Arabist that worked for the Duke of Lerma. In his *Doctrina Phisica y moral de principes* (Madrid, 1615) he recommended that the monarch

should not only control everything, but also be controlled. He should not only be served, but serve. Not only his slips and errors should be dissimulated, but he should also dissimulate the [slips and errors of] others.⁵⁶⁹

The central idea here was therefore that of a passive attitude, based on feigning ignorance or misunderstanding.⁵⁷⁰ According to the treatises of the time, such dissimulation could pursue two goals. The first one reflects the Machiavellian advice of accommodating time and people. The second recalls the Christian notions of tolerance and forgiveness.

I. Dissimulate to punish better

In 1657 Andrés Mendo encouraged the prince to dissimulate ‘the crimes and mistakes’ of his subjects and enemies, waiting for the best ‘opportunity to punish and amend them.’ ‘A hate displayed [prematurely] closes the road to revenge, because the enemy is warned and defends himself.’⁵⁷¹ That is why sometimes the prince must:

Suffer with dissimulation, pretending to ignore many things that prompt revenge and would cause serious problems. He must show a cheerful face before adversities that he cannot avoid; and sometimes, pretend that he does not know what is happening, (...) since that is not deceiving with malice, but

disimular los errores de los hombres, pues si se midiesen los castigos por los pecados, tiempo ha se hubiera acabado el género humano. Mariana, *De Rege et regis institutione*, bk. II, chap. 12

⁵⁶⁹ ‘Que no conviene que el lo sujete y mande todo, sino que sea sujeto y que no solamente el sea servido, sino que también sirva, y que no solo han de ser sus descuidos y errores sufridos, sino que el ha de sufrir a los demás, y que no solo con el han de disimular, sino que disimule el con los otros.’ Gurmendi, *Doctrina Phisica y moral de príncipes*, fol. 60r.

⁵⁷⁰ According to Mártir Rizo, ‘dissimulation is convenient, because kings should not show that they acknowledge everything, since not acknowledging them is part of the remedy’ (Mártir Rizo, *Norte de príncipes*, fol. 119r).

⁵⁷¹ ‘los delitos y yerros,’ ‘... oportunidad para la corrección y enmienda,’ because ‘un odio descubierto cierra el camino a la venganza, porque se guarda y defiende el enemigo.’ Mendo, *Príncipe perfecto y ministros ajustados*, chap. 54.

dissimulating with industry.⁵⁷²

This form of dissimulation connected directly with that ‘accommodation’ to time and circumstances recommended by Machiavelli. On the one hand, the prince had to use it to deal with the conspiracies and betrayals of court.⁵⁷³ This view was defended by Fernando Alvia de Castro (d. c. 1640), an avowed tacitist that served for many years in Portugal as Inspector General of the Spanish Armada. According to Alvia de Castro, ‘if the prince wants to punish some minister or vassal, but the timing is not appropriate, he can dissimulate it and postpone it to another time; that would be prudence.’⁵⁷⁴ Alvia finds support for his view in the Holy Scriptures, Cicero, Tacitus, and several episodes of Spanish history: ‘King Don Pelayo dissimulated well (...) the feeling he had with Menuça, governor of Gijón’; ‘King Alphonse VI of Castile dissimulated with great sagacity his anger against the Cid’ to punish him later; and King ‘Alphonse VIII also dissimulated before King Sancho of Navarre when he did not respect the promise he made after being defeated by the Moors in Alarcos.’⁵⁷⁵

On the other hand, this technique could also be applied to deal with ‘the people (...) dissimulating [their faults] until the strengths were significant enough to ensure the right execution of the punishment.’⁵⁷⁶ According to Pedro de Rivadeneira:

it is a rule of prudence in a prince not to try to pull up all at once those things that are well established [among subjects], even if they are bad. Because nature does not suffer sudden and extreme changes (...) and the

⁵⁷² ‘Sufra con disimulación, haciéndose desentendido de muchas cosas cuya pronta venganza sería causa de graves detrimentos. Muestre semblante alegre en las adversidades que no puede evitar; y, a veces, conviene mostrar que ignora los sucesos (...) que no es engañar con incidencia, sino disimular con industria.’ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷³ *Vid.* Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un príncipe político cristiano*, empresa 44; Quevedo, *Vida de Marco Bruto*, p. 632; Enríquez de Villegas, *Advertencias eruditas para Príncipes y Ministros*, p. 87.

⁵⁷⁴ ‘Si el Príncipe tuviere justo sentimiento de algún ministro o vasallo, porque merezca castigo; pero por justas causas no convenga dársele luego, bien puede disimularlo y alargarlo a otro tiempo: prudencia será ésta.’ Alvia de Castro, *Verdadera razón de estado*, fol. 52v.

⁵⁷⁵ ‘El Rey don Pelayo bien disimuló (...) el sentimiento que tuvo con Menuça, gobernador de Gijón (...) El Rey don Alfonso sexto de Castilla con mucha sagacidad disimuló el enojo que tuvo del Cid (...) El Rey don Alfonso el octavo también disimuló el que tuvo del Rey don Sancho de Navarra, por no le haber hecho ningún cumplimento, cual debiera, cuando fue vencido de los Moros junto a Alarcos.’ *Ibid.*, fol. 53r-v.

⁵⁷⁶ ‘El pueblo (...) disimulando hasta que se prevengan fuerzas bastante grandes con que se asegure el castigo.’ Palafox y Mendoza, *Historia real sagrada, luz de principes y súbditos*, bk. II, chap. 4, no. 5

hairs of the horse fall one by one, being impossible to pull them out at the same time.⁵⁷⁷

Thus, concludes Rivadeneira, the prince should

consider the circumstances (...) and dissimulate some things, however serious and deserving of punishment they are, and wait until the right time comes; because otherwise he would cause great noise and scandal.⁵⁷⁸

‘The rioting crowds,’ explained Juan de Mariana, are like ‘a torrent that grows fast and drags everything ahead of it.’ Its strength is such that ‘not even the prince would be forgiven.’ Thus, the monarch should calm it down first ‘with some art, dissimulating some things, and giving in to their demands.’ Once ‘the tumult is appeased, nothing prevents him from punishing those who were the instigators and main leaders [of the rebellion].’⁵⁷⁹ Iberian authors recommended their kings use this type of dissimulation to deal with riots such as the Rebellion of the Alpujarras (1568)⁵⁸⁰ or the Alterations of Aragon (1591).⁵⁸¹ Similarly, the Count-Duke of Olivares advised the Philip IV (1624):

When the people run riot it is convenient to apply immediately the means of rigor and punishment. But if this does not work, there is no other way than

⁵⁷⁷ ‘Es regla de prudencia en un príncipe no querer arrancar de golpe las cosas que están muy recibidas y asentadas, aunque sean malas; porque la naturaleza no sufre repentinas y extremadas mudanzas, sino irse, poco a poco, pelando pelo a pelo del caballo, que no se puede toda junta arrancar.’ Rivadeneira, *Tratado de la religión y virtudes que debe tener el príncipe Cristiano*, bk. I, chap. 32.

⁵⁷⁸ ‘Mirar la coyuntura y (...) disimular algunas cosas, por graves que sean y merecedoras de castigo, y guardarle para su tiempo; porque si se quisiere dar fuera de él, no se podría dar sin gran ruido y escándalo.’ *Ibid.*, chap. 31.

⁵⁷⁹ ‘Las multitudes alborotadas’ are like ‘un torrente que en breve tiempo se hinca y todo lo que encuentra por delante lo arrastra.’ Thus, the monarch should calm it down first ‘con cierto arte, disimulando alguna cosa, y cediendo otras veces a los ruegos.’ Once ‘se haya apaciguado el tumulto, nada le impide castigar a los que hubiesen sido sus instigadores y principales cabezas.’ Mariana, *De rege et regis institutione*, bk. III, chap. 15.

⁵⁸⁰ Arias Montano said that once the revolt of the Alpujarras had been quelled, ‘it was necessary to dissimulate with the guilty and punish them later, when the occasion was propitious’ (*Apud*. Sánchez Lora, José Luís, *Arias Montano y el pensamiento político en la corte de Felipe II*, Huelva: Universidad, 2008, p. 80).

⁵⁸¹ Baltasar Álamos de Barrientos recommended Philip III to punish the leaders of the rebels of Aragon ‘at least with the death penalty and confiscation of property.’ ‘However, is not convenient [to punish everyone else] according to the good reason of state, whereby it is allowed to forgive criminals, or at least dissimulate with them until they are punished in other occasions, without making the prince being hatted or seem too rigorous, like David did with Joab’ (Baltasar Álamos de Barrientos, *Discurso político al rey Felipe III al comienzo de su reinado*, ed. by Modesto Santos, Barcelona: Anthropos, 1990, p. 23).

to lengthen the reins and let the people act, dissimulating them. Because their confusion and lack of leadership reduce them to a state in which it is very easy and safe to give them the punishment and chastisement that they deserve.⁵⁸²

According to Lancina, this way of turning a blind eye when it came to administering justice was lawful and appropriate in all circumstances, although it often implied ‘dissimulating and rewarding those who commit crimes; and executing severe penalties for tenuous faults.’⁵⁸³

In addition to preventing further altercations, this attitude allowed the prince to control public opinion and avoid unnecessarily harming the image of the monarch and his ministers. As Antonio de Castro explained, ‘there are remedies that, despite being beneficial, if they are not dissimulated and kept in secret, they offend (...) because they damage the image of an honest man.’⁵⁸⁴ For this reason, theorists advised the prince to dissimulate ‘when he punishes [someone], giving to punishments the appearance of favours,’ in a way in which the punishment is administrated without staining the reputation.⁵⁸⁵

II. Dissimulate to forgive and forget certain faults

But for early modern theorists, dissimulation was not only a fire to cook revenge; it was also a way of forgiveness, a certain form of tolerance made of stoic resignation, Christian

⁵⁸² ‘Cuando llega a desenfrenarse el pueblo conviene mucho al principio poner severamente los medios de rigor y castigo, pero sí no cede a esto no hay otro camino que alargar la rienda y dejarlos obrar disimulando, que su confusión y falta de cabezas y de orden los reduce luego a estado en que con gran facilidad y sin riesgo ninguno se puede hacer el castigo y escarmiento que conviene.’ *Gran Memorial. Copia de papeles que ha dado a Su Majestad el Conde Duque, gran canceller, sobre diferentes materias de gobierno de España*, 25 December 1624, ed. by. John H. Elliott & José Francisco de la Peña, *Memoriales y cartas del Conde Duque de Olivares*, Madrid: Alfaguara, 1978.

⁵⁸³ ‘Disimular y premiar a quien delinque; y por tenues excesos ejecutar graves penas.’ Lancina, *Comentarios Políticos*, para. 61, no. 3, p. 92.

⁵⁸⁴ ‘Remedios hay que, con ser beneficios, sino se disimulan, si con la disimulación no se cela el secreto, más ofenden (...) echan en la calle la mengua de un hombre honrado.’ Antonio de Castro, *Fisonomía de la virtud, y del vicio al natural sin colores, ni artificios*, Valladolid: Ioseph de Rueda, 1676, part. II, p. 246.

⁵⁸⁵ ‘Cuando se castiga, dando a los castigos fisonomía y parecer de favores,’ in a way in which ‘no solamente se borre al castigo la nota de afrenta, sino también se le sobrescriba con título de honra. No es poco primor trazar la pena, de forma que no se eche borrón en la fama.’ *Ibid.*, p. 251.

kindness and political realism.⁵⁸⁶ The prince, wrote Jerónimo Román y Zamora, cannot expect to ‘eliminate all the vices and defects of the Republic.’⁵⁸⁷ Such a thing ‘would not be possible.’ First, because he lacks certain skills that only God has, such as the power to ‘know and judge the thoughts of men.’⁵⁸⁸ Second, because, as Grotius said, sin ‘is innate in human beings.’⁵⁸⁹ No application of the law, however draconian it may be, could change this.⁵⁹⁰ In fact, if he ‘tried to punish all evils and sins to avoid, he would end up causing other bigger ones.’⁵⁹¹ What should the prince do then against those harmful or reprehensible behaviours? Dissimulate. According to Jerónimo de Ceballos (d. 1641), who was an important jurist and councillor of the city of Toledo, sometimes ‘discrete dissimulation is more beneficial than rigorous justice.’⁵⁹² Similarly, Juan de Campo y Gallardo, a clergyman that spent most of his life in the small Riojan monastery of Santa María del Burgo, recommended the prince to rule

his subjects with the tranquillity of peace, rather than the harshness of rigor, dissimulating them many things, being less important to repair them than what could come of punishing them. Therefore the wise Emperor Frederick said that he who does not know to dissimulate, does not know to rule.⁵⁹³

⁵⁸⁶ In fact, both terms appear often together. For example: ‘Herewith I declare that tolerance and dissimulation, which I have showed...’ (*Testamento de Carlos V*, ed. by Manuel Hernández Álvarez, Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1982, p. 13). There is, however, an important difference between the two. In canon law, *dissimulatio* was a passive attitude that consented for a limited period of time a conduct that was considered unlawful, *ad vitanda peiora*, always without accepting its legitimacy. *Tolerance*, on the contrary, was more related to other canonical category: dispensation. Namely, a positive intervention of the ecclesiastical authority that, despite considering negative certain conduct, allowed its and recognised its lawfulness (Vid. P. G. Caron, ‘Tolleranza e dissimulazione (diritto canonico),’ *Enciclopedia del diritto* 44, Milan: Giuffrè, 1992, pp. 714-720).

⁵⁸⁷ ‘... evitar todos los vicios y defectos de la República.’ Jerónimo Román y Zamora, *Repúblicas del mundo divididas en tres partes*, Salamanca: Juan Fernández, 1595, III, f. 156r.

⁵⁸⁸ ‘... conocer y juzgar de los pensamientos de los hombres.’ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸⁹ Grotius, *Jure belli ac pacis libri tres*, bk. II, chap. 20, sect. 19.

⁵⁹⁰ According to Seneca: ‘If everyone who has a crooked and vicious disposition were to be punished, no one would escape punishment’ (Seneca, *Of Anger*, bk. II, sect. 31).

⁵⁹¹ ‘... se quisiese prohibir todos los males y pecados, por evitar uno, se seguirán otros mayores.’ Román y Zamora, *Repúblicas del mundo*, f. 156r.

⁵⁹² Ceballos, *Arte real para el buen gobierno*, fols. 94v-95r.

⁵⁹³ ‘A los súbditos antes con la tranquilidad de la paz, que con la aspereza del rigor, disimulándoles muchas cosas que importa menos el reparar en ellas, que puede resultar de utilidad en castigarlas. Por lo cual dijo el Sabio, repetía mucho el Emperador Federico, que quien no sabe disimular, no sabe reinar.’ Campo y Gallardo, *Monarchia perfecta*, bk. I, chap. 9, pp. 10-11.

Most Iberian writers agreed. To ensure the stability of the Republic sometimes it is convenient 'to dissimulate the minor and almost daily faults,'⁵⁹⁴ 'the sins (...) and the affronts of the enemy,'⁵⁹⁵ the 'murmurs and small errors committed against the prince'⁵⁹⁶ and even 'the betrayals made against him.'⁵⁹⁷ Sometimes it is advisable to 'ignore them because, as Tacitus wrote, if they are left behind they are quickly forgotten, while if they are considered they grow and remain.'⁵⁹⁸ Such dissimulation, authors claimed, was not cowardice or an irresponsible way of looking away, but a kindness associated with some of the greatest virtues of the Christian prince, such as prudence, mercy, and clemency.

This form of dissimulation could also be used to deal with the differences in habits and customs that afflicted the Empire. Courtly treatises encouraged the courtesan and diplomats to 'accommodate' their behaviour to the 'common uses' (*usanza comune*) of the places they were in.⁵⁹⁹ Similarly, political writers recommended the prince to dissimulate to adapt to the diversity of cultures, customs, and interests of his subjects. According to Juan de Mariana:

Each province has its own way of seeing things and the prince must accommodate to all of them, because to destroy them is not possible, since that could easily alienate the minds of many and disturb the peace of the kingdom.⁶⁰⁰

Similarly, Francisco Gurmendi considered that the prince:

Should not alter or innovate the uses and ancient customs of his provinces and lands (...), but to adapt to them, unless they were against God or the king. Because preserving customs accepted by the elderly and estimated by

⁵⁹⁴ Grotius, *Jure belli ac pacis libri tres*, bk. II, chap. 20, sect. 19.

⁵⁹⁵ '... los pecados (...) y los agravios del enemigo.' Lancina, *Comentarios Políticos*, para. 203, no. 2, p. 304

⁵⁹⁶ '... las murmuraciones o yerros, pequeños, cometidos contra el Príncipe.' Alvia de Castro, *Verdadera razón de estado*, fol. 56v

⁵⁹⁷ '... las traiciones hechas contra su misma persona.' Monzón, *Libro primero del Espejo del Príncipe Christiano*, fol. 192r.

⁵⁹⁸ '... no hacer caso de ellos, porque estos, como escribe Tácito, dejados se entiende fácilmente se olvidan y acaban, y si se apuran y estiman, mucho crecen y duran.' Alvia de Castro, *Verdadera razón de estado*, fol. 56v

⁵⁹⁹ Giovanni della Casa, *Galateo overo de' costumi*, Venice: Niccolò Bevilacqua, 1558, sect. 66

⁶⁰⁰ 'Cada provincia tiene su manera de ver las cosas y ha de acomodarse el príncipe a las opiniones de unas y de otras, ya que destruirlas no es posible, que de otro modo podría muy bien enajenarse el ánimo de muchos y turbar sin querer la paz del reino.' Mariana, *De Rege et regis institutione*, bk. II, chap. 14

the young produce peace and love; while trying to change it usually causes hatred (...) And this easily avoid dissimulating (...) As certain Arabic poets said: 'If you go to a land where everyone was one-eyed and you have two eyes, close one and you will live in peace.'⁶⁰¹

Some theorists allowed this hypocritical behaviour even when dealing with cases of heterodoxy and heresy. According to Pedro de Rivadeneira, in such a context the prince

Must carefully consider how his kingdom is, and whether the heretics are many or few in it; because when the whole population or the majority of it are heretics, and it is not possible to pull up the dandelion without damaging the wheat, that is, without a serious danger of revolutions and wars. Christian prudence teaches to dissimulate for not doing more harm than good. And this would be according to the doctrine of St. Augustine, who says: *Non propter malos boni deserendi, sed propter bonos mali tolerandi sunt*; meaning, that the good should not be abandoned for the evil, but for the good we should tolerate the bad.⁶⁰²

Similarly, Andrés Mendo recommended 'applying soft measures [with the heretics] before resorting to rigorous punishments,' although this meant turning a blind eye to certain faults. The perfect prince should 'tune' (*templar*) the heretic as if he was an out of tune string, bringing it 'to harmony with the others, dissimulating their faults (...); because is better to tune than to punish.'⁶⁰³ In those cases in which forced baptism and preaching had not made significant progress, patient dissimulation should be used. This

⁶⁰¹ 'No quiera alterar ni innovar los usos y costumbres antiguos de las provincias y tierras que habitare y poseyere, sino que este por ellas y se ajuste a ellas, si ya no fuesen en ofensa de Dios, o de su Rey. Porque el conservar la costumbre admitida por los mayores y estimada por los menores engendra paz y produce amor; y el querer innovarla suele causar aborrecimiento (...) Y esto fácilmente se escusa y evita con disimular y pasar con las costumbres de las Provincias no siendo nocivas o dañosas (...)'. Cierta poeta árabe lo sintetizó así: "Si fueres a tierra cuyos habitantes fueren tuertos, y tu tuvieses dos ojos claros, cierra el uno y vivirás en paz." Gurmendi, *Doctrina Phisica y moral de príncipes*, fols. 145r-145v.

⁶⁰² 'Debe atentamente considerar cómo está su reino, y si son muchos o pocos los herejes que hay en él; porque cuando todo el reino o la mayor parte es de herejes, y no se puede arrancar la cizaña sin arrancar el trigo, o sin grave peligro de revoluciones y guerras, la prudencia Cristiana enseña a disimular por no hacer más daño que provecho, según la doctrina de San Agustín, el cual dice: *Non propter malos boni deserendi, sed propter bonos mali tolerandi sunt*; que no se han de desamparar los Buenos por los malos, sino por los buenos tolerarse los malos.' Rivadeneira, *Tratado del Príncipe Cristiano*, p. 499.

⁶⁰³ '... aplicar suaves medios antes de llegar a castigos rigurosos.' '... a concordia con las otras, usando de disimulación, de avisos, de reprehensiones, si no ay riesgo en la detención de la pena; porque es bien templar, antes de castigar.' Andrés Mendo, *Príncipe perfecto y ministros ajustados*, chap. 30.

policy was implemented by the Spanish kings on many occasions;⁶⁰⁴ for example, with the *Moriscos* after the forced conversions of 1502 - 1525. Sources describe rulers who ‘dissimulated with them for years (...) waiting to see some improvement’ in their heretical behaviour.⁶⁰⁵ Due to the fear of the uprisings they could cause, ‘they are allowed and dissimulated against the provision of some laws that have decreed, in particular [against those related with] the language and some other things.’⁶⁰⁶ It is undeniable that this sort of religious “tolerance” corresponded mainly to political pragmatism.⁶⁰⁷ But it is not unreasonable to think that some theorists seized the opportunity provided by the notion of dissimulation to introduce certain doses of tolerance and permissiveness in the social and religious policies of the state, perhaps to mitigate the rigid evangelical intransigence established by the Counter-Reformation.

⁶⁰⁴ Vid. Prosperi, Adriano, ‘El misionero,’ in *El hombre barroco*, ed. by Rosario Villari, Madrid: Alianza, 1992, pp. 179-218; Rodríguez de la Flor, Fernando, ‘Retórica y conquista: la nueva lógica de la dominación humanista,’ in *Barroco: representación e ideología en el mundo hispánico*, Madrid: Cátedra, 2002, pp. 301-333.

⁶⁰⁵ ‘Se disimuló con ellos durante años (...) esperando ver alguna enmienda.’ Bermúdez de Pedraza, Francisco, *Historia eclesiástica de la ciudad de Granada*, Granada: Andrés de Santiago, 1638, f. 238v; Mármol Carvajal, Luís, *Historia del rebelión y castigo de los moriscos del Reyno de Granada*, Málaga: Juan Rene 1600. I quote the 1797 edition, vol. I, p. 157; Carrillo de Toledo, Luís, *Bando de expulsión de los moriscos*, Valencia: n. pub., 1609, f. 1.

⁶⁰⁶ ‘Se les permite y disimula contra la disposición de algunas leyes que han proveído en el particular de la lengua y en algunas otras cosas.’ Pedro de Valencia, *Tratado acerca de los moriscos de España*, [1606], Ms. 7.845 Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid, fol. 11v. There is a modern edition by Rafael González Cañal, *Obras completas de Pedro de Valencia*, León: Universidad, 1999, vol. IV, pp. 67-139. The same statement in Pedro Azar Cardona, *Expulsión Iustificada de los moriscos españoles y suma de las excelencias christianas de nuestro rey don Felipe Tercero deste nombre*, Huesca: Pedro Cabarte, 1612, fol. 99v.

⁶⁰⁷ As such, this attitude, clearly Machiavellian, was severely criticised by some writers of the period. Jaime Bleda denounced the behaviour of those ‘political princes (...) who believe that it is licit and helpful to dissimulate with that bad people [the *moriscos*], and that what matters is protecting the temporal peace of the Republic and their flourishing State’ (*Coronica de los Moros de España...*, Valencia: Felipe Mey, 1618, chap. 37, p. 1027). According to Marcos Guadalajara y Xavier, ‘the dissimulation of the princes in religious matters has caused [serious damages] in the world, and the kingdoms and provinces are lost and ruined because of this mixture and confusion of religions’ (*Memorable expulsión y iustísimo destierro de los moriscos de España...*, Pamplona: Nicolás de Assiayn, 1613, f.19v.)

CHAPTER VI

WAYS TO DECEIVE

The reverse of truth has a hundred
thousand shapes and a limitless field.

MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE

Beyond the ends pursued, the lawfulness of deception depended on the methods employed to carry it out. This was one of the main concerns of early modern theorists, who worked hard to determine what mechanisms and methods were allowed to the prince to deceive. In this chapter I will discuss the main four: dissimulation, fraud, simulation, and perjury.

1. DISSIMULATION

As we said, the most accepted technique was dissimulation (*suppresio veri*), an art that, according to the Portuguese diplomat António da Silva e Sousa, could be done in three ways: ‘remaining quiet, speaking, and acting.’⁶⁰⁸

1. 1. Dissimulating with silence and omissions

Remaining silent was perfectly lawful. Both St. Augustine and St. Thomas had ruled that the omission of truth was not an intrinsically sinful act, especially when practiced defensively or for the common good. Early modern writers inherited and expanded on

⁶⁰⁸ ‘... *calando, falando e fingindo*.’ António da Silva e Sousa, *Instrução Política de Legados*, Hamburgo: n. pub., 1656, chap. 25, no. 1, pp. 688-699.

this idea to convert silence to ‘the most precious and necessary virtue in man’⁶⁰⁹ and ‘the main instrument of rule.’⁶¹⁰ In the courtly world prudence drastically opposed the loquacity. ‘That is why (...) Solomon praised so much his wife’s lips, because they tended to open so seldom, that seemed more one than two.’⁶¹¹ According to the Dominican Andrés Ferrer, if new-borns put their fingers in their mouths it is to remind us that ‘no man has ever made a mistake by remaining silent.’⁶¹² For the prince, the custodian of secret information on which the preservation of the state relied, this statement was particularly important. Silence was the best way he had to protect the *arcana imperii* and the most lawful technique (i.e. the most compatible method with Christian ethics and natural law) to dissimulate.⁶¹³ As Rivadeneira stated: ‘it is not lying to remain silent or keep actions in secret (...), although in doing so some people became deceived.’⁶¹⁴ Provided that he does not use false words, the prince can ‘conceal the truth,’⁶¹⁵ ‘say nothing, hiding, and pretending not to have understood certain things, dissimulating what he knew to the limits of his convenience or the ends expected.’⁶¹⁶ Hiding what is known through silence is a lawful act morally tolerable when it is in the interest of the Republic. Therefore, explained Núñez de Castro, ‘the Trojan Horse gifted by the Greeks did not betray its owners [the Trojans], because it had no tongue to express the secret hidden inside it.’⁶¹⁷

⁶⁰⁹ ‘La virtud más preciosa y necesaria en el hombre.’ Ferrer de Valdecebro, *Gobierno general, moral, y político*, p. 299.

⁶¹⁰ ‘... el principal instrumento de reinar.’ Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un príncipe político cristiano*, empresa 43. On this topic see Pilar Pedraza, ‘El Silencio del Príncipe,’ *Goya* 187-188, 1985, pp. 37-46.

⁶¹¹ ‘Por eso (...) Salomón celebra tanto los labios de su Esposa, porque sabían tan poco abrirse, que mas parecían uno, que dos.’ Garau, *El Olimpo del sabio instruído*, p. 223. (I will resist the temptation to make a postmodern interpretation of this fragment.)

⁶¹² ‘... ningún hombre erró callando.’ *El por qué de todas las cosas*, Madrid: Antonio Delgado, n. d., pp. 108-109.

⁶¹³ According to Baños de Velasco, the best way the prince has to ‘dissimulate’ without ‘ruining his laurel [wreath]’ is ‘to pretend remaining quiet.’ (Baños de Velasco, *El Ayo y Maestro de Príncipes*, p. 506).

⁶¹⁴ ‘No es mentira el callar y guardar en sus consejos y acciones grandísimo secreto (...), aunque del secreto tomen ocasión algunos para engañarse.’ Rivadeneira, *Tratado del Príncipe Cristiano*, p. 525.

⁶¹⁵ ‘... celar la verdad.’ Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un príncipe político cristiano*, empresa 43.

⁶¹⁶ ‘... calar, encubrir e mostrar não haver entendido as cousas, disimulando o que dellas se alcança até aos limites da conveniencia pera o fim que se pretende.’ César de Meneses, *Summa politica*, p. 47.

⁶¹⁷ ‘No hizo traición a sus dueños el caballo, que maquinaron contra Troya los Griegos, porque no tuvo lengua con que manifestar el secreto que escondía en el pecho.’ Núñez de Castro, *Libro historico político*, p. 55.

Most writers of the seventeenth century agreed with this idea.⁶¹⁸ To legitimise it, they combined the teachings of Tacitus with those of St. Augustine and St. Thomas, who 'claimed that in some cases the truth can be hidden prudently under the veil of dissimulation.'⁶¹⁹

1. 2. *Dissimulating with gestures*

Be that as it may, the prince would not be able to deceive anyone if his silence was not accompanied by the appropriate gestures. The face and body are a reflection of his inner thinking, so, in order to be convincing, dissimulation had to be complemented with 'actions (...), gestures, and expressions' that transmitted something in 'dissonance with understanding.'⁶²⁰ Early modern writers knew that deception was not exclusive to verbal communication, 'being also possible to simulate or feign in the actions.'⁶²¹ This nonverbal deception (that 'is more done than said'⁶²²), could be lawful or unlawful, depending on the way it was performed and the objectives sought. According to Francisco de Quevedo:

There are lies in actions as much as in words, for example, if a Christian wore a yellow hat he would lie, pretending to be a Jew. Although we should notice (...) that these mendacious actions are more easily forgiven than mendacious words, because words are specific signals of concepts, created to express them. This not the case for actions, which are more vaguely interpreted. And we must realise that, according to this theory, when there is a just cause to hide the truth and dissimulate, neither hypocrisy nor a lie is committed.⁶²³

⁶¹⁸ See some examples in: Abreu de Melo, *Avizós pera o Paço*, pp. 39-40; Felipe de Albornoz, *Cartilla política y christiana*, fols. 85v-86r; Laynez, *El Daniel Cortesano*, p. 213; Quevedo, *La Caída para levantarse*, p. 220; Márquez, *El gobernador cristiano*, p. 74.

⁶¹⁹ '... dicen que en ciertos casos puede ocultarse la verdad prudentemente bajo el velo de alguna disimulación.' Garau, *El Olimpo del sabio instruido*, p. 156.

⁶²⁰ '... acciones (...), ademanos y semblantes,' 'en disonancia del Entendimiento.' Ramírez de Prado, *Consejo y Consejeros de Príncipes*, pp. 51-52.

⁶²¹ '... se puede simular o fingir en las obras.' *Ibid.*

⁶²² '...que más se hace que se dice.' Barbosa Homem, *Discursos sobre la verdadera y jurídica razón de Estado*, fol. 267r.

⁶²³ 'Hay mentira en las obras como en las palabras, como si un cristiano trajese un sombrero amarillo mentiría que era judío. Mas débese advertir con Cayetano que más fácilmente se excusan de mentirosas las obras que las palabras; y es la razón que las palabras son propia y expresamente las señales del concepto y para exprimirle se instituyeron; no así las acciones, que se interpretan más latamente. Y débese advertir, según esta doctrina, que cuando en el hecho hay justa causa de ocultar la verdad y

The kind of dissimulation was lawful as long as it was used for the common good or defensive purposes ('in time of danger and advised by God'⁶²⁴), and only gestures 'of vague significance (...) that would not mean more than what the people present wanted to infer from their appearance or sound.'⁶²⁵ Treatises explained to the prince how to dissimulate, by 'soothing and composing his face,'⁶²⁶ 'showing a double face,' and controlling the movement of his hands or the tone of his look. Furthermore, they also emphasised the importance of using dresses, wigs, and costumes to perform dissimulation, an especially interesting license if we consider how important clothing was at the time. In the Early Modern Age, as in the Middle Ages, there was a rigid association between the self and the outfit. As Núñez de Castro said: 'usually the dress is a dumb definition of its owner.'⁶²⁷ Clothes served as one of the most important identity markers and signs of social status. They were both 'a proclamation of belonging' and a 'manifestation of the difference,' expressing the gender, class, origin, and religious beliefs of an individual.⁶²⁸ Hence, States tried hard to control dress through strict laws that established the kind of clothes, colours, fabrics, and accessories that subjects could wear (for example, silk was reserved for the nobility).⁶²⁹

However, Iberian theorists considered that the prince was exempted from these rules and allowed him to change his clothes in order to conceal his identity ('to dissimulate his own person'⁶³⁰), escape from danger, or 'explore and unveil with dissimulation the

disimular, no se incurre en hipocresía ni mentira; empero en este suceso y disimulación.' Quevedo, *La Caída para levantarse*, p. 220,

⁶²⁴ '... en ocasión de peligro y aconsejadas por Dios.' Figueroa, *Aviso de Príncipes*, p. 313.

⁶²⁵ '... de una vaga significación (...) sin que signifiquen más que aquellos que de su aspecto o de su sonido quisieren colegir los presentes u oyentes.' Barbosa Homem, *Discursos sobre la verdadera y jurídica razón de Estado*, fol. 267r.

⁶²⁶ '... sosegar y componer el rostro.' Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un príncipe político cristiano*, Empresa 54.

⁶²⁷ 'Suele ser el vestido muda definición de su dueño.' Núñez de Castro, *Libro historico político*, bk. III, p. 418.

⁶²⁸ '... proclamation d'appartenance' and 'affichage de la différence.' Nicole Pellegrin, 'Le vêtement comme fait social total,' in *Histoire sociale, histoire globale? Actes du colloque des 27-28 Janvier 1989*, ed. by Christophe Charle, Paris: EHESS, 1993, pp. 81-94. The quotations in pp. 90 and 92.

⁶²⁹ *Vid.*: González Arce, José Damián, *Apariencia y poder: legislación suntuaria castellana en los siglos XIII-XV*, Jaén: Universidad, 1998; Laurent, Jacques, *Le nu vêtu et dévêtu*, Paris: Gallimard, 1979.

⁶³⁰ 'disimularse por su persona misma.' Laynez, *El privado cristiano*, p. 250.

opinion and inclination of his [subjects and] ministers.’⁶³¹ According to them, this ‘was a very wise trick (...) used by many princes and praised by historians.’⁶³² Among other precedents, they evoked the case of the Emperor Nero, who used to change ‘his Imperial clothes for a servile and rough dress’ and ‘roamed the streets of Rome at night,’ mixing with the people and listening to their views, because ‘he needed to know what was the image of his government and how his vassals saw him.’⁶³³ Antonio Pérez, the Secretary of Philip II, attributed the same attitude to the Roman General Julius Caesar Germanicus (Nero's maternal grandfather), who used to dress up as a soldier to know the mood of his army before battle.⁶³⁴ Authors also mentioned the case of Frederick of Habsburg (d. 1330):

The Duke of Austria often changed his clothes and walked among the farmers, and sometimes pretended to be a worker, and dug and acted as everyone else, and talked with his peers, thus knowing in detail what was said about him, his ministers and his servants.⁶³⁵

According to the royal chronicler of Phillip IV, Juan Baños de Velasco (d. 1682), this duplicity was no sin but a great proof of self-sacrifice and dedication to the people:

If the prince abandons his sacred retirement to know this, without concern about the inclemency of the night, which sometimes freezes and sometimes rains, [it means that he is] a great king to his subjects! Praise be to the monarchy that has him, because getting rid of the flattering sirens he wants to look at things without embellishment.⁶³⁶

Some even extended this license to the religious sphere, allowing the prince to use the

⁶³¹ ‘... explorar, y afondar con disimulación el dictamen e inclinación de sus ministros.’ *Ibid.*

⁶³² ‘... de grande acierto (...) usada entre muchos Príncipes, y celebrada de sus Historiadores.’ *Ibid.*

⁶³³ ‘...los Imperiales adornos por lo grosero del vestido servil’ and ‘rondaba de noche las calles de Roma.’ He ‘necesitaba saber que forma tena su gobierno; como le tratavan los vasallos.’ Baños de Velasco, *El Ayo y Maestro de Príncipes*, pp. 465 y 466.

⁶³⁴ Antonio Pérez, *Norte de príncipes*, pp. 51-53.

⁶³⁵ ‘Duque de Austria, que muchas veces mudaba el vestido, se andaba entre los labradores del campo, y algunas fingiéndose jornalero en peonada, cavaba, como cada cual, y metiendo plática entre los compañeros, sabía muy por menor lo que de sí, de su Ministro y criados se decía.’ Laynez, *El privado cristiano*, pp. 256-257.

⁶³⁶ ‘Si el Príncipe deja el Sagrado de su retiro para saber esto, sin excusarse de la inclemencia de la noche, que hiela y otra que llueve, gran Rey para los súbditos! Feliz Monarquía que la posee, que librándose de las aduladoras Sirenas, quiere mirar las cosas sin el adorno.’ Baños de Velasco, *El Ayo y Maestro de Príncipes*, p. 466.

Muslim dress if the situation required it. This was the view of Cristóbal Benavente y Benavides (d. 1649), an important counsellor of Philip IV that served as a diplomat in Venice and France. He wrote in this regard:

I see clergymen using secular clothes to cross enemy countries safely to go to spread the Gospel to territories of infidels or heretics, or with other just cause, and all doctors approve it. There is some dispute on whether Catholics can use the distinctive outfits of the Turks or Moors, such as the turban with a white sash, which while not being elements of their religion, are representative of it, and suggest its observance (...) Suárez and Juan Egidio among many others, consider that they could: because there is great difference between the profession of faith in words, whose role it is to signify the concepts of understanding, and at all times the Christian is obliged to profess faith; and [the profession with] clothes, which although may be unique to a nation, or sect, always remains indifferent. (...) And this is related to the concealment of truth: who hides his faith with a dress does not lie, because if bringing such dresses was sinful, the Moors and Jews who wear them would also sin, and therefore, the Pope and the Christian princes would not be able to force them to use turbans, and red hats, and yellow ones in their Kingdoms [as they actually do].⁶³⁷

1. 3. *Dissimulating with words*

Although dissimulation by silence and gestures was the most convenient approach, the prince cannot always remain quiet. On the contrary, deception often required words to achieve its goal.⁶³⁸ For most theorists, the best option was ‘to deceive with the truth,’⁶³⁹

⁶³⁷ ‘Veo vestirse los Clérigos y religiosos del hábito secular, para pasar por Países enemigos con seguridad de la vida y para ir a propagar el Evangelio a países de Infieles o Herejes, o con con otra justa causa, todos los Doctores lo aprueban. En lo que hay alguna disputa es, en si puede el Católico usar de las vestiduras peculiares de los turcos, o moros, como es el turbante con su faja blanca, que aunque no son significativas de su Religión, pero es traje peculiar de ella, e inducen alguna probanza de profesarla (...) Suárez y Juan Egidio, que citan otros muchos, tienen que sí: porque hay gran diferencia entre la profesión de la Fe con palabras, cuyo oficio es significar los conceptos del entendimiento, y en todo tiempo está obligado el Cristiano a profesar con ellas la Fe; y las vestiduras no, que aunque sean peculiares de una nación, o secta, siempre se quedan indiferentes: (...) y entra también aquí la ocultación de parte de la verdad, quien con el traje oculta parte de la Fe, no miente en ella, por que si en traer estas vestiduras, se pecara, hubiéramos de confesar, que pecaban los moros y judíos trayéndolas: y el Papa, y los Príncipes Cristianos no los pudieran obligar a andar en su traje, trayendo turbantes, y sombreros rojos, o amarillos en sus Reinos.’ Benavente y Benavides, *Advertencias para Reyes...*, pp. 484-486.

⁶³⁸ Some moralists (for example, Fray Manuel Guerra y Ribera, ‘Oración Miercoles de las Encenias,’ in *Oraciones varias consagradas a Maria Señora Nuestra, Madre de Dios predicadas a la católica magestad de Carlos Segundo Rey de las Españas*, Barcelona: Ioseh Texidò; 1699, p. 87) argued that silence was the only lawful way to deceive. Most, however, also allowed other forms of deception.

masking it with ambiguities and mental reservations. According to Saavedra Fajardo, the prince 'ought to avoid that dissimulation that lies with things themselves,' because lies are unacceptable 'vices' that 'leave the prince's reputation stained' for life.⁶⁴⁰

Dissimulation can only be acceptable (...) when it makes use of cunning to hide things, according to the different circumstances of time, place and persons, always preserving the consonance between the heart and tongue, and the mind and words.⁶⁴¹

To achieve this

one may well use indifferent and equivocating words, putting one thing in place of another with a different meaning, not in order to deceive, but rather to secure oneself or prevent deception, or for other legitimate ends.⁶⁴²

Thus, seventeenth century writers adopted the path opened by Azpilcueta and Rivadeneira a few decades before and incorporated the casuist doctrines of verbal equivocation and mental reservation to their political theories. 'Good dissimulation,' explained Cristóbal de Benavente in 1643, 'is made in two possible ways: whether [using] amphibologies and mental restrictions (...), that is, with words; or using external actions, with whose true meanings we can imply something else that suits us.'⁶⁴³

These techniques, which Suárez called 'a kind of dissimulation,'⁶⁴⁴ became the key element of the legitimation of political deception. The majority of early modern theorists evoked this as a meeting point among tacitists, casuists, and Machiavellians.⁶⁴⁵

⁶³⁹ 'Engañar con la verdad.' Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un príncipe político cristiano*, Empresa 53.

⁶⁴⁰ '... debe huir de aquella disimulación que con fines engañosos miente con las cosas mismas;' 'vicios que dejan manchado el crédito del Príncipe.' *Ibid.*

⁶⁴¹ 'La disimulación solamente puede ser lícita (...) cuando se vale de la astucia para ocultar las cosas, según las circunstancias del tiempo, del lugar y de las personas, conservando una consonancia entre el corazón y la lengua y el entendimiento y las palabras.' *Ibid.*

⁶⁴² '... bien se puede usar de palabras indiferentes o equívocas y poner una cosa en lugar de otra con diversa significación, no para engañar, sino para cautelarse o prevenir el engaño o para otros fines lícitos.' *Ibid.*

⁶⁴³ 'Disimular (...) se hace de una de dos maneras, o con razones amphibologicas, o con mentales restricciones (...) ora sea con palabras, ora con acciones externas, que justamente con su verdadero significado se pueda dar a entender otra cosa, que nos convenga.' Benavente y Benavides, *Advertencias para Reyes*, p. 481.

⁶⁴⁴ 'Un tipo de disimulación.' Suárez, *Tractatus Quintus de Juramento et Adjuratione*, p. 700.

⁶⁴⁵ See some examples in: Barbosa Homem, *Discursos sobre la verdadera y jurídica razón de Estado*, fols.

The reasoning they used is exactly the same as that employed by casuist theologians and heterodox religious minorities to justify duplicity: human communication had two levels. The first existed between God and the individual, and another between the individual and other men. In the words of the Jesuit writer Juan Eusebio Nieremberg (d. 1658): ‘One thing is to conform what is said to the mind and one’s self-conception; the other is [to conform it] with someone else’s.’⁶⁴⁶ The first is mandatory. The second, ‘not always.’ ‘Sometimes it would be lawful, when dealing with injustice,’ to use ‘double-sided words,’ faithful to what the mind thinks. Such an approach ‘would not be lying, if said with good sense, although others understand them otherwise.’⁶⁴⁷

As we see, the lawfulness of deception was not achieved as Machiavelli suggested, namely, by imposing a secular politics in which religion was removed from the equation. But rather it was implemented by using dissimulation as part of the Christian model of statecraft. For early modern theorists, dissimulation was not lying, but a true ambiguity or secret sufficient to mislead the listener without the speaker sinning. Other theorists went further and directly legitimised lying in some of its worse forms: simulation, fraud, and even perjury.

2. FRAUD

According to the preacher of King Philip III, Juan Márquez (d. 1621):

There are many authors in this age who, considering with good judgement the great difficulties faced by truthful men, claim that it would be impossible for princes to achieve the just ends they sought without using simulations,

266r-267r; Benavente y Benavides, *Advertencias para Reyes*, pp. 499-508; Laynez, *El Daniel Cortesano*, p. 211; Rebolledo, *Selva militar y política*, p. 336; Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un príncipe político cristiano*, empresa 43.

⁶⁴⁶ ‘Una cosa es conformar lo que se dice con su pensamiento, y concepto propio: otra es con el ageno.’ Nieremberg, *Obras y días: manual de señores y príncipes*, fol. 191r.

⁶⁴⁷ ‘Algunas veces será lícito, cuando se ha de seguir injusticia’ to use ‘palabras de dos haces.’ This ‘no será mentira, diciéndolas con buen sentido, aunque los otros las entiendan en contrario.’ *Ibid.*

fictions, and duplicities. And therefore, they recommend a mix of prudence, slightly dashed (as they say) with simulation, cunning, and deception.⁶⁴⁸

Indeed, many Iberian theorists echoed the ‘mixed prudence’ formulated by Lipsius and expanded the prince’s right to deceive far beyond the limits of Christian dissimulation. It is difficult to categorise them neatly. They were often secular intellectuals with university education: diplomats, jurists, secretaries, and writers who worked close to power and knew its needs and artifices first-hand. As traditionalists, these authors held that politics should normally be subjected to the rules of religion. However, they thought that sometimes these rules could be broken for the benefit of utility. Thus, while the majority only allowed what Lipsius called ‘light frauds’ (i. e. dissimulation), they also allowed ‘moderate frauds,’ (*media fraus*) which included deception (*deceptionem*) and simulation.⁶⁴⁹

Such is the case, for example, of Bernardino de Rebolledo, a soldier, poet, and politician who served as Spanish ambassador to the Scandinavian countries and the Holy See. In his *Selva militar y política* (1654), a long didactic poem in which he expanded on his military theory and experience as diplomat, Rebolledo alleged that the use of ‘moderate frauds’ to persuade others is ‘a widely practiced art (...) in the courts.’ The question is: ‘can the prince rely on so common means, whose use is so necessary for the just defence of the state? Yes he can.’⁶⁵⁰ Prudence:

Encourages achieving a common good using deception (...) Plato says that the prince should make the most of fraud for the good of the vassals (...) Others, that he is not guilty of lying who aims to the public welfare.⁶⁵¹

⁶⁴⁸ ‘No faltan en esta edad hombres tenidos por buen seso que considerando las grandes dificultades que padecen los hombres verdaderos, y que a su parecer, es caso imposible conseguir aun los fines justos que los príncipes pretenden, sin usar de simulaciones ficciones, y dobleces, han hallado una prudencia mixta que aconsejarles, rociada (como ellos dicen) ligeramente de simulación, astucia y engaños.’ Márquez, *El gobernador cristiano*, pp. 230-231.

⁶⁴⁹ See Chapter III.

⁶⁵⁰ ‘¿No puede el Príncipe valerse de los comunes medios, que son tan necesarios y el uso ha destinado a la justa defensa del Estado? Sí puede.’ Rebolledo, *Selva militar y política*, pp. 337 and 338.

⁶⁵¹ ‘La decepción induce a disponer algún común provecho, valiéndose de engaño, en que pocos antiguos repararon; Platón dice, que debe aprovechar en bien de los vasallos el Príncipe las fraudes; otros, que no es culpable la mentira que al bien público aspira.’ *Ibid.*, p. 339.

Juan Alfonso Lancina held the same opinion. He never denied the moral superiority of religion, but argued that on certain matters of state, political pragmatism should prevail over it: 'When the actions of the highest ministers look only to the public good, they should not stumble on some materials that are not [real] obstacles.'⁶⁵² Such was the case, for example, when the Crown was threatened by traitors or a popular revolt. 'In these cases,' wrote Lancina, 'deception is always lawful,' as long as it is used as a defensive instruments and in a moderate way.⁶⁵³ For example, Lancina recommended the forgery of letters and reports to deceive the enemy. 'When troubles are great and the prince is far away, it is permissible for a minister to fake a letter or rescript⁶⁵⁴ in order to avoid major problems.'⁶⁵⁵ He acknowledged having used this trick when, as minister in Italy, he had to fake a dispatch by the viceroy to appease the riot caused by the nobility in the city of Tropea. Lancina also suggested that the Prince blames others for the 'odious measures' and, if possible, 'attributes them to the dead, [since] they do not feel [and] do not refuse it.'⁶⁵⁶ Baltasar Gracián had recommended a similar approach to courtiers: 'All the favourable things, do them yourselves; all the odious things, through third parties.'⁶⁵⁷ When restraining rights and applying other unpopular measures, political prudence advises the ruler to delegate the responsibility to any of his ministers, thereby avoiding becoming the target of popular discontent, even if this meant lying and incriminating an innocent man. As we can see, Lancina did not recognise any moral constraint. The important thing for him was that these techniques were used 'with discretion,' because 'when the people suspect that they are being deceived, they start doubting the very

⁶⁵² 'Cuando las direcciones de los altos ministros han de mirar sólo al público bien, no se debe tropezar en algunos materiales que no son estorbos.' Lancina, *Commentarios políticos*, para. 120, no. 2, p. 212.

⁶⁵³ '... en estos casos son lícitos los engaños.' *Ibid.*, p. 212.

⁶⁵⁴ From the Latin *rescriptus*. A rescript was a decree, edict, announcement, or official answer of a Roman emperor or of a pope to a legal inquiry or petition.

⁶⁵⁵ 'Cuando son grandes los aprietos y se halla lejos el Príncipe le es lícito al ministro fingir alguna carta o rescripto de aquello que se desea para evitar o quitar los embarazos.' Lancina, *Commentarios políticos*, para. 176, no. 2, p. 274.

⁶⁵⁶ '... castigar las operaciones odiosas sobre espaldas ajenas, y si pueden achacárselas a los muertos, que no sienten, no lo rehúsan.' *Ibid.*, para. 25, no. 2, p. 39.

⁶⁵⁷ 'Todo lo favorable, obrarlo por sí; todo lo odioso, por terceros.' Gracián, *Oráculo manual*, aphorism 187.

evidence.⁶⁵⁸

In Portugal there were also supporters of moderate fraud. One of the most noteworthy was the priest António Carvalho Parada (d. 1655), who argued ‘that princes could use lies and dissimulation when it was necessary for the conservation of the Republic or useful for vassals.’⁶⁵⁹ According to Carvalho, the Sacred Scriptures and the profane histories of the Romans were full of examples where ‘deception and lying (...) were not only forgiven, but approved of when they aimed at a good end, being allowed to fail the truth when the lie is so present in government.’⁶⁶⁰ Being as he is, surrounded by enemies and false advisors, concludes Carvalho quoting Lipsius, the prince was forced to indulge these moderate frauds, since acting otherwise ‘is not only against reason, but against nature itself.’⁶⁶¹

To support these statements, early modern authors resorted to the legal principle of *dolus*, forged in Roman law during the Republican period (2nd century BC). The term *dolus* referred to any deceptive manoeuvre or cunning machination aimed at bringing others to an error. Roman legal tradition distinguished between two types: *dolus malus* and *dolus bonus*. The first was a form of selfish and illegal fraud that had the sole purpose of benefiting the self and causing damage or injury to others. The good *dolus*, on the contrary, was a lawful deception, used in trade or as a defensive strategy against the enemies of common welfare. We find this principle in Ulpian’s *Edictum* and in Justinian’s *Digest*, which mainly applied to commercial dealings,⁶⁶² but also in the philosophy of Cicero, Seneca, Quintilian, and Sallust who discussed it in relation to *dissimulatio*.⁶⁶³ Then it was inherited by St. Augustine and Christian patristic, which saw

⁶⁵⁸ ‘... llegando a concebir el vulgo que le engañan, duda de las mismas evidencias.’ *Ibid.*, para. 23, no. 1, p. 37.

⁶⁵⁹ ‘... que quando fosse necessário à conservação da republica, ou à utilidade dos vassallos, podiam os Príncipes usar de mentiras e dissimulação.’ Carvalho de Parada, *Arte de Reynar*, disc. 8. The quotation in fol. 137r.

⁶⁶⁰ ‘... o engano e a mentira (...) não somente desculpado, mas aprovado quando se encaminha a algum bom fim, tendo por ignorância faltar verdade, quando a mentira tem tomado tanta posse do governo, e esta se não possa vencer sem outra.’ *Ibid.*, fols. 137v-138v.

⁶⁶¹ ‘... não só hê contra razão, mas contra la mesma natureza.’ *Ibid.*, fol. 138v.

⁶⁶² Ulpian, bk. LXXI *ad Edictum Aedilium curulium*; Justinian, *Digest*, bk. IV, law 1, tit. 2-3.

⁶⁶³ For more information on this see: Carcaterra, Antonio, *Dolus bonus, dolus malus. Esegese di D.4.3. 1.2-3*, Naples: Eugenio Jovene, 1970, pp. 151-156 and 160-172; García Camiñas, Julio, ‘La problemática del

in *dolus bonus* that kind of cunning that Christ advised to his disciples (Matthew 10.16), guaranteeing it a place in the canon and civil medieval laws.⁶⁶⁴

From the sixteenth century on, fraud gained ground obtaining wide recognition in both theology (through figures such as Azpilcueta or Erasmus⁶⁶⁵) and law, where it led to Grotius's theory of *falsiloquium*, as we already saw.⁶⁶⁶ The principle of *dolus bonus* can be found in hundreds of lawsuits from early modern Iberia, as well as in the major legal compilations of the time.⁶⁶⁷ It is therefore not surprising that theorists used to legitimise the use of moderate frauds in politics. Long before Grotius published his *De Jure Belli ac Pacis*, Iberian writers appealed to the principle of *dolus bonus* to justify deception as part of ruling, an activity that, in their eyes, was not much different from the trade or warfare contemplated by the Romans jurists. Thus, argued Lorenzo Ramírez de Prado, a cultivated humanist and diplomat who served in the court of Philip IV under the protection of the Count-Duke of Olivares (d. 1658): 'It is allowed to dissimulate by masking the truth with means that are truthful in regard to themselves and that are used with skill.'⁶⁶⁸ This is demonstrated, he explained, by the 'ancient jurists' who

distinguished the good *dolo* from the bad. They say that the *dolo malo* is the encounter between true law and appearance, because one thing is made and

dolo en el Derecho romano clásico,' in *Derecho romano de obligaciones: homenaje al profesor José Luis Murga Gener*, ed. by Francisco Javier Paricio Serrano, Oviedo: n. pub., 1984.

⁶⁶⁴ Vid. *Siete Partidas*, tit. XVI, law 1.

⁶⁶⁵ Azpilcueta, *Commentarius in cap. Humanae Aures*, quaest. 1, sect. 3; Erasmus, *Letter to Lorenzo Campeggi*, 6th December 1520, in *Opus epistolarum*, ep. 1167, lines 164-173.

⁶⁶⁶ *De Jure Belli ac Pacis*, bk. III, chap. 1.

⁶⁶⁷ See, for example: Bermúdez de Pedraza, Francisco, *Arte legal para el estudio de la Iurisprudencia*, Salamanca: Antonia Ramírez, 1612, bk. I, tit. 20; Covarrubias, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española*, 'Dolo,' fol. 324v; Covarrubias y Leyva, Diego de, *In regulam Peccatum, de regulis iuris*, bk. VI, relectio, part. 2, para. 4, in *Opera Omnia*, Turin: Ioan Dominicum Tarinum, 1594, vol. II, pp. 486-488; Gutiérrez de la Huerta, Leonardo, *Tractatus de Compensationibus*, Naples: Dominici Antonii Parrino, 1699, bk. I, quaest. 10, no. 5, fol. 336; Torrecilla, Martín de, *Consultas, alegatos apologias y otros tratados assi regulares como de otras materias morales*, Madrid: Antonio Roman, 1694, p. 402; Villalobos, Enrique de, *Summa de la theologia moral, y canonica, Segunda parte*, Barcelona: Sebastian de Cormellas, 1637, p. 304.

⁶⁶⁸ 'Es permitida la Disimulación, que disfraza la Verdad con el rebozo de medios, que son ciertos respeto de si y que la encaminan con destreza.' Ramírez de Prado, *Consejo y consejero de príncipes*, p. 63.

another simulated, in order to deceive a third party. And they allow the good *dolo*, especially against enemies.⁶⁶⁹

The same reference appears in the *Emblemas morales* by Juan de Horozco,⁶⁷⁰ in the *Discursos sobre la verdadera razón de Estado* by Pedro Barbosa,⁶⁷¹ and in the works of José Laynez, who mentions the doctrine of ‘falsiloquio’ and the existence of ‘a type of *dolo*, that [Vipiano] calls *Solertia*, that is holy and lawful,’ a deception used ‘by the judge who examines the intention and words of an accused, with style and prudential dissimulation.’⁶⁷² Thus, here we have a number of authors who appeal to Lipsius’ idea of ‘mixed prudence’ as a meeting point between the traditionalist theses of Christian statecraft and the Machiavellian *realpolitik*. What underlies their arguments is a finalist conception of politics, which determines the lawfulness of the act depending on its intended purpose, rather than on the means used. These authors acknowledged that fraud and deception were morally wrong, and recognised that religion should normally govern political practice, but argued that, sometimes, it was necessary to make exceptions and prioritise pragmatism for the reason of state.

This brings us to another important determinant: duration. All authors insist that dissimulation should be temporary, an attitude limited to a period of time and particular circumstances. ‘The art cannot go always against nature (...) Hypocrisy is a colour, a fake gold that covers the surface, but with use and time it wears out and becomes consumed.’⁶⁷³ Both the effectiveness and lawfulness of political dissimulation depend on its exceptional character. The prince who pretends to deceive indefinitely would eventually be discovered and would lose his credibility before his subjects, which is the

⁶⁶⁹ ‘... distinguen el Dolo malo del bueno, y dicen que es el Dolo malo encuentro entre el hecho verdadero y la apariencia, porque se hace una cosa y se simula otra, en orden a engañar al tercero. Y permiten el Dolo bueno, y más contra los enemigos.’ *Ibid.*, pp. 63-64.

⁶⁷⁰ Horozco y Covarrubias, *Emblemas morales*, bk. II, emblem 5, fol. 10r

⁶⁷¹ Barbosa Homen, *Discursos sobre la verdadera y jurídica razón de Estado*, fol. 266r-v.

⁶⁷² ‘... un modo de dolo, que [Vipiano] llama *Solertia*, santo y lícito, con que por estilo y disimulación prudencial’ used by ‘el Iuez que examina el animo o palabras del reo.’ Laynez, *El Daniel Cortesano*, chap. 29, sect. 1, p. 245.

⁶⁷³ ‘El Arte no puede siempre contra la naturaleza (...) La hipocresía es un color, un oro falso que viste la superficie; pero con el uso, y con el tiempo se gasta, y consume.’ Mut, *El príncipe en la guerra y en la paz*, p. 28.

cornerstone of every republic. His word would not be trusted again by the other rulers, which would make political relations unsustainable.⁶⁷⁴

3. SIMULATION

The process carried out by early modern theorists to free the prince of the practical limitations of honesty did not stop there. Some went even further and advocated the lawfulness of simulation, a practice that, as we saw, was severely condemned as a form of lie by medieval authors. As we saw in previous chapters, this idea was already present in the writings of the main thinkers of the sixteenth century, such as Lipsius, Botero, and Rivadeneira. According to them, simulation could be as good or bad as dissimulation, depending on the circumstances and the ends it furthered. However, most seventeenth writers abandoned this idea and established a Manichean distinction between the two actions: dissimulation was praised as prudent and necessary, while simulation was condemned as a kind of lying *malum in se*.⁶⁷⁵

According to Alvia de Castro, dissimulation was ‘silencing and concealing what is, as if it was not.’⁶⁷⁶ Simulation, on the contrary, was ‘to pretend what is not, as if it was it.’⁶⁷⁷ ‘In politics (...) [the first] may be prudent, lawful, and necessary,’ provided it does not go against ‘religion and virtues.’⁶⁷⁸ Simulation, by contrast, ‘is impious and dangerous,’ ‘a false and mendacious act’ ‘improper not only to the prince, but the good man.’ As such, ‘it is to be removed from social life.’⁶⁷⁹

⁶⁷⁴ Mártir Rizo, *Norte de príncipes*, fol. 98r.

⁶⁷⁵ See some examples in: Márquez, *El gobernador cristiano*, p. 75; Laynez, *El Daniel Cortesano*, chap. 7, sect. 4; Rebolledo, *Selva militar y política*, p. 336; Mallea, *Gobierno del Príncipe Cathólico*, p. 168; Portocarrero y Guzmán, *Theatro monarchico de España*, p. 307; Alvia de Castro, *Verdadera razón de estado*, fols. 46v-47r; Enriquez de Villegas, *El Príncipe en la idea*, pp. 87-88.

⁶⁷⁶ ‘... callar y encubrir aquello, que es, como si no fuese.’ Alvia de Castro, *Verdadera razón de estado*, fol. 147r-v.

⁶⁷⁷ ‘... fingir aquello que no es, como si fuese.’ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷⁸ ‘... en lo Político (...) puede ser prudente, lícita y necesaria,’ provided it does not go against ‘la religión y virtudes.’ *Ibid.*, fol. 51r.

⁶⁷⁹ ‘... es impía y peligrosa; ‘un acto falso, doblado y mentiroso,’ ‘impropio no solo al Príncipe, pero al varón bueno.’ Therefore, ‘se ha de quitar del trato y vida humana.’ *Ibid.*, fols. 47v-49v.

However, this distinction, although very clear from a conceptual point of view, was extremely precarious in practical terms, since both actions, despite being different, were often inextricably linked. It was very hard to dissimulate a thing without simulating another. For example, if the prince wanted to hide the sadness that certain news caused him, he could only do so by pretending to feel a joy that he did not truly feel. Seventeenth century authors were perfectly aware of this. Thus it is not unreasonable to assume that such distinction was not the result of an epistemological conviction, but rather a rhetorical strategy used by theorists to introduce deception in politics without giving the impression that they accepted lying, always regarded as intrinsically evil by the Church. In fact, there were many authors who allowed the use of simulation in cases of extreme necessity in which the preservation of the prince or the state was at risk. So argued Arnold Clapmarius, when he recognised the lawfulness of ‘*simulacra*,’ a technique that consists of doing one thing and simulating another (*aliud agitur, aliud simulatur*),⁶⁸⁰ and Scipione Ammirato, as long as it was used ‘for the sake of a just public cause.’⁶⁸¹ The same view can be found in the works of some Iberian authors, such as Juan Fernández de Medrano, Joaquín Setanti, Juan Baños de Velasco, Pedro de Figueroa, António da Silva, and Pedro Barbosa Homen, to mention but a few.⁶⁸²

The opinion of the latter is particularly noteworthy. Barbosa was a Portuguese jurist who served as *corregedor* (chief magistrate) of the district of Tavira before being imprisoned for unknown reasons. In 1627 he published a curious political treatise in Spanish in which very Machiavellian ideas are mixed with harsh criticism of the Florentine theorist. According to Barbosa, simulation was a ‘kind of deception as lawful, useful, and sometimes necessary’ that the prince should use ‘in any matter concerning

⁶⁸⁰ Arnold Clapmarius, *De arcanis rerum publicarum libri VI*, Frankfurt: Berner, 1624, bk. I, chap. 5.

⁶⁸¹ Scipione Ammirato, *Celeberrimi inter neotericos Scriptoris. Dissertatines Politicae sive Discursus in Cornelium Tacitum...*, Frankfurt: Main Helenopoli Schönvetterus, 1609, disc. 1, 235.

⁶⁸² Fernández Medrano, *República Mista*, p. 34; Setanti, *Centellas de varios conceptos*, centellas 239 and 362; Baños de Velasco, *El Ayo y Maestro de Príncipes*, p. 506; Figueroa, *Aviso de Príncipes*, pp. 313-315; António da Silva, *Instrução Política De Legados*, pp. 683-687.

the preservation of the state.⁶⁸³ Barbosa devoted several chapters of his treatise to prove this point. He legitimised ‘simulation and good deception’ both ‘in military actions’ and ‘in civil actions.’ And even encouraged the prince to simulate ‘in religious matters,’ feigning ‘virtue and holiness’ or ‘pretending [to worship] some kind of infidelity or heresy,’ if necessary, advice dangerously close to Machiavelli’s most controversial ideas.⁶⁸⁴

Were men like Barbosa an exception? Certainly. But perhaps his specificity did not rest exclusively in the high levels of deception that he justified, but the brazen honesty with which he did so. Barbosa failed to dissimulate his ideas as effectively as many of his contemporaries who, as we have seen, often used euphemisms and legal ruses to justify virtually any form of insincerity.

4. PERJURY

Seventeenth century political thought detached so much from medieval political thought that it even allowed perjury, one of the most serious sins for Christian theologians. According to Machiavelli:

A wise lord cannot, nor should he, keep his word when such observances may be turned against him, and when the reasons that caused him to pledge it exist no longer. If men were entirely good this precept would not hold. But because they are bad, and will not keep faith with you, you too are not bound to keep faith with them.⁶⁸⁵

⁶⁸³ ‘... suerte de engaño tan lícita, tan útil y a veces tan necesaria (...) en cualquier materia tocante a la conservación del Estado.’ Pedro Barbosa Homen, *Discursos sobre la verdadera y jurídica razón de Estado*, fol. 269r.

⁶⁸⁴ ‘... la simulación y el engaño bueno’ both ‘en las acciones militares’ and ‘en las acciones civiles.’ The prince can also simulate ‘en materia de religión,’ feigning ‘virtud y santidad’ and ‘fingiendo [observar] algún genero de infidelidad, o herejía.’ *Ibid.*, fols. 269r-274v.

⁶⁸⁵ ‘Non può uno signore prudente, né debbe, osservare la fede, quando tale osservanzia li torni contro e che sono spente le cagioni che la feciono promettere. E, se li uomini fussino tutti buoni, questo precetto non sarebbe buono; ma perché sono tristi, e non la osservarebano a te, tu etiam non l’hai ad osservare a loro.’ Machiavelli, *Il Principe*, chap. 18.

This behaviour did not present any problem for Machiavelli's political views. For him, morality existed only to secure and improve civilian life. Therefore, if in certain circumstances its implementation went against that purpose, morality could be put on hold. In fact, according to Machiavelli:

Experience teaches that those princes who have done great things have held good faith to little account, and have known how to circumvent the intellect of men, and in the end have overcome those who have relied on their word.⁶⁸⁶

This was one of the most controversial Machiavellian proposals and led to heated controversies in Europe since it clashed directly with one of the most established principles of Christian theology: the unbreakable nature of the oath.⁶⁸⁷ According to Augustine, perjury was the most serious of all lies and an utterly detestable crime of a magnitude 'greater or certainly no less than defilement' since it went against God Himself. It was, therefore, a mortal sin for which it was impossible to plead any excuse whatsoever.⁶⁸⁸

Most Iberian theorists endorsed this prohibition and ruled that the prince should always respect his promises, even when doing so would be harmful to the Republic.⁶⁸⁹ However, there were some authors who supported Machiavelli's view and postulated the lawfulness of breaking certain pacts and oaths if that was in the State's interest. Such was the case of Joaquín Setanti ('the faith and the word of kings follow the utility of the State')⁶⁹⁰ or Jerónimo de Ceballos, who argued that:

⁶⁸⁶ 'Non di manco si vede, per esperienza ne' nostri tempi, quelli principi avere fatto gran cose che della fede hanno tenuto poco conto, e che hanno saputo con l'astuzia aggirare e' cervelli delli uomini; et alla fine hanno superato quelli che si sono fondati in sulla lealtà.' *Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁷ On the importance of promise and oath in medieval and early modern Europe see, among others: Casagrande & Silvana, *I peccati della lingua*, pp. 251-278; Prodi, Paolo, *Il sacramento del potere*, Bologna: Il Mulino, 1992; Tuttino, *Shadows of Doubt*, chap. 5.

⁶⁸⁸ *Contra mendacium*, sect. 19 and 20.

⁶⁸⁹ See, for example: Lipsius, *Politicorum*, bk. IV, chap. 14; Márquez, *El gobernador cristiano*, p. 292; López Bravo, *Discurso político del Rey y la razón de gobernar*, p. 118; Monzón, *Libro primero del Espejo del Príncipe Christiano*, fol. 190r; Narbona, *Doctrina política civil*, aphorisms 72, 76 and 86; Fernández Medrano, *República Mista*, p. 35; Mártir Rizo, *Norte de príncipes*, fols. 96v, and 101v-102r.

⁶⁹⁰ '... la fe y la palabra de los reyes siguen la utilidad del Estado.' Setanti, *Centellas de varios conceptos*, centella 216.

Being in conflict between the royal word and the utility and conservation of his Republic, he must do whatever is more convenient for the conservation [of his Republic], since that is the end of every government (...) because a prince who breaks positive laws to preserve his kingdom cannot be considered guilty.⁶⁹¹

Francisco de Quevedo also shared this view. In *La Caída para levantarse* he claimed that there were certain circumstances under which it was lawful for the prince to break his promises. This fraud could not be condemned because:

Someone breaks his word not when he gave it against justice, but when he fulfilled it, just because he gave it. He who keeps an oath made in favour of evil things is guilty (...) The promise made to a criminal is not an obligation, but a shame to he whom requested it. The law demands its punishment, not its fulfilment.⁶⁹²

Similarly, Juan Blázquez Mayoralgo, who served as *contador* in the city of Veracruz, argued that, in order to determine whether he should respect an oath or not, 'the Catholic prince (...) must first think to whom he made it, and against whom, because there are some strong cases that can be excluded from the rigor of the law' since fulfilling them 'would be more of a plot than friendship.'⁶⁹³ In such cases, the contracts and promises stop being mandatory, and 'fraud not only fails to go against justice, but is rather advised by reason.'⁶⁹⁴

⁶⁹¹ 'Concurriendo de una parte la palabra real, y de la otra, la utilidad y conservación de su Republica, se ha de resolver lo que fuere mas conveniente para su conservación y a esto se encamina el fin de todo el gobierno (...) porque no se puede imputar culpa a un Príncipe que quebranta las leyes positivas por conservar su reino.' Ceballos, *Arte real para el buen gobierno de los reyes y príncipes*, fols. 119r-119v.

⁶⁹² 'No falta a su palabra el que la dio de cosa contra justicia, sino cuando la cumple sólo porque la dio. El que cumple juramento hecho en favor de las maldades es perjuro al que hizo de no consentirlas. No es empeño promesa hecha en favor del facinoroso y delincuente, sino gravamen de su culpa el haberla solicitado para seguridad suya y nota del príncipe. Lo ilícito obliga a su castigo, no a su cumplimiento.' Francisco de Quevedo, *La caída para levantarse. El ciego para dar vista, el montante de la Iglesia en la vida de San Pablo Apóstol*, Madrid: Diego Diaz de la Carrera, 1644. I use the ed. by Valentina Nider, Pisa: Giardini, 1944. The quote on p. 287.

⁶⁹³ 'El príncipe católico que gobierna político (...) primero se ha de mirar con quién se hizo, y contra quién se va, porque hay casos tan fuertes que se puedan excluir del rigor de la ley impuestos, [pues] más tendrán de conjuración que de amistad.' Blázquez Mayoralgo, *Perfecta razón de estado*, p. 75

⁶⁹⁴ '... el fraude no sólo no se opone a la justicia, pero suele dar fuerza a la razón.' *Ibid.*, pp. 94-95.

CHAPTER VII

THE SOURCES OF DECEPTION

The lie is a condition of life.

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

As discussed in earlier chapters, Iberian authors built their justification of political deception on two different traditions: on the one side, the European tacitist current embodied by Lipsius and Botero, who mostly drew from classical philosophy and history. On the other, a casuist current, led by Azpilcueta and Rivadeneira, who rejected Tacitus and preferred to craft the rules of Christian statecraft from the Sacred Scriptures. These two intellectual traditions soon merged, and by the second decade of the seventeenth century, most of the treatises combined references to the Greco-Roman past with the examples taken from the Bible. Thus political deception was justified on the grounds of reason and faith. In the following pages I will discuss briefly its most interesting elements.

1. THE SACRED HISTORY

As during the Middle Ages, early modern politics continued to derive their main theoretical foundations from Christianity. Accordingly, Iberian theorists resorted to the Sacred Scriptures and the writings of the Church Fathers to find examples that could allow them to prove the lawfulness of deception. It was not hard to find them, after all,

casuist theologians had just demonstrated that the Bible was full of saints, prophets, kings, and other characters who openly used deception without being condemned for doing so.⁶⁹⁵ Among the examples cited there were several episodes from the Old Testament, which now acquired an important moral and political significance⁶⁹⁶: Moses hiding his origins from the Pharaoh,⁶⁹⁷ Abraham calling his wife Sara ‘sister’ (Genesis 20. 2), the King Jehu killing the priests of Baal (IV Kings 10. 18-27), David feigning madness before King Achish (I Kings 21. 14-21),⁶⁹⁸ Joseph accusing his brothers of stealing (Genesis 44),⁶⁹⁹ Job’s patient dissimulation,⁷⁰⁰ Michal deceiving Saul’s soldiers (I Samuel 19),⁷⁰¹ and so on. These actions, wrote Saavedra Fajardo, ‘were lawful dissimulations’ whose mere presence shows that deception was permissible to the prince who pursues a good end.⁷⁰²

Early modern political theorists also engaged in the old theological controversy on Peter’s dissimulation that, as we saw, had been recovered by some humanists and Protestant theologians in the early sixteenth century. Following the approach introduced by Erasmus, many Iberian authors argued in favour of Jerome’s interpretation supporting the ‘*utilem simulationem et assumendam in tempore*’ of the apostle.⁷⁰³ One of the most interesting contributions in this regard was the one made by Francisco de Quevedo in *La caída para levantarse*. According to Quevedo, ‘Peter’s dissimulation had some just cause, namely, the fear of not offending the Jews (...) Persevering in the opinion of St. Jerome, I believe that Peter’s dissimulation was not a

⁶⁹⁵ See an example in the work of Cristobal de Benavente y Benavides, probably one of the most strenuous efforts made in 17th century Iberia to justify dissimulation through the Sacred Scriptures (*Advertencias para Reyes*, pp. 489-450).

⁶⁹⁶ Most of them already examined by St. Jerome in his *Commentarium in Epistolam ad Galatas Tres Libri*, bk. I, chap. 2, cols. 338-367, and his defence of *Utilem simulationem in tempore assumendam*, *Jehu Regis Israel nos docet exemplum*, quaest. 2, nos. 9-10, 12, 15 and 23.

⁶⁹⁷ Garau, *El Olimpo del sabio instruído*, pp. 223.

⁶⁹⁸ See, for example: Ramírez de Prado, *Consejo y Consejeros de Príncipes*, p. 55-56; Benavente y Benavides, *Advertencias para Reyes*, pp. 489-490; Palafox y Mendoza, *Historia Real Sagrada, luz de Príncipes y súbditos*, bk. V, p. 101; Figueroa, *Aviso de Príncipes*, pp. 113-150; Portocarrero y Guzmán, *Theatro monarchico*, p. 305; Barbosa Homem, *Discursos sobre la verdadera y jurídica razón de Estado*, fol. 269r.

⁶⁹⁹ Laynez, *El privado cristiano*, chap. 29, sect. 1, p. 245.

⁷⁰⁰ Quevedo, *La caída para levantarse*, pp. 217-218.

⁷⁰¹ Figueroa, *Aviso de Príncipes*, pp. 72-74

⁷⁰² Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un príncipe político cristiano*, empresa 43.

⁷⁰³ *Commentariorum in Epistolam ad Galatas Libri III*, bk. I, chap. 2, in *PL*, XXVI, col. 364.

lie, but a medicine, since dissimulating with another's mistake to amend it is a remedy.' Thus, 'what they called in Peter thoughtlessness, was [actually] prudence; they called the weakness, a virtue; and what they named as lies, pity.'⁷⁰⁴

But Quevedo did not stop here. Like many other theorists of his time, he wanted to justify political deception by relying on an even more important precedent: Christ. According to Quevedo, Christ was the first great dissimulator, able to 'disguise himself as a slave [being] the king of all the Heavens, and with weak human nature he covered his eternal nature of God.' He came into the world 'pretending to be a man,' taking for 'cot a manger, and for company the beasts, and for blankets the straws, and for shelter (...) a crib.' 'During all his life he dissimulated, [covering] with human feelings what miracles described as divine.'⁷⁰⁵

Between Christ's childhood and the beginning of his ministry, there is a long period not described in the New Testament. These unknown years of his life, that Christ probably spent living anonymously among shepherds, were now interpreted as an irrevocable example of this tendency to conceal. In works such as *El príncipe encubierto* by Marinho de Azevedo (1648) and *El Príncipe escondido* (1648) by Marcos Salmerón, Christ is depicted as an undercover Saviour, a hidden prince who 'made (through

⁷⁰⁴ 'La disimulación de Pedro en parte tuvo justa causa, como fue el temor de no ofender a los judíos (...) Yo, perseverando en la opinión de San Gerónimo, pretendo que la disimulación de San Pedro no sea mentira, sino medicina; pues, disimular con el orgullo ajeno para enmendarle, remedio es.' The apostle 'fingía, disimulaba; sus acciones, no entendidas, tenían semblante de mentira, mas en él era la que parecía mentira piedad (...) y así, lo que llaman en Pedro inconsideración, fue prudencia; la que dicen flaqueza, virtud; como lo que nombran mentira, piedad.' Quevedo, *La caída para levantarse*, pp. 220-221. For more on Quevedo's view on dissimulation see Valentina Nider, 'La disimulación como "prudencia divinamente política" en *La caída para levantarse* de Quevedo,' in *Littérature et politique en Espagne aux siècles d'or*, ed. by Jean-Pierre Étienve, Paris: Klincksieck, 1998, pp. 423-424.

⁷⁰⁵ '... vestirse de esclavo [siendo] el monarca de todos los cielos, y con la flaca naturaleza humana cubrir la eterna naturaleza de Dios.' He came into the world 'disimulando ser hombre,' taking for 'cuna un pesebre, y por compañía las bestias, y por mantillas las pajas, y por abrigo (...) un portal.' 'Toda su vida disimuló con las propasiones de hombre lo que con los milagros describía de Dios.' Quevedo, *La caída para levantarse*, pp. 217-218. The same idea (*Lavae Dei*) was defended by other Catholic authors, such as Barbosa Homen (*Discursos sobre la verdadera y jurídica razón de Estado*, fol. 268v) and some Protestant too. According to Luther, 'a fisherman deceives a fish by enticing it with bait (...) and it is not unreasonable (...) to apply this to Christ.' The Saviour 'came into the world clothed in flesh and was cast into the waster like a hook.' The bait of his humanity concealed his eternal majesty. He also 'shamefully deluded and deceived' the Devil. (Luther, *Lectures on Genesis*, [1535-1545], ed. by Jaroslav Pelikan & Helmut T., *Luther's Works: American Edition*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1955, vol. V, p. 151.)

dissimulation) heroic actions' waiting for the right time for his Revelation.⁷⁰⁶ When he turned thirty, he showed his divine nature to men. But even after that he had to use amphibologies and mental restrictions frequently. Iberian writers evoked several episodes in which Christ used deception to fulfil God's will. For example, when he said to his disciples that he did not know the day of the last judgment (Matthew 24, 36). According to Juan Márquez:

To support [mental] restriction we have a very clear example in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, annoyed by his disciples, who wanted to know the date of the Final Judgment, he said to them that it was so hidden that neither angels nor His human nature knew it, but only God.⁷⁰⁷

According to Cristóbal de Benavente, all Church Fathers agreed:

Christ knew very well the date of the Judgement (...); but not being advisable for men to know the day, nor the hour (...) He did not tell them; and here Christ used mental restriction, in saying he did not know, understanding 'to tell you,' silencing the restriction.⁷⁰⁸

This was not the only time that Christ used this technique:

The Son of God also used mental misunderstandings, restrictions and amphibologies when the apostles urged him to visit Lazarus because he was sick, and He waited several days and finally said: 'Our friend Lazarus sleeps, I am going to awake him from the dream,' understanding the dream of death, because he knew he was dead, but the apostles understood an ordinary dream. [On another occasion,] he said to the Pharisees: 'destroy this Temple, and in three days I will rebuild it,' speaking equivocally of the Temple of his Holy Body, while the Jews understood their material

⁷⁰⁶ '... obrando (aunque disimuladamente) acciones heroicas.' Salmerón, Marcos, *El Príncipe escondido. Meditaciones de la vida oculta de Cristo desde los doce hasta los treinta años*, Madrid: Pedro de Horno, 1648. The quote on p. 46; Azevedo, Marinho de, *El príncipe encubierto*, Lisbon: Domingo López Rosa, 1642.

⁷⁰⁷ 'Tenemos a favor de esta restricción un ejemplo muy claro en las palabras de Jesucristo nuestro Señor que, moleestado de sus discípulos, que querían saber el día del Juicio, les respondió que era tan oculto que ni los ángeles ni su humanidad lo sabían, sino sólo Dios.' Márquez, *El gobernador cristiano*, p. 502.

⁷⁰⁸ '... que sabía bien Cristo el día del juicio (...) y no conviniendo a los hombres saber el día, ni la hora (...) no se lo dijo; y así usó Cristo aquí de restricción mental, diciendo que no lo sabía, entendiéndole para decírselo, callando la restricción.' Benavente y Benavides, *Advertencias para Reyes*, p. 502.

Temple.⁷⁰⁹

Furthermore, early modern theorists often revered the episode of the Supper at Emmaus, which tells the appearance of the resurrected Christ to two of his disciples. The meeting took place on a dusty road outside Jerusalem. Christ appeared disguised as a pilgrim and pretended to still have a long journey ahead. But they constrained Him, saying,

‘Abide with us, for it is toward evening and the day is far spent.’ And He went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as He sat at meat with them, He took bread and blessed it, and broke and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened and they knew Him. And He vanished out of their sight (Luke 24. 29-31).

Iberian authors used this episode to show that ‘pretending is not lying.’⁷¹⁰ Christ came to his disciples ‘disguised as a pilgrim,’ but his ‘deception’ was inspired by ‘love’ and not malice. In the path:

He dissimulated and pretended to go further [*finxit se longius ire*]. But the Saviour could use this dissimulation and pretence without incurring mendacity, because [it was a] prudent dissimulation, performed to experience one thing and discover another, [and therefore] it did not have the intrinsic evil of lying.⁷¹¹

⁷⁰⁹ ‘También uso el Hijo de Dios equívocos mentales, restricciones y amphibologías cuando diciéndole los Apóstoles fuese a visitar a Lázaro que estaba malo, dejó pasar los días mas y dijo al cabo de ellos: “Nuestro amigo Lázaro duerme, voy a despertarle del sueño,” entendiendo por sueño la muerte, sabiendo era muerte, y los Apóstoles entendieron del sueño ordinario. [En otra ocasión,] dijo a los Fariseos: “Deshaced este Templo, y en tres días le volveré a edificar,” hablando equívocamente del Templo de su Cuerpo Santo, y los Judíos entendieron de su Templo material.’ *Ibid.*, pp. 502-503. The same in Laynez, *El privado cristiano*, chap. 29, sect. 1, pp. 245-246. This episode was also widely used by 16th century casuists to legitimise the use of mental restriction. See, for example: Prierias, *Summa Summarum que Sylvestrina Dicitur*, chap. 3, no. 2 and chap. 6, no. 1-4.

⁷¹⁰ ‘Fingir no es mentir.’ *Vid.* Monzón, *Libro primero del Espejo del Príncipe Christiano*, fol. 191; Pineda, *Diálogos familiares de la agricultura cristiana*, fol. 20v; Benavente y Benavides, *Advertencias para Reyes*, pp. 491-493; Barbosa Homem, *Discursos sobre la verdadera y jurídica razón de Estado*, fol. 268v.

⁷¹¹ ‘Disimuló y fingió que pasaba adelante [*finxit se longius ire*]. Mas de esta disimulación y fingimiento podía usar el Salvador, sin intervenir modo alguno de mentira: porque [se trató] de una disimulación prudente, a fin de experimentar y descubrir una cosa, no tiene malicia intrínseca de mentira.’ Laynez, *El privado cristiano*, p. 245.

In light of these examples, concluded Cristóbal de Benavente, ‘mental restrictions, with just cause, and the verbal equivocation and amphibologies seem to be well justified.’⁷¹² Christ practiced deception ‘until his death,’ even if that caused terrible pain to his loved ones. And, as indicated in Matthew’s Gospel, he advised his disciples to do the same.⁷¹³ And if Christ, the prince of princes, model of all men, had used deception to accomplish his mission on earth, why should not princes do the same? Thus, deception stopped being that moral sin as described by Augustine to become an attribute of the most perfect rulers. Christ was, for early modern theorist, an example of dissimulation. A model of ‘divine behaviour’ that every ruler should ‘imitate.’⁷¹⁴

Moreover, some authors went further and attributed deception to God Himself. This idea, already postulated by some Church Fathers by the third century,⁷¹⁵ had been categorically refuted by St. Augustine, who his *Sermon on the Creed*, rejected the very possibility that God could lie. ‘Since God is omnipotent,’ he argued, ‘he is not able to be deceived, nor is he able to lie for as the Apostol says, He cannot deny himself.’⁷¹⁶ This interpretation dominated medieval thought⁷¹⁷ but, as we saw, began to be challenged from the thirteenth century, when several casuist theologians argued that God had used deception on more than one occasion. This view was also endorsed by some Protestant leaders, such as Martin Luther himself.⁷¹⁸

Political theorists took up this idea; they recommended the prince ‘to imitate the

⁷¹² ‘... parece quedar bien acreditadas las restricciones mentales, con justa causa, y los equívocos y palabras amphibológicas.’ Benavente y Benavides, *Advertencias para Reyes*, p. 503.

⁷¹³ Matthew 10. 16: ‘Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.’ Also his mother, the Virgin, practiced this concealment of feelings, and ‘with great honesty, she dissimulated her sorrow, disdaining its honours, this divine rose’ (Íñigo de Mendoza, *Coplas de Vita Christi*, ed. by Julio Rodríguez Putértolas, Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1968, p. 101).

⁷¹⁴ Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un príncipe político cristiano*, empresa 44, Gracián, *Oráculo manual*, p. 72.

⁷¹⁵ Origen, *Contra Celsum* IV, 18.

⁷¹⁶ Augustine, *De symbolo ad catechumenos*, in PL 40.

⁷¹⁷ There were, of course, some exceptions. For instance, the English Dominican Robert Holcot (d. 1349) considered God perfectly capable of ‘asserting something false and with the intention of deceiving a creature’ (*Sententiarum*, bk. II, quaest. 2). On this issue see: Katherine Tachau, ‘Robert Holcot on Contingency and Divine Deception,’ in *Filosofia e teologia nel Trecento*, ed. by Luca Bianchi, Louvain-la-Neuve: Fédération internationale des instituts d’études médiévales, 1994, pp. 178-188.

⁷¹⁸ Luther, *Lectures on Genesis*, vol. V, p. 151. On the idea of God as dissimulator among Protestant theologians see: Denery, *The Devil Wins*, pp. 88-94.

greatness of God, who rules the world without revealing secrets⁷¹⁹ and described Heaven as a state structured in different levels of information and knowledge. According to Nunez de Castro:

In the best ordered Republic, which (...) is Heaven, angels remain friends, but no theologian doubts that the angels of the highest hierarchy, as those closer to God, know several things that they hide from the angels of the second order, and these inferior angels are aware of it. Thus, communicating secrets is not necessary to preserve affection; rather the opposite, in order to conserve it among men it is better not to reveal them.⁷²⁰

Similarly, some theorists claimed that ‘sometimes’ God ‘dissimulates the injuries’ of men either to ‘forget’ them or to ‘postpone His revenge.’⁷²¹ This idea is already in the works of authors such as Antonio de Guevara and it was used both to encourage mercy in monarchs and to explain God’s passivity in the face of the many crimes and sins that plagued the world.⁷²² According to the Jesuit Antonio de Castro, ‘God uses dissimulation with justice to punish human dissimulation.’ He does so because He knows ‘that lesson is bigger and the terror in hearts more universal when he employs a dissimulated rigour, rather than a rigour openly exposed.’⁷²³ Vicente Mut argued the same to explain why God did not stop the Franks when they invaded the Iberian Peninsula in the sixth century and sacked several Christian cities. According to Mut:

If at that moment God did not strike them down it was because He did not want the punishment to seem like revenge. God is a merciful father and He

⁷¹⁹ ‘... imitar la grandeza de Dios, que hace gala de gobernar el mundo, sin tener necesidad de manifestar secretos.’ Núñez de Castro, *Libro historico político*, p. 60.

⁷²⁰ ‘Los Ángeles, en la República más bien ordenada, que (...) es la del Cielo, amistad conservan entre sí (...) y no ha dudado Teólogo ninguno que alcanzan muchas cosas los Ángeles de la primera Jerarquía, como más allegados a Dios, que se les esconden a los de la segunda; y muchas perciben estos, que las retiran de los inferiores, luego el comunicar los secretos, no son gajes, sin que no pueda conservarse el cariño; antes bien entre los hombres, para que dure, será diligencia precisa el no comunicarlos.’ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁷²¹ ‘Algunas veces’ God practices ‘la disimulación de las injurias,’ either to ‘olvidarse’ or in ‘retardación de venganza.’ Vicente de Burgos, *Traducción de El Libro de Proprietatibus Rerum de Bartolomé Anglicus*, Tolosa: Enrique Mayer, 1494. I use the ed. by María Teresa Herrera & María Nieves Sánchez, Salamanca: Universidad, 1999, fol. 11r.

⁷²² Guevara, *Libro llamado Relox de príncipes*, chap. 27, p. 773.

⁷²³ ‘Usa Dios de disimulación con su justicia para castigo de la disimulación humana (...) y es lo cierto, y experimentado, que cuanto con mayor disimulación obra el celo de Dios en estos lances, con solo un rigor disimulado obra más escarmiento, y más universal pavor en los corazones, que con muchos rigores ejecutados al descubierto.’ Castro, *Fisonomía de la virtud*, p. 245.

does not punish at the time of the offense. He delays it, so anger could not make the sentence bigger, nor could it interfere with piety. He dissimulates, but he does not forget the punishment.⁷²⁴

Casting God as a consummate deceiver is not surprising considering that, ultimately, the world itself, as His Creation, was also dominated by deception. From the late sixteenth century, many authors interested in dissimulation rushed to examine ‘the symbols of lies (...) that God wanted to put in nature,’⁷²⁵ and soon concluded that the specular dynamic of false appearances was ruling the entire universe and all the creatures that inhabit it. Dissimulation, explained Juan de Salazar in 1619, ‘is a virtue taught by God and by nature, through trees, plants, and animals (...) of whom kings and princes should learn the way they should rule their kingdoms and states.’⁷²⁶ According to Juan de Horozco:

Deception is an industry without malice, but just ingenuity and art, and we should not have scruples about it, because the world is filled with this way of deception, being used by as many animals as there are on land and water, which were taught by nature so they could survive with it. And if we consider the holy deception that which God used with us in the uncertainty of death, we would have no doubt that [deception] sustains the world.⁷²⁷

For many early modern intellectuals, deceit was intrinsic to existence: a universal pattern of behaviour that allowed the survival of all beings:

Birds, and animals, and also fish, they all use deception to survive. Trees and plants also deceive, promising cheerful flowers and fruits, which are not ripe

⁷²⁴ ‘Si en aquel instante Dios no [los] fulminó es porque el castigo no pareciera venganza: es Dios un piadoso padre, no ejecuta el azote al tiempo de la ofensa, dilata a otro tiempo el castigo, para que la cólera no pueda hacer grande la pena, ni pueda estorbar la piedad. Disimula, pero no deja el castigo.’ Mut, *El príncipe en la guerra y en la paz*, p. 98.

⁷²⁵ ‘... símbolos de la mentira (...) que quiso Dios poner en la naturaleza.’ Padilla, *Elogios de la Verdad e invectiva contra la mentira*, chap. 10, pp. 123-134.

⁷²⁶ ‘... es virtud enseñada por Dios, y por la naturaleza, en los árboles, plantas, y animales (...) de quienes los Reyes y Príncipes aprenden el modo que han de tener en la gobernación de sus Reinos y Estados.’ Salazar, *Política española*, pp. 155-156.

⁷²⁷ ‘Y si se entiende del engaño, que es de industria en que no hay malicia, sino ingenio y arte, no hay en qué poner escrúpulo, pues de esta manera de engaño está lleno el mundo, usando de él cuantos animales hay en la tierra y el agua, con admirable industria enseñados de la naturaleza, para que con eso se sustenten. Pues si miramos en el engaño santo de que Dios usó con nosotros en la incertidumbre de la muerte, que duda habrá de que con esto se sustenta el mundo.’ Horozco y Covarrubias, *Emblemas Morales*, fol. 10v.

yet, but seem fresh. The stones, although being senseless stones, deceive us with their fake glare, and lie, pretending to be what they are not.⁷²⁸

2. THE PROFANE HISTORY

But the Bible was not the only source of thought consulted by early modern theorists. Machiavelli had built his *realpolitik* attending ‘not to the doctrines of the great theologians,’ but the ‘natural reason’ of things. Iberian authors also took this road and tried to unravel ‘the precepts, rules, and warnings for the right government of human life’⁷²⁹ attending to ‘natural reason’ and ‘experience.’ According to the thinking of the time, such ‘experience’ could be of two types. On the one hand, there was the personal experience, that is, the practical knowledge that each individual treasures throughout his life. On the other, the collective experience, whose testimony was revealed to us through the study of history. Saavedra Fajardo explained it this way:

History is politics’ mentor and who better to teach the prince to reign, because in it is present the experience of all past governments and the prudence and judgment of those who ruled [before him]. [History] is an advisor that at all times is with him.⁷³⁰

It is therefore not surprising that many Iberian writers resorted to historical precedents in order to justify political deception. Two different traditions were used. On the one hand, we find several references to classical history, increasingly known thanks to the studies conducted during the Renaissance. We have already emphasised the importance

⁷²⁸ ‘Las aves y animales; también los peces tratan allá de sus engaños, para conservarse mejor cada uno. Engañan los árboles y plantas, prometiéndonos alegre flor y fruto, que al tiempo falta y lo pasan con lozanía. Las piedras, aun siendo piedras y sin sentido, turban el nuestro con su fingido resplandor, y mienten, que no son lo que parecen.’ Mateo Alemán, *El Guzmán de Alfarache*, Madrid: Várez de Castro, 1599. I quote the ed. by Jose María Micó, Madrid: Cátedra, 1998, vol. I, p. 73.

⁷²⁹ ‘... los preceptos, reglas y advertimientos que se dieron para [la conservación del Estado] y para todo el gobierno de la vida humana.’ Álamos de Barrientos, *Tácito español, ilustrado con aforismos*, dedicatoria al Duque de Lerma, fol. 28r.

⁷³⁰ ‘La historia es maestra de la política, y quien mejor enseñará a reinar al príncipe, porque en ella está presente la experiencia de todos los gobiernos pasados y la prudencia y juicio de los que fueron. Consejero es que a todas horas está con él.’ Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un príncipe político cristiano*, empresa 4.

that Tacitus's works had in this process. To them we should also add the writings of other great Roman historians, such as Sallust (d. 35 BC), Caesar (d. 44 BC), Titus Livius (d. 17), Plutarch (d. 120), and Suetonius (d. 130), whose lessons now came to complement the teachings of Aristotle, Plato, Socrates, Seneca and other classic philosophers. In their histories early modern authors found a number of the example of heroes, such as Hercules, Lysander (d. 395 BC), and Alcibiades (d. 404 BC), who often employed dissimulation to defeat their enemies and wore the skins of a lion and a fox, implying the need to combine strength with cunning.⁷³¹ They also evoked the lives of many Roman rulers, such as Servius Tullius (d. 534 BC),⁷³² Augustus (d. 14),⁷³³ Tiberius (d. 37),⁷³⁴ Nero (d. 68), Trajan (d. 117),⁷³⁵ and Marcus Aurelius (d. 180),⁷³⁶ who managed to remain in power through the systematic use of deception.

On the other hand, Iberian authors resorted to the example of numerous medieval and early modern kings who masterfully used duplicity without qualms or moral hesitation. From 'Pelagius, who dissimulated well (...) his feelings for Menuça,'⁷³⁷ to the emperor Philip II, model of Christian prudence and deceit.⁷³⁸ Among them, two monarchs stood out, and were considered the perfect archetypes of dissimulation. The first was Louis XI, King of France (d. 1483), who supposedly argued that dissimulation was the sole skill required to rule. According to Juan de Campo y Gallardo, 'he did not

⁷³¹ See for example: Silva, *Instrucçam Politica De Legados*, chap. 6, no. 6., pp. 83-85; Miguel Solares, *Portugal Libertado*, p. 110; Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un príncipe político cristiano*, empresa 43; Rivadeneira, *Tratado de la religión y virtudes que debe tener el príncipe cristiano* p. 524; Mariana, *De Rege et regis institutione*, bk. II, chap. 10;

⁷³² Vid. Jufre del Águila, Melchor, *Compendio historial del descubrimiento y conquista del Reino de Chile*, Lima: n. pub., 1630, disc. 3, no. 4.

⁷³³ Baños de Velasco, L. *Anneo Séneca, ilustrado en blasones políticos y morales*, p. 506.

⁷³⁴ Vid.: Bermúdez de Pedraza; *El Secretario del Rey*, Madrid: Luis Sánchez, 1620, disc. 6; Gracián, Baltasar, *El Héroe*, Madrid: Diego Díaz, 1639, primores 2 and 17; Mártir Rizo, Norte de Príncipes, chap. 21; Mur, Luis de, *Tiberio ilustrado con morales y políticos discursos*, Zaragoza: Diego Dormer, 1645, p. 18; Narbona, *Dotrina politica civil*, aphorism 85; Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un príncipe político cristiano*, empresa 42.

On this topic see: Álvarez-Ossorio, 'Proteo en palacio,' pp. 121-123; Toffanin, *Machiavelli e il "Tacitismo"*, pp. 35-59.

⁷³⁵ Barreda, Francisco de, *El mejor príncipe Trajano Augusto. Su Filosofía Política, Moral y Economica, deducida y traducida...*, Madrid: viuda de Cosme Delgado, 1622.

⁷³⁶ Guevara, *Relox de príncipes*, chap. 36 and 38.

⁷³⁷ '... don Pelayo bien disimuló (...) el sentimiento que tuvo con Menuça.' Alvia de Castro, *Verdadera razón de estado*, fol. 53r.

⁷³⁸ Salazar, *Política española*, proposit. 8, sect. 3, p. 180; Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un príncipe político cristiano*, empresa 44.

want his son, the prince Charles, to know anything more than that; since he thought that observing it was enough to have his kingdom well governed, with calm and peace, and to be loved by everyone.⁷³⁹ The second one was Ferdinand II (d. 1516), taken by Machiavelli as a model for his *Principe* and considered by Iberian authors a peerless dissimulator. They praised his skilful use of deception to defeat the Moors in the War of Granada (1492) and his great patience, which allowed him to receive every stroke of fortune with a smile, dissimulating his grief like a silent anvil under the hammer.⁷⁴⁰

⁷³⁹ 'Ludovico Rey de Francia (...) no quiso que su hijo el Príncipe Carlos supiese mas letras que las de estas palabras: considerando que observándolas tendría su Reino bien regido, y con mucha quietud, y paz gobernado, y sería amado de todos.' Campo y Gallardo, *Monarchia perfecta*, bk. I, chap. 2, pp. 10-11.

⁷⁴⁰ See, for example: Blázquez Mayoralgo, *Perfecta razón de estado*, fol. 55r; Solórzano Pereira, *Emblemata Regio-política*, emblem 43; Vitrián, Juan, *Las Memorias de Felipe de Comines ... de los hechos y empresas de Luis undecimo y Carlos octavo, reyes de Francia*, Amberes: Iuan Meursio, 1643, vol. I, chap. 127, p. 117.

CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

The real history of consciousness
starts with one's first lie.

JOSEPH BRODSKY

In this thesis I have tried to explain how the notion of lawful deception played a central role in theological and political discourses, and how it led to forging a new view of the world and human interactions –a view that today we consider characteristic of Modernity.

Initially, medieval thought was dominated by the authority of St. Augustine, who in the fifth century condemned lying as intrinsically sinful and evil. European scholastics envisioned the good Christian as an *homo fenestratus*, whose existence should be governed by total sincerity. Consequently, they banned deception as an offense to God that would jeopardise communication and coexistence among men. Nevertheless, this vindication of full transparency began to receive important modifications as its incompatibility with the reality of a world in which openness was not always possible or desirable became evident. This process began in the thirteenth century, following the establishment of the Sacramental Seal and the inquisitorial process, and reached its breaking point by the mid-sixteenth century in the context of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. It was then when, relying on casuistry, early modern moralists advocated the use of devices such as verbal equivocation and mental reservation as a lawful third way between the prohibition of lying and the necessities of real-life. Thus, deception went from being a mortal sin to a morally acceptable mechanism to protect secrets that should not be revealed, as well as to prevent any unlawful questioning and any injustice by authorities.

At the same time, the notion of deception experienced a profound transformation in the literature on politics and statecraft. Throughout the sixteenth century, thinkers like Machiavelli, Lipsius, Botero, and Rivadeneira justified deception as the only way to reconcile the sincerity requested by religion and the duplicity and secrecy needed to ensure the preservation of the state. This intellectual process began in Italy, and received important contributions in Central Europe. However, it was in Iberia where it reached its maximum development. Between 1595 and 1700, the territory produced more than 70 treatises that legitimated and supported the political use of deception in a way unknown in the rest of Europe.

Combining the currents of tacitism, neostoicism and Catholic casuistry, Iberian authors justified the Prince's deception as a duty of his office. According to them, the Prince was forced to deceive in order to protect himself and his Republic from the deceptive world, keep the *arcana imperii*, please all his subjects, and administer justice or forgiveness, as required. They supported this rationale with examples from sacred and profane history and by associating deception with some of the main Christian virtues –such as prudence, self-sacrifice, patience and tolerance. Thus, what the Italian humanists had justified as permissible despite falling outside the limits of Christian morality, became justified in Iberia as an intrinsic part of ruling. Medieval thinkers saw Christ as the embodiment of truth. Early modern authors, on the contrary, described him as 'the best dissimulator,' and considered deception as part of God's creation.

I will now address some ideas that have been left outside the scope of this text and that I would like to address in the future. It is important to note that this justification of deception was not limited to the figure of the prince. The sources I have cited usually focus their analysis on the prince, as he was considered the head of state and a model that all the subjects should follow. But it is undeniable that their conclusions were meant to extend to virtually all men involved in governance (otherwise, they would not have been published and circulated as they were). In fact, from the late sixteenth century, there appeared in Iberia several treatises that recommended the use of deception to

favourites (*validos*), ministers, advisors, secretaries of state, diplomats, and so on.⁷⁴¹ Thus, the Latin formula '*Qui nescit dissimulare nescit regnare*' became a motto to every member of the state structure.

And this is just the beginning. As I delved deeper into my research, I realised that the theoretical acceptance of deception not only affected the theological and political discourse, but also spread to other spheres of society leading to fundamental changes in the ways of understanding social interactions, religious practices, and artistic creation. The Augustine friar José Laynez (d. 1667), a clergyman fairly well known for his writings in defence of Olivares, reminds us that 'no one escapes deception; from the rustic to the politician, from the barbarian to the statesman, from the vassal to the prince.'⁷⁴² I have found a number of treatises that recommend the use of deception to magistrates, prelates, captains, doctors, lawyers, courtly ladies, heterodox believers (Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Muslims), the poor, and many other social groups. My desire now is to study these sources to provide a complete view on this process, which can be considered among the most transcendental and overlooked in the history of early modern ideas. Specifically, I would like to focus on three aspects:

1. The first area to address is deception as a pattern of social behaviour. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries deception was theorised and practiced by the privileged classes as an essential mechanism for survival and prosperity in the treacherous environment of the Court. This process began with Baldassare Castiglione in 1528, continued with authors such as Pietro Andrea Canonieri, Edward Herbert,

⁷⁴¹ See, among others: Ramírez de Prado, *Consejo y consejero de príncipes*, chap. 2, pp. 63-81; Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un príncipe político cristiano*, empresa 43; Laynez, *El privado cristiano*, chap. 29, pp. 245-246; Pedro Maldonado, *Discurso del perfecto privado*, Biblioteca Nacional de España, ms. 6778, fols. 11r-16v; Mateo Renzi, *El Privado Perfecto, del Doctor Don Matheo Renzi, al Exmo. Sr. Don Gaspar de Huzmán, Conde de Olviarez, Sumilier de Corps de Su Majestad*, Biblioteca Nacional de España, ms. 5873, fols. 18r and 159r; Pedro Fernández Navarrete, *Instrucción solida para ministros de estado en la que se manifiesta poder*, Madrid: Manuel Martín, 1774, p. 24; Anonymous, *Apuntamientos políticos, reducidos a quatro respectos, que el Privado ha de guardar*, Biblioteca Nacional de España, ms. 5873, fols. 48r-51r; Juan Antonio de Vera y Zúñiga, *El embajador*, Seville: Francisco de Lyra, 1620, esp. disc. 2, fols. 86r-89r; Benavente y Benavides, *Advertencias para Reyes*, chap. 22, pp. 484-508; Gaspar de Varela, *Discurso para el Embaxador conde de Castro, del modo como se a de gobernar en la Embaxada de Roma...*, 31 de Mayo de 1609, Biblioteca Nacional de España, ms. 8755, fol. 95r; Gabriel Perez del Barrio, *Secretario y Consejero de señores y ministros*, Madrid: Martín de Balboa, 1613, bk. VII, fol. 278r

⁷⁴² 'El engaño nadie se niega, desde el rústico al político, desde el bárbaro al estadista, del vasallo al Príncipe.' Laynez, *El privado cristiano*, p. 237

Pierre Charron, Pio Rossi and Diego Sarmiento, and culminated around 1650s with Baltasar Gracián, who claimed that ‘dissimulation is the most practical sort of knowledge’ that no one can have.⁷⁴³

Moreover, and contrary to common belief, this vital transformation was not limited to courtiers. Although with different forms and manifestations, it affected the whole spectrum of society: from the palatial nobility to the most miserable of beggars. Not in vain, the Spanish *Diccionario de Autoridades* (1726) defined the rogue (*pícaro*) as someone ‘crafty and cunning, who with the art of dissimulation gets what he wants.’⁷⁴⁴ Throughout the early modern age, deception was adopted as a philosophy of life for all members of society. They restored it as a defence mechanism to escape the repressive power of Churches and States, but also as a means for reducing internal tensions and improving relations among the members of the community. My intention is to study the treatises by Erasmus, Giovanni Della Casa, Stefano Guazzo, Antonio de Castro, Pedro Figueroa and other authors who realised that without a ruse there could not be privacy, and argued that deception was a necessary evil to ensure certain levels of freedom and social harmony. This is, I believe, an essential and overlooked chapter of the long ‘civilizing process’ identified by Norbert Elias that is still to be written.

2. Next, I intend to analyse the use of deception as a mechanism of resistance to power. Many scientists, philosophers and religious minorities of this period (Crypto-Jews and Crypto-Muslims in Iberia, Nicodemists in Italy, hidden Catholics in England, Libertines in France...) employed deception to hide their heterodox beliefs and avoid persecution from the Inquisition and the State. In their lives, deception functioned as a ‘technology of the self’ (Foucault) and an ‘impression management technique’ (Goffman), helping them to find that elusive balance between the antithetical principles that governed their existence as an ontological (being vs. seeming), religious (orthodoxy vs. heterodoxy) and social (public vs. private) level. To justify their duplicity, many of these minorities created theoretical rationales in which they reflected on the importance

⁷⁴³ Gracián, *Oráculo manual*, aphorism 98.

⁷⁴⁴ ‘... astuto y taimado, y que con arte y disimulación logra lo que desea.’

of inner piety over their external actions and appearances, thereby laying the foundations for some of the ideas that would revolutionise modernity in the following decades, such as freedom of worship, scepticism and atheism.

3. Finally, I would like to discuss the fascinating and overlooked relationship between deception and art. Writers like Francisco de Quevedo were not only active creators of the doctrines of lawful dissimulation, but also some of their most influential disseminators. Here I would study, on the one hand, the role played by the early modern theatre in the transmission of these theories of behaviour, both to the aristocracy and the common people. On the other, I would like to show how the notion of deception shaped art during the period. As George Steiner pointed out, 'the question of the nature and history of falsity is of crucial importance to an understanding of language and of culture. Falsity is not, except in the most formal or internally systematic sense, a mere miscorrespondence with a fact. It is itself an active, creative agency.'⁷⁴⁵ The human capacity to lie, to change the reciprocity between words and the world, stands at the heart of many major literary works (i.e. *Don Quijote*) and conspicuous characters of the period –such as the deceptive character of Nature, the obsession with appearances and the theatricality of the Universe.

It is evident that early modern society did not invent deception. But it is also certain that it did invent its possibility, by recognizing it as an intrinsic part of the world and human relations. This led to some of the most characteristic features of Baroque culture and opened the door to some of the most transcendental changes of sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe, such as the creation of a new politic governed by reason rather than faith, the secularization of social behaviours, and the emergence of the notions of individualism, privacy and freedom of thought. For all these reasons, I claim that deception played an important role in the shaping of Modernity.

⁷⁴⁵ George Steiner, *After Babel*, Oxford: University Press, 1975, p. 214.

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