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Chapter 10

A plea for hypocrisy: pragma-philosophical considerations

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Abstract

This chapter shows to what extent hypocrisy is more ubiquitous and essential than one may think. There are however degrees of hypocrisy that I highlight by elaborating a continuum of the phenomenon that ranges from insincere politeness to deliberate deception. Politics being one of the fields where hypocrisy has been shown to be inevitable, I use the satirical political TV series *Veep* (HBO 2012-2019) to illustrate what I propose as a “Hypocrisy Principle”. This principle comprises several maxims which consist of flattering and (dis)simulating, each using different forms of language and being the preserve of a certain type of hypocrites. I develop the notion of ‘civil hypocrisy’ for the lighter side of the phenomenon. The darker socially unacceptable side involves the notions of duplicity and simulation that can go all the way towards self-deception.

Keywords

politics, TV series, Hypocrisy Principle, flattery, dissimulation, deceit, civil hypocrisy

1. Introduction

Ask anyone on the street and they will tell you that hypocrisy is a morally condemnable attitude and that it should be unreservedly denounced – and they will probably add that it is rampant in the world of politics. In a similar way to manipulative discourse including lies and deception (Sorlin 2017), it could be argued that hypocrisy is more pervasive and more essential than one might think. This is what this chapter intends to demonstrate. Hypocrisy has something of the ubiquity of lies that Galasiński has shown to be one of the propensities of human beings:

We lie not to offend others; we lie to get away with being late for work or not meeting a deadline. The intuition that deception is something normal rather than abnormal in our lives and communicative practices is confirmed by numerous studies (e.g., Barnes, 1994; Nyberg, 1993; Zagorin, 1990). (Galasiński 2000:2-3)

I contend that certain forms of hypocrisy pertain to “normal” behaviour, and they are even “inevitable” in certain communities of practice, politics being the most obvious one as shown by Grant (1997) and Runciman (2008). In fact, as Feinberg puts it in his book entitled *Hypocrisy: Don't Leave Home Without It* (2002), hypocrisy seems part and parcel of what makes us civilized. For him, the question is not who is and who is not a hypocrite, “Everyone is. The only variant is the degree of hypocrisy practiced by every person” (59). To prove the inevitability of hypocrisy, he recalls an experiment for sociology students to carry out, consisting in never misleading the addressee about their genuine and sincere intentions:

Several years ago a sociologist at an American university proposed an experiment when the class was studying ‘honesty’. He suggested that for one entire day the students be totally honest in all their relationships. After a half day of speaking nothing but the truth, a female student was reported by her roommate to the psychiatrist at the University Health Center. The roommate thought that the sociology student was having a nervous breakdown. **Life without dissimulation is impossible in what we call civilized society.** (Feinberg 2002:59, my emphasis)

This chapter can be read as a plea for something that we all practice (to different degrees) but that we do not like to be associated with. Our traditional (western) philosophy of language based on rational interaction between reasonable human beings cooperating willingly by telling the truth, in a clear and direct manner without any circumlocution or unnecessary information (Grice’s 1975 maxims) appears not well equipped to grasp this distinctly human feature. I contend that verbal hypocrisy can be seen as a protective shield¹ that is taken away in more authoritarian regimes and/or discourse.

My aim is to give a pragmatic approach to what has been rarely studied in pragmatics and sociology (see Wieting 2015 as an exception on sport and religion). I will start by establishing the “pragmatic space” (Jucker and Taavitsainen 2000) of hypocrisy and try to foreground its frontiers. Since verbal hypocrisy is particularly rampant in politics and hard to

¹ See also Kittay (1982:289) who puts forward the idea of hypocrisy as the arm of disadvantaged people that enable them to “preserv[e] the dignity of our personhood”.

observe in everyday life, I will use the satirical political series *Veep* (HBO 2012-2019) as illustrations to my theoretical points. Indeed political TV series uniquely give access to the backstage of politics where characters' intentions and genuine feelings are revealed to the viewers as ratified recipients (Sorlin 2016). I have chosen *Veep* because it is a comedy wherein traits are exaggerated, making visible what is not visible in real life since hypocrisy can be said to be mostly (but not entirely) a covert pragmatic act. After trying to define hypocrisy against what it is not (section 2), I will display the wide scope of verbal hypocrisy from more or less harmless social behaviour towards greyer or darker zones of its use (section 3), before considering how these different degrees can be sustained by a Principle of Hypocrisy in pragmatic terms (section 4). I will conclude on what I label 'civil hypocrisy' that can only be exposed with awkward social consequences (section 5).

2. Establishing the frontiers of a pragmatic space

I will be speaking here of "verbal hypocrisy" rather than "situational hypocrisy" – situational hypocrisy includes cases where there is a mismatch between private practice and public announcement/discourse. The difference between verbal and situational hypocrisy is the same as verbal and situational irony: irony is linguistically created in the first case and situationally produced in the second. A good example of situational irony would be firemen leaving the fire station to put out a fire while leaving the gas on and setting the fire station on fire. The examples of hypocritical misalignment between words and deeds are legion. We only need to think of Al Gore advocating environment protection and having a house with high energy consumption in the US or Jérôme Cahuzac in France, Minister for the Budget under the François Hollande presidency, who was supposed to fight tax evasion while being himself a tax-dodger. His swearing in front of the whole *Assemblée Nationale* in 2013 "I have never had a bank account abroad" is an instance of "situational hypocrisy" based on plain lying or even, in his case, (self)deception.

Unlike for instance Chapters 3 and 4 (see Gillings and Tanskanen this volume), this chapter will not focus on emic layperson understanding of hypocrisy but on second-order etic understanding, as I propose an academic theorisation of the term. Given the negative connotation associated with hypocrisy and the pervasiveness of the phenomenon in politics, characters in the series hardly refer to their beliefs or actions or those of others as hypocritical. My proposal is therefore to venture a theoretical construct based on the observation of characters' utterances or responses in the context of a whole series giving access to their histories, intentions and goals. To do so, I will first need to establish the pragmatic space of verbal

hypocrisy under our western democratic “civilized” skies. Theoretically speaking, it would have to be situated between two frontiers, a rapport-maintenance orientation on the one hand (in Spencer-Oatey’s 2008 terms) and a rapport neglect/challenge one on the other (Figure 10.1).

	Rapport-maintenance orientation	Rapport-enhancement orientation	Rapport neglect/challenge orientation
Relation to truth	Truth and moral bias	‘Civil’ lies	‘Post-truth’ -> the total lie
Pragmatic principle	Cooperation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • politeness • tact • “communicative altruism” 	Hypocrisy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self and Other-oriented 	(Social) uncooperativeness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • impoliteness/face-attack • lack of tact - threats • a focus on self

Figure 1. Delimiting the pragmatic space of verbal hypocrisy

The left-hand side of Figure 10.1 defines cooperative interaction, borne by an ideal of systematic truthfulness, sincerity and ethical honesty between participants. It would combine Grice’s Cooperative Principle (1989) with Leech’s Politeness Principle (2014), whereby the Speaker is either tactful (refraining from saying hurtful things) or using conventional politeness strategies to ensure social harmony, graciously acknowledging the Hearer’s face, by humbling herself and enhancing the other, in strict obedience of Leech’s (2014:91) altruistic maxims of communication: give a high value to H’s wants (*generosity*), qualities (*approbation*), feelings (*sympathy*) and opinion (*agreement*) while giving a low value to S’s wants (*tact*) and qualities (*modesty*). The other side of the pragmatic space, the frontier beyond which hypocrisy is no longer hypocrisy, could be exemplified in totalitarian regimes where hypocrisy does not exist anymore; only pure lies do, or what Runciman (2008:189) calls “the total lie”. He exemplifies this by quoting Orwell’s newspeak in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* where language becomes transparent to the point of becoming unable to hide, colour or conceal anything at all. In Orwell’s dystopia, “War is Peace / Freedom is Slavery / Ignorance is Strength” because the party, in full control of performative language, says so. For Runciman indeed (2008:183), “imperialism without hypocrisy is called fascism, and it is one of the distinguishing marks of fascism, as of various other totalitarian regimes, that

it does not need to be hypocritical”. One of the redeeming traits of hypocrisy thus seems to be its capacity to keep the sword “in the scabbard” (Runciman 181). But authoritarian discourse can be proffered under democratic regimes. We only need to think of Donald Trump’s frankspeak in our post-truth era: truth seems to have become indifferent recently – *The Washington Post*’s data base shows that Trump had made 18,000 false or misleading claims by his 1,170th day in office.² During Trump’s presidency, traditionally tactful and polite diplomacy³ appears to have given way to outspokenness and impoliteness on the other side of the Atlantic. Persuasive argumentation was often replaced by hot-blooded threats with potential world-wrecking consequences. Figure 10.2 recalls Trump’s memorable tweet indirectly addressed to North Korean Leader Kim Jong Un in 2018.



Figure 10.2. Trump’s intimidating style

The tweet in Figure 10.2 testifies to an absence of polite humbling of the self or of tactful discourse. President Trump not trying to repair relations with world leaders but asserting power instead and creating the strongest impression of himself.

² <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/04/14/president-trump-made-18000-false-or-misleading-claims-1170-days/> That is an average of 15 a day that has been brought up to 23 with the coronavirus crisis.

³ For Goel (2015:23), the soft skill of diplomacy is employed to avoid ‘coercive tactics’ or ‘military power’: “in an informal and social sense, diplomacy is the employment of tact to gain strategic advantage or to find mutually acceptable solutions to a common challenge”. The link between diplomatic language and politeness is also underlined by Mikalayeva (2011:5-6): “One may speak of diplomatic ‘language’ referring to a polite and careful style, attentive to the expectations of the interlocutor and respectful of her integrity”.

Similarly, during the Covid-19 pandemic, Trump's 2020 letter to the World Health Organisation (WHO) reads as an explicit threat with the prototypical conditional implicative 'if...then' (see Limberg 2009:1378-9)⁴. Not at all caring about the maintenance of good working relationships, Trump states his will in no ambiguous terms: if WHO does not serve Americans' interests better, steps will be taken, beyond any consideration for world solidarity (see Figure 10.3).

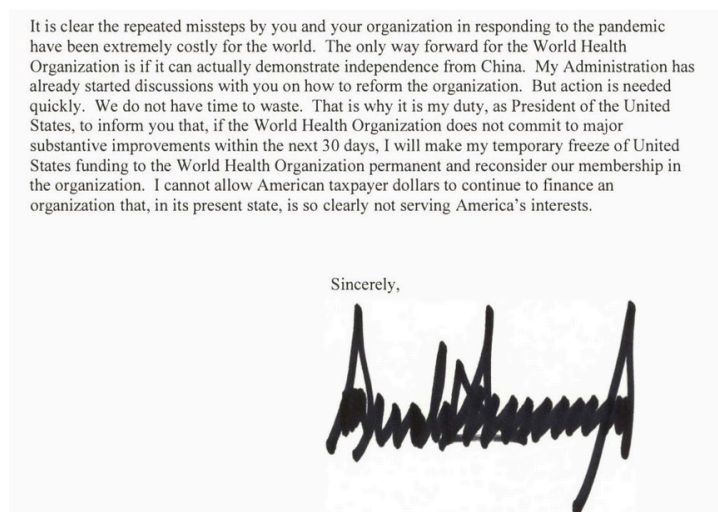


Figure 10.3. Trump's pointing fingers in 2020, fixing a final warning for WHO

One could say that Trump's tone has the merit of some form of "honesty". As such it runs counter to diplomatic political language that tends to use underspecified words which could be deemed 'hypocritical' in their unassertive roundabout way of (not) telling things. Trump was probably elected on the sincerity of his tone (with little consideration for truth) defending American interests at all costs, unashamedly boasting about the self (and by extension, his country) and belittling the other. What Trump is doing here in fact is doing away with what Elster (2005:59) calls "argumentation" where assertions aspire to *validity* in favour of "negotiation" where assertions consist of promises and threats, claiming *credibility* instead.

From the two frontiers represented in Figure 10.1, we can start to sense the pragmatic force of hypocrisy. Adopting a second-order pragmatic perspective on hypocrisy, we can come to define the phenomenon as

⁴ Trump makes use of "conditional threats" ('No Y before you do X', for instance)" (van Eemeren 2010:150) following the logic: no more money before you clearly dissociate from China.

consisting in attenuating the illocutionary force of language and in protecting rapport. Indeed one of the redeeming features of hypocrisy seems to be to work as a protective shield in order to preserve harmonious (world) relationships. Having quickly sketched in the external borders of the pragmatic space of Verbal Hypocrisy (henceforth VH) as a communicative phenomenon rather than a situational one, we will need to delve further into the notion. I am tentatively advancing that hypocrisy has a ‘rapport-enhancement’ orientation in Spencer-Oatey’s terms (2008) and define it as a pretence strategy in impression management consisting in attributing false or insincere credit to self and other for the sake of self-promotion or civil behaviour.

3. Pragmatic degrees in hypocrisy

In this section, VH will be presented in its full scope and illustrated with a wide array of examples starting with instances bordering on the left-hand side frontier highlighted in the previous section before getting to what constitutes the core of the phenomenon. Lastly, as we move further towards the second frontier, on the right-hand side, simulation at its extreme will be shown to take the form of self-deception where the frontier between truth and lies no longer matters.

3.1. A continuum

To echo Feinberg (quoted in the introduction) and his argument of possible degrees in hypocrisy, I’m proposing a continuum that would extend from a form of polite-based VH on the left-hand side to more clearly deceptive forms as we get towards the right-hand side (Figure 10.4).

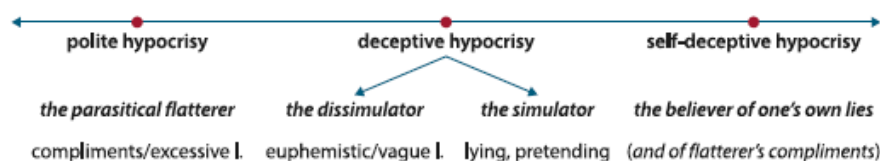


Figure 4. The scope of hypocrisy

The central part of the continuum deals with the deceptive forms of hypocrisy in line with the etymology of the term, from Greek *hupokrisis* ‘acting of a theatrical part’ and *hupokrinesthai* ‘play a part, pretend’. Deceptive hypocrisy oscillates between dissimulation (you attenuate what you truly think, using non-committal vague language not to antagonise your potential voters in politics) and simulation (you give false impressions to

take others in, using calculated shamming and pretending).⁵ For Runciman (2008:86), if both “fall short of the truth”, only “simulation is a deliberate policy of deception”. While the simulator lies “industriously”, the dissimulator has sometimes no other choice than keeping things to herself as “full disclosure” could be “extremely hazardous” in public life (2008:86). The practice of simulation can go as far as engendering self-deception. This is the case when you end up believing the untruth of what you are saying, especially when you perform hypocrisy very regularly.

The following sections will give illustrations of the whole scope and the different degrees of hypocrisy, trying to identify types of hypocrites and the specific language they may use.

3.2. Hypocritical compliments

Holmes (1988:446, 1995:117) defines the act of complimenting in the following terms: “a compliment is a speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker, usually the person addressed, for some ‘good’ (possession, characteristic, skill, etc.) which is positively valued by the speaker and the hearer”. The definition does not say anything about the sincerity of the one attributing credit to the complementee. And indeed false compliments, although flouting the maxim of quality, can be made for politeness’s sake when the Speaker feels she has to make a compliment out of concern for the other’s face (and her own). We have all faced the situation in which we felt compelled to compliment our interlocutor soliciting our opinion on her new haircut or a newly acquired pair of shoes. What then would make a false compliment (designed to “give credit” to the other) a hypocritical one?

I would contend that a false compliment turns into a hypocritical one when the aim is not merely to protect the faces of the interactants and avoid social conflict but to further the Speaker’s own interest. In the following extract from *Veep*, the reactions to Selina Myer’s new haircut verge on polite hypocrisy on the part of her whole staff, some refraining from saying anything out of what can be called “coercion tact”⁶, others making excessive compliments to obviously please her and avoid any reaction that might run counter to their own interest – like losing their job for instance for she is their boss and has reward power over them. VH thus serves as a protective shield in (1).

⁵ Drawing from Bacon, Runciman distinguishes dissimulation meaning “concealing, holding back something” from simulation which “requires going out of your way to put something in the public domain that you know to be false” (Runciman 2008:94).

⁶ Just as we speak of ‘coercion lies’ which occur “when a speaker believes that *p* is false, states that *p*, and does so, not with the intention to deceive, but because she is coerced or frightened into doing so” (Lackey 2013:239).

(1) *Selina (campaigning to be President) arriving in her campaign HQ*

Selina (*showing herself putting hands on her hips waiting for reactions*): ReBRANdEd. (pause: 1s) What do we think, I LOVE it
Mike (*in a constrained laugh*):

ah ah I love it I love it looks great

Ben: I never knew you had so much neck

Selina: I KNOW

Mike: I mean in a good way I think necks are neat

Selina: I'm gonna show everybody mySELF

Amy: ok

Selina: Let's go do it

$$[\dots]$$

Amy: M'am this is the haircut that your head's always wanted but was too afraid to ask for

Selina: Right

Amy: Everything about it says

Speech writer (*whispering behind Amy*):

Tomorrow

Amy: Tomorrow

Selina: Yeah. (*Arriving in the room full of helpers behind computers*) Hello, oh no don't feel shy if you feel like you must applaud, then (.) you know (*Mike clapping his hands silently behind her to show the team what to do*) (*applause*) oh (.) no it's fine (*pretending not to want the applause with a dismissing gesture*) don't don't.

(Extract 1 -S03E08 2'26-2'66)⁷

The faces and reactions of Vice President Selina Myers' staff imply they do not particularly like the new haircut. In Extract (1), she is obviously fishing for compliments, guiding the others' constrained responses. Hypocritical compliments follow as a consequence of this coercion, the aim being to sustain social cohesion and maintain good work relations in order not to displease the political candidate they are supporting. Strongly invited to join Selina in her own self-appraisal ('I love it'), they feel compelled to align with Selina's opinion, especially as the use of the first-person plural leaves

⁷ Here are the transcription conventions used for the transcribed scenes in this chapter:

(.) *slight pause*

(pause: n seconds) *longer pause with duration noted in number of seconds*

Capital letters *strong salient emphasis*

? *marked rising intonation*

, *slightly rising intonation*

. *marked falling intonation*

() includes transcriber's comment

them limited space for disapproval: ‘what do **we** think’. Polite (or what I would call ‘civil’) hypocrisy can thus take the form of compliments conforming to what is expected in the context – whether or not they like the new hairstyle is even irrelevant here, especially when there is an imbalance of power between the participants.

But compliments can go further into hypocrisy when they leave the area of what Watts (2003) calls “politic” behaviour or “appropriate” language (that is what we, conventionally or by etiquette, are supposed to say to appear polite in society whatever we truly think) and enter something that comes in excess of what is needed. In terms of compliments, that would be the difference between “ceremonious compliments” (Jucker 2009:1614) in contexts of diplomacy, using conventional politeness to pay a courtesy to the host, and overpoliteness in the form of excessively commendatory language. Polite compliments turn into flattery when they aim at furthering the speaker’s aims while enhancing the other’s face (for which the speaker only feigns to care). As Eylon and Heyd (2008:389) show there are two types of flatterers that they draw from Aristotle. Both use “excessive friendliness”. The first one is the “snake” who uses manipulative flattery under the form of “excessive friendliness aiming at [the speaker]’s advantage” (389); the second takes the guise of the obsequious, servile “dog” who “suffers from the same excessive need [for excessive friendliness] but has ‘no end in view’”. They are both concerned by the addressee’s self-image whose vanity and ambition they exploit but the first does so to use the flatteree whilst the other does not. Indeed the “dog” type only desires to be face-pleasing to the person they flatter in order to reduce the distance between them⁸. Following Danziger’s (2020) study of the functions of flattery, we could say that the snake uses flattery in exchange for something else they want to obtain. This would be an instance of what Danziger (2020:420) calls “transactional flattery”. The dog’s flattery on the other hand is a “relational” one aiming at “making a relationship closer” (420).⁹

The two types are represented in the political TV series *Veep*. Gary, Selina’s bagman, is of the “dog” type, praising Selina to make her feel good at all times, beyond any maxim of quality. When for instance Selina asks him if her eyes are puffy (S07E04), he uses praise as an answer: “I’m

⁸ The flatteree could not care less about the dog’s friendship though, hence the pathetic nature of the unidirectional attachment.

⁹ Danziger identifies a third function in between transactional and relational flattery that she names “self-promotional”: “Flattery is used for image management with the ultimate goal of getting people to like the addressee” (Danziger 2020:420, see also chapter 2, this volume). In our case, the dog also desires to be liked but does not care so much about his self-image as that of the other (Selina here). For Eylon and Heyd (2008:701), that is a main difference between flattery and hypocrisy: “the difference between the two vices is that while flattery is concerned with the merits of another person, hypocrisy is primarily concerned with the image of oneself”.

surprised they let you run for president because you look 34 tops". This excessive flattery comes at the cost of self-respect for Gary in his desperate attempt to reduce the hierarchical relationship between them by telling her what she wants to hear, but it cannot be deemed hypocritical. It becomes so when it leaves the "solidarity" with the addressee that complimenting constitutes as a "social strategy" (see Wolfson and Mane 1980, Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk 1989:75) to become opportunistic exploitation. Compliments as used by opportunistic imposters become "pre-acts" for some higher-order goals, preparing the ground for the true wish/request ahead. The hypocritical flatterers can be equated to bribers using words to get what they want.¹⁰ In fact, what makes an utterance hypocritical is not its manifest insincerity, or its excess, but the presence of some ulterior motive or intention behind it, which is why hypocrisy is difficult to identify as one usually doesn't have access to hidden motives (see also Halmari, this volume). Often we need to know about a character, such as Gary in *Veep*, and how he typically behaves, to be able to disqualify him as a hypocrite. Verbal evidence has thus to be completed by behavioural evidence in order to identify VH.

Praising can misfire however if the flatteree is not taken in by the flattery. In the following extract Vice President Selina Myers is flattered by the compliment of a West Wing intern, Jonah Ryan. The latter uses the very same words a few seconds later with Ben Cafferty, President Stuart Hughes's chief of staff. While Selina proves particularly susceptible to flattery in (2), Ben sees through Jonah's manipulative verbal bribery and sends him packing.

- (1) Jonah: I'm so sorry to interrupt madame Vice President I am (.)
Jonah Ryan
Selina: Ok
Jonah: I'm (.) oh (showing his badge) I'm a a (.) West Wing
intern
Selina: Oh congratulations
Jonah: I just want to say it's such an honour to meet you. The
only reason that I voted for Hughes it's because you were
on the ticket.

¹⁰ As Eylon and Heyd (2008:686) indicate, if an act of flattery can be equated with bribery "using words rather than money or goods and appealing to the addressee's vanity rather than to his material self-interest", the difference is that in bribery, the terms of the deal "are laid on the table", the currency being "real", "its value is undiminished by its use". A subtle flatterer usually intends to flatter without the addressee being totally aware of the nature of flattery: it can only succeed "if the flatteree believes the flatterer has made an *honest* compliment. Since it is the perception in the eyes of the flatteree that matters, flattery may consist of a statement known to its utterer to be completely untrue or at least over-inflated in its positive evaluation of the addressee".

(Selina: I'm sure you're not alone)

While Selina is speaking, Jonah catches a glimpse of the president's chief of staff and calls out to him

Jonah: Hello Sir I just wanted to say what a pleasure it is to meet you and the only reason I voted for Hughes is because I knew [you were his chief of staff.

(Ben: [...]) Get the fuck away from me [...]) stay the fuck away from me

(Extract 2 - S06E10 9'30-10'15)

The strategic snake and the weak dog both distort truth, constructing an illusory image of reality, but only the manipulative flatterer can be said to be hypocritical in that their excessive friendliness hides ulterior hidden personal motives. The frontier is indeed thin between altruistic you-first oriented communication and me-first hypocritical communication. The me-first interlocutor only fakes abiding by altruistic politeness maxims but in fact selfishly acts to influence the flatteree in a way that is advantageous to the flatterer. For the flatterer's aim to work however, the flattery should not be over-inflated to the point of raising the flatteree's suspicion. Yet it must be added that human beings have a propensity to be both conscious of the excess and still appreciate it¹¹. As shown in Chan and Sengupta (2010) and Danziger (2020:414), although detected as insincere, flattery can still be effective (see also Chapter 2 on flattery). I will show in the final section that VH can similarly be detected and still accepted for what it is but first we need to investigate VH at its core.

3.3. Dissimulation

As Runciman (2008:8) shows, a hypocrite is "always putting on an act", thus involving the building of a "persona [...] that generates some kind of false impression". In the world of politics, concealment or holding one's true beliefs and feelings back are sometimes the only way not to antagonise voters or influential people. The viewer of *Veep* can easily appreciate how

¹¹ As Eylon and Heyd put it, "no one can completely avoid the trap of flattery", "only God cannot be flattered" (702). Mitchell (1996:835) is along the same line: "the victim is most vulnerable, however, when he or she ardently seeks and expects to find what the deceiver supplies". Selina is an adept at self-deception and very active in it, preferring to believe in Gary's words rather than in other more honest statements that do not correspond to her expectations.

Selina very often forces herself to be friendly with journalists or voters. Her excessive friendliness can be perceived in the high-pitched prosodic tone she adopts, with an “explicit illocutionary force” (Jucker 2009:1617) of niceness that she uses each time she practises small talk with people whose votes she wants. Selina knows all too well she needs to constantly attend to people’s quality face and sociality rights in public (Spencer-Oatey 2002:540), often enhancing her interlocutor’s face for self-promotional reasons. By ‘sociality rights’, Spencer-Oatey means what a person claims she is entitled to in her interactions with others.¹² Hypocritical dissimulation does not aim at deceiving the co-speaker about the speaker’s beliefs but at concealing her personal opinion of the Hearer to make sure the (small talk) interaction goes well, preserving all faces involved. Extract 3 is one of numerous instances in the series in which Selina needs to show consideration for someone she despises. The crate that is referred to in (3) is the one Selina, who is quite small, uses to speak whenever she makes a speech in public spaces.

(3) Selina (*speaking to potential voters*):

- I like that T-shirt
- Amy: Ma’am, Quincy Carter?
- Selina: Yes
- Amy: The editor of the New Hampshire Globe is here to speak with you.
- Selina (*still smiling*):
- oh, God. That Dickensian shitstack?
- Dan: Yeah, well, that shitstack can swing the entire New Hampshire vote
- Amy: That’s why they call him ‘The Endorser’
- (*Carter approaching*)
- Selina (*in a suddenly cheerful tone*):
- Mister Carter
- Carter: ma’am, a pleasure. I see you’ve brought your soon-to-be-famous crate

¹² Spencer-Oatey breaks down ‘sociality rights’ into two subsets:

Equity rights: We have a fundamental belief that we are entitled to personal consideration from others, so that we are treated fairly: that we are not unduly imposed upon or unfairly ordered about, that we are not taken advantage of or exploited, and that we receive the benefits to which we are entitled. *Association rights*: We have a fundamental belief that we are entitled to association with others that is in keeping with the type of relationship that we have with them. These association rights relate partly to *interactional association/dissociation* (the type and extent of our involvement with others), so that we feel, for example, that we are entitled to an appropriate amount of conversational interaction and social chit-chat with others (e.g not ignored on the one hand, but not overwhelmed on the other). They also relate to *affective association/dissociation* (the extent to which we share concerns, feelings and interests). (Spencer-Oatey 2002:540)

Selina: Ooh
Carter: See our online diary piece for details... “crate expectations”
Selina (*laughing*):
Oh, I love it [...]
[...] Selina *agreeing to an interview*
Carter: SPLENDid. Now I am away to lunch. Wine and branzini wait for no man
Selina: Oh my goodness
Carter: Until we meet again
Selina: ok (.) bon appetit
Carter (*leaving and saying with his back turned*):
merci!
Selina (*still fake smiling*):
you fucking douche
Mike: He is a character though
Selina: I HATE those, HATE

(Extract 3 – S03E09, 6’03)

Selina adopts a cheerful attitude through fake smile and laudatory language ('I love it' commenting on his Dickensian pun) only to reveal what she truly thinks behind his back as soon as he has gone, adopting the semantically opposed verb 'hate'. Selina's hypocrisy using politeness strategies is blatantly self-serving. In fact both interlocutors seem to be using 'dissimulation' here.

There are other modes of hypocritical dissimulation though that can take the form of vague language (Zhang 1998, Channell 1994, Jucker et al 2003) with the aim of foregrounding positive elements while euphemising some less avowable others. Among the topics on which no firm positions can be taken in the US when you are campaigning are abortion and guns. Selina spends hours trying to figure out her own position as regards abortion to appear neither pro-life nor pro-choice, although one of her staff members in (4) tries to push her to seem what she is not for electoral reasons.

- (4) Dan: Look, I love abortion, I'm an abortionado, but I would go pro-life in a foetal fucking heartbeat if it meant winning.
Selina: You're suggesting that you would like me to be a hypocrite like Maddox? Ya, ok, you need to go home.
(Extract 4 - S03E02 – 9'42)

What Dan has in mind is a more total form of hypocrisy (telling the opposite of what one thinks to gain votes, see section 3.4 below). Selina wants to opt for a less firm stand on the issue. Although she does not want to call it VH, she still adopts a milder degree of hypocrisy in the end, in the manner of her

direct opponent, the US Secretary of Defense, George Maddox, a potential candidate in the run-up to the election. Maddox is advised by his spin doctor to play down his Christian pro-life beliefs. The statement he makes to the American people appears in (5).

- (5) Science may give us the maths, but we are lost without morality's compass. The right to free speech includes the right to free thought. I can't in all conscience politicize this as an issue. (S03E02 – 15'30)

Maddox is beclouding the issue so as to background his own pro-life position, as Selina points out: "well he fucking fudged it, so now we know he's running for president, that stupid bastard" (S03E02). Her funny answer is telling of the need in politics to hypocritically "run with the hare and hunt with the hounds" when you're running for office and need everyone's vote. Sectarianism can no longer be advocated as it can prove very costly in terms of votes. In his statement Maddox does not say much, situating the issue on a personal moral level that is up to anyone to take up, leaving the responsibility in each individual conscience.

Mitigating one's own thoughts to be sure not to antagonize conflicting interests can best be perceived in the following scene. Initially trying to have it both ways, Selina ends up choosing her political career over her ethical beliefs. She has obtained the freeing of Tibet from the Chinese with the help of Sudan. She initially intended to take a firm stand on women's rights at an Arab human rights conference in order to appear as a daring strong-willed woman politician who can take strong ethical stands. Yet on the day of the conference, the Sudanese colonel who was instrumental in Tibet's liberation is in the conference room – he is even sponsoring the event – and she is warned to play down her denunciation of Sudanese practices if she wants the deal with the Chinese to hold. The discrepancy between what she says eventually and what was planned (and is on her prompter) shows how she tries to mitigate her accusations, the hypocritical behaviour being sanctioned by the premature departure of the Sudanese woman she has promised action to. (6) is the original version of the speech that ran on the teleprompter.

- (6) I rise here to condemn in the harshest possible terms the situation in Sudan. Women's rights are human rights and human rights are non-negotiable. While there has been some very positive progress, there are some practices however that require a firm stance such as female genital mutilation and our stance must be unequivocal denouncement. And so we look forward to the removal of Colonel I-Saleh. (S06E06)

(7) is the edulcorated hypocritical version pronounced by Selina that aims at feigning to uphold the women's cause without antagonising the Sudanese colonel who is present in a room full of men (there is only one woman):

- (7) Gentlemen and lady I rise today to (pause 1s) con(.)sider in the most open-minded of ways the situation in the Sudan. Women's rights are human rights, and human rights (pause 1s.) are part of a diverse pageant of different priorities. Uh, while there has been some (.) very positive progress, there are some practices, however, that require a firm stance such as female genital mutilation and our stance must be (.) Who are we to judge? Don't we in the US (.) we practice male circumcision on boys as young as tiny babies, so (.) uh (pause: 1s) glass houses. And I would also add that it really does help to prevent sexually transmitted diseases as well as (.) certain types of cancer. And female circumcision (pause: 1s) I'm sure you have your reasons. And so we look forward to a bright future. Thank you.

(Extract 5 - S06E07 – 22'58-24'25)

Choosing underdetermined expressions such as “consider” instead of “condemn” allows Selina to tone down the initial on-record attack. The vague adjunct of manner “in the most open-minded of ways” evokes a scalar cognitive process as opposed to the “harshest possible terms” that unambiguously situates the condemnation in language itself. As opposed to the “non-negotiable” adjective stating the speaker's evaluative attitude in no uncertain terms, ambiguity is preferred in the sugarcoated version (“which is part of a diverse pageant of different priorities”), using repetition (“diverse”, “different”), lexical vagueness with terms endowed with “fuzzy”¹³ denotation (“pageant”) as well as vague plurality (inherent in “pageant” and manifest in “priorities”) to diffuse the singularity of the issue. The wordy phrase contrasts with the adjective with the negative prefix (“non-negotiable”) in the original version that clearly makes apparent the impossibility of negotiation on that issue. Likewise “unequivocal denouncement” of the original version (6) is replaced by an argument steeped in cultural relativism denouncing her own patronising (“who are we to judge”), sexualising an issue that she initially placed at the level of universal “human” rights. The abstract semantic features of “bright future” in “we look forward to a bright future” in (7) comes in lieu of a very concrete action towards one specified individual: “we look forward to the removal of Colonel I-Saleh” in (6). The adjective “bright” is not even used in the comparative on a scalar mode (as in “a brighter future” for instance) that would imply that there is something to modify. As Jucker et al.

¹³ See Channell 1994.

(2003:1761) indicate, “vague expressions are themselves an explicit convention device for conveying a lack of commitment”. Verbal hypocrisy here lies in the mismatch between Selina’s initial firm and total commitment to women’s cause and her more tentative assertions, as vague language serves as a shield from a higher degree of commitment.

3.4. Simulation and self-deception

Further to the right on the continuum would be instances not of “dissimulation” (mere concealment) but of “simulation”. Simulation is “conscious deception” which occurs “when a man industriously and expressly feigns and pretends to be that which he is not” (Runciman 2008:85 quoting Francis Bacon). This would amount to a higher degree of manipulation because the speaker’s beliefs are at stake: what the speaker asserts is not something she believes in from the depth of her heart but what she is expected to say on the surface, conforming to positively-valued ethical norms in society that are more likely to have her gain the most votes. It may take the form of lies¹⁴ (as the speaker is saying something she knows to be false) or deception and bullshit when she fakes truly believing some issues that she could not care less about (see also Chapter 2 on deception and bullshit). For Kittay (1982:278), “hypocrisy is a form of deception” in the sense that “one pretends to be other than one is, or pretends to hold beliefs, have feelings, motives or attitudes other than those one truly has or adheres to”. In the case of the conference (example 7), Selina is aware of the tension between preserving her interest and defending women’s rights, trying to do both but failing at being ethically strong-willed, favouring her own personal political interest in the end.

Simulation is when there is a complete tension-free severance between words and beliefs, as part of the political game of winning elections. When one of the candidates to the presidential elections, Joe Thornhill, declares he will always speak his mind, Selina debunks this impossible ideal in politics in (8).

- (8) Joe (on TV): I’m just an honest Joe and I like to speak my mind
 Selina and Ben (*watching him not convinced*): euh
 Selina: yeah, boy, how much would I love to speak my mind on this campaign? Can you

¹⁴ Lies can be deceptive, thus making the divorce between lies and deception uneasy as Lackey (2013:236L) shows. She defines lies thus: “A lies to B if and only if (1) A states that *p* to B, (2) A believes that *p* is false and (3) A intends to be deceptive to B in stating that *p*. Not all lies are deceptive, but some can be”.

Ben: imagine if I did that. Mississippi is a chock-
full of assholes, I don't trust the Chinese,
look I gotta tell you something, I'm not
gonna be able to pass a single piece of
legislation that's really gonna make any fuck
of a difference in your life, so how's that for
my platform
you've got my vote
(Extract 6 – S03E05)

In (8) hypocrisy seems to have reached a higher degree than strategic smarming. In this higher degree, the concealer has turned into an imposter. Towards the end of the series, Selina becomes the genuine hypocrite, practising “a fully deliberate, self-conscious activity, involving shamming, lying, pretending, trickery, all calculated to give false impressions and take others in” (Szabados 1979:201). She thus becomes what Szabados calls a “second-order” hypocrite, adeptly and expertly practising verbal hypocrisy to turn issues/beliefs/situations/people to her own advantage, to the point even of believing what she is saying. As already hinted at, self-deception can be one of the consequences of those practising VH regularly (see Szabados 1979:205¹⁵). Playing on positively valued expectations while campaigning, Selina provides the deceived voters with what fits their expectations, hiding the fact that they will never get what she promises. These deceptive acts are covert acts of communication as the speaker communicates a speech as if it was truthful, concealing what Dynel (2016:184) calls “the second-order communicative intention”:

the first-order communicative intention is made available to the hearer, with the speaker meaning being the *covertly untruthful* (cf Vincent Marrelli 2003, 2004, Dynel 2011) what is said and/or covertly untruthful implicature. [...] The hearer is not meant to appreciate the speaker's underlying second-order intention, which must remain covert for the deception to be successful. (185)

The highest degree of hypocrisy on the continuum (Figure 10.4) is reached in cases of self-deceptive hypocrisy where the speaker becomes what she pretends to be and starts to believe in the constructed image.

¹⁵ “Self-deception often plays an important role in many cases of hypocrisy where the hypocrite is not fully aware that he is a hypocrite or where he actually thinks himself to be sincere” (Szabados 1979:207).

4. The Hypocrisy Principle

The continuum in Figure 10.4 could be said to be sustained by a Hypocrisy Principle in pragmatic terms, but one that would be parasitic on the Principle of (Im)politeness. It remains a covert principle, by which I mean that it is meant to be exploited covertly, the higher-order intentions remaining hidden. It would take the following form:

“Make your contribution at all times overtly polite if covertly insincere; you can use overt flattery or (dis)simulate your feelings and beliefs if required by the context.”

The Hypocrisy Principle would be composed of three different maxims, depending on the degree of hypocrisy (in increasing order):

1. **Flatter** in order to enhance rapport. Use linguistic bribery to put the other in a good mood the better to further your own selfish intentions.
2. **Conceal** your true intentions/beliefs through vague, neutral or non-committal language if that is the only way not to antagonise people with conflicting interests. Do not commit to anything. Evade the issue.
3. **Simulate** sincerity in your deception. Say what is expected by the circumstances to feign satisfying the other. You can say something different from what you have said to another person if needed.

Three short utterances drawn from the TV show will further illustrate the three maxims. Talking about the best way to produce a statement on abortion, Selina tells Mike what they are trying to do in (9).

(9) “We try to figure out how I think about this issue”. (S03E02)

The three-verb utterance takes a hypocritical distance from sincere, direct and heart-felt or spontaneous belief. Belief has to be calculated which is perfectly rendered by ‘figure out how I think’, the verb of opinion (‘think’) being transformed into a dynamic process implicating durative calculation. Selina needs collective advice to come to her own thinking (‘we try to figure out how I think’).

The ability to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds that sustains hypocritical discourse is nowhere better expressed than in the pragmatic sentence in (10) consisting in saying and not saying at the very same time.

(10) “Listen, we have to find a way to say these things without actually saying them” (S07E04)

The context is that of trying to get the white vote by stating what they want (college education, jobs and security, and all this ‘to be denied to African Americans’). The team tries to suggest the racist implicature while leaving open the possibility of denying it, implicating and disimplicating¹⁶ it at the very same time. This attempt consists in beating about the bush by finding a way around the issue in order to make sure they cannot be held accountable for the racist implicature.

Lastly, hypocritical lies can be resorted to for self-promotional reasons. In order to produce the right image of herself as an altruistic politician concerned with the poor fate of the Tibetan people, self-centered Selina plays the modesty card in (11) when receiving a peace prize, thereby constructing the right ethos.

- (11) “You see it’s never been important to me to be honoured publicly but I decided tonight to come not for myself but for Tibet”
(S07E06)

She pretends to have altruistic interests only at heart, while this seeming you-first attitude is highly manipulative (Sorlin 2017) as it hides higher-order intentions concerning the legacy she wants to leave as president.

5. Civil hypocrisy as shared understanding

The constant practice of the Hypocrisy Principle can lead to self-deception through constant playing of the game but this can also make one particularly astute at detecting hypocrisy. The TV show enables the viewer to perceive how VH is detected. Selina, as the Hypocrite in chief (in all its degrees) is an apt metapragmatic commentator. In excerpt (12), The House Speaker (Jim Marwood, speaker of the opposite party) congratulates the newly elected President Selina Myers by voicing his feelings that for Selina are overtly untruthful and insincere.

¹⁶ Grice used this notion without further developing it in a reply to Davidson (Grice 1974). If implicature is for Grice a matter of adding meaning to “what is said” without actually putting it in the linguistic form used, “disimplicature” on the contrary would be a way to convey less meaning than is inscribed in the linguistic form. As Siobhan Chapman (2005:134) shows: “The notion of disimplicature suggests some interesting possible extensions to Grice’s theory of conversation, but it does not seem to be one to which he returned. As it is presented in ‘Logic and conversation’, and therefore as it is generally known, implicature is a matter of adding meaning to ‘what is said’: to conventional or entailed meaning. With the notion of disimplicature, Grice appears to have conceded that the meaning conveyed by a speaker in a context may in fact be less than is entailed by the linguistic form used”.

- (12) Selina: Hey Mr Speaker
 JM: thrilled for you madam
 Selina: oaahhh, see you're being sarcastic
 JM: ASBSolutely thrilled, really
 Selina: oh no see that's sarcasm
 JM: couldn't be more thrilled
 Selina: that is sarcasm
 JM: No it's not (*he is leaving*)
 Selina: It is I see it, ya
 (Extract 7 - S04E01 – 20'36-20'47)

In this extract, Jim communicates some assumptions that are for Selina incompatible with their relationship. She is assessing what he says against the backdrop of their prior experience with one another – which is one of dislike (they belong to different parties). From her point of view, he cannot be happy about her becoming president.

I would contend that Jim Marwood uses a rather conventional expression relative to the context: 'thrilled for you m'am'. Selina has just become the new president. It is normal/expected behaviour, a social 'ought' to congratulate her, but this does not trigger a Generalised Conversational Implicature (GCI) for Selina. She does not hold the belief that the Speaker is being polite. She even draws an implicature of mock politeness/sarcasm. But does Jim really try to cause offence here? More surely he is saving face or ensuring some good rapport for subsequent working relationship with the president, covering himself or protecting his back so to speak. In my framework, these words would qualify as an instance of suitable/appropriate "civil hypocrisy" (based on non-genuine politeness of course). Selina does not want to match the politeness and reciprocate in accordance with the Principle of (Im)politeness Reciprocity upheld by Culpeper and Tantucci (2021¹⁷). Instead, Selina chooses to challenge the compliment through a metapragmatic comment ("you're being sarcastic") rather than letting it go for what it is – some kind of ritualised ceremonious tribute after an election. The more she does so the more excessively polite Jim becomes, with the use of the intensive adverb "absolutely (thrilled for you m'am)" reinforced by the excessive formula "couldn't be more thrilled", maximizing his pleasure at her being president to a suspicious degree. His repetition of the word "thrilled" – which in any case is a formulaic overstatement – only heightens its insincerity; he pointedly doesn't say (e.g.) "no, honestly, I mean it". The interaction is broken up in an awkward manner, neither wanting to

¹⁷ Culpeper and Tantucci (2021:150) give the following definition of the Principle of (Im)politeness Reciprocity (PIR) which is about balancing credit given or withheld: PIR is "a constraint on human interaction such that there is pressure to match the perceived or anticipated (im)politeness of other participants, thereby maintaining a balance of payments."

accommodate the other's point of view in order to politely smooth out the exchange.

I define "civil hypocrisy" as a form of sincere or insincere courtesy paid to the other as required by a situation – here etiquette calls for words of congratulation. Polite/civil hypocrisy is a broader category that includes what Haugh (Chapter 7, this volume) calls "sincere hypocrisy" when dealing with hypocritical offers where the offer may not be genuine but what is genuine is the wish to be perceived by the recipients as one who cares about them (see also Sorlin and Virtanen, chapter 2).

In the scene under study, from the same etic perspective upheld so far, I would argue that Selina detects hypocrisy rather than sarcasm as there is no apparent "violation of sociality rights" in Jim's remarks (see Taylor 2015:135). She exposes a phenomenon that she should have kept covert even if she detected it, as part of the civil game played by human interactants in such circumstances. Jim on the other hand adheres to the HP that consists in being overtly polite and covertly insincere. In (12), Jim's pretence to acknowledge Selina is part of the "civilizing force of hypocrisy", oiling the wheels of civil conversation (see Chapter 2, this volume).

6. Conclusion

This chapter proposes to free the notion of hypocrisy from its dark connotations and offers a broad perspective of the phenomenon as a theoretical construct. VH was shown to occupy a wide scope between two borders with a vast array of possible acts ranging from compliments/white lies to outright manipulation/ black lies. Establishing its pragmatic space allowed us to perceive the redeeming traits of VH when it serves as a protective shield, favouring diplomatic tact rather than outright show of force through impoliteness and threats. I brought forward a Hypocrisy Principle that would be covertly parasitic on the Politeness Principle. Simulation and dissimulation are based on a show of appearances and/or a downtoning of language, consisting in either attenuating or totally silencing what one would really want to say.

Lastly, the chapter has argued that VH is ubiquitous in human interactions as a social ought that needs to be played along with. Although VH can be detected, it can only be pointed out at the price of challenging the rapport that VH was meant to maintain or enhance. Social harmony seems to call for some degree of accepted/acceptable hypocritical courtesy required by circumstances for face-protection and cohesion. The line of social acceptability is crossed when VH borders on outright deception. I propose that lighter forms of hypocrisy that can be called "civil hypocrisy" are pervasive in face-to-face interactions. Hypocritical utterances of this kind may not be genuine but their purpose is to attend to all faces. From an

etic pragmatic perspective, hypocrisy turns out to be a more complex and multi-faceted phenomenon than its traditional moral conception as a vice could make us think.

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