

## The Art of Transmission

The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.

—Eccl. 1:9

In his last will Bacon states that the “durable part” of his memory consists in his “works and writings.”<sup>1</sup> But how are we to approach these works and writings in light of the vast period of time that separates us from them? It is to answer this question that we turn to one of our authorities on philosophical hermeneutics, Hans-Georg Gadamer, who teaches us that, since writing is a kind of “alienated speech,” in a “special sense” hermeneutics depends on the “art of writing,”<sup>2</sup> and who thus invites us to take our primary hermeneutical task to consist in a revivification of the writings’ speech by means of an interpretation of the art by which it was written down.

But let us take one step back. For it is Bacon himself who considered securing the “durable part” of his memory a subject matter important enough to devote a separate book of *De Augmentis Scientiarum* to what he calls the “art of transmission” (DA 6, I: 650–712), which he classifies as one of the “rational arts” (DA 5.1, I: 616) because it includes all the arts relating to “words and discourse,” and because reason, whose “footsteps” are words, is as the “soul of discourse.” It consists in “disclosing and enunciating what has been discovered, judged, and laid up in memory.” As its “principal part” concerns the writing of books, so its “relative part” turns on the reading of books (DA 6.1, 6.4, I: 651, 654, 708). And it was a “great reader of books”<sup>3</sup> who observed that the “Images of mens wits and

knowledges remaine in Bookes.” For, as our principal writer explains himself, “so immortall and incorruptible a thing did knowledge” seem to be to the “Philosophers which were least diuine, and most immersed in the sences,” and who “denyed generally the immortality of the soule,” that they thought that the “motions” of the “vnderstanding” might “remaine after death” (AL 1.102, 52–3, III: 318). But if this is true, and a book is as it were the mirror of its author’s soul, then hermeneutics ultimately becomes the art of re-ensouling Bacon’s writings by reading the thought that is transmitted by their speech.

We went a few steps too far, though. For if all human thought is ultimately determined by the historical horizon within which it takes place, the act of transmission can never or never wholly be consummated. Although according to Bacon himself reading is either “guided by teachers,” or “accomplished [perficitur] by man’s own industry” (DA 6.4, I: 708), our “historical conscience” teaches us that our only true teacher is the “historical consciousness” becoming aware of its historical horizon, within which it can become truly “conscious of itself.” Our own “industry,” it is true, enables us to transmit the author’s writings to our time by transposing ourselves and our own horizon into the author’s horizon, but it is the historical consciousness that relates both horizons to itself before effecting a new hermeneutical horizon that makes understanding possible. And after having effected a fusion of our horizon and the author’s horizon that overcomes their respective particularity, the hermeneutical circle’s prime mover comes full circle by acquiring a higher universality within particularity.<sup>4</sup>

But the act of making the historical consciousness transmission’s principal agent presupposes that the nature of the subject matter of Bacon’s writings is determined by Bacon’s particular horizon. It therefore presupposes what could only be the outcome of a hermeneutic effort. Besides, it was Bacon himself who put the horizon of his writings in a broader context by emphasizing that books are “capable of perpetuall renouation” if “exempted from the wrong of time” (AL 1.102, 53, III: 318). We can therefore agree with Gadamer’s hermeneutical principle of the “anticipation of completeness [Vorgriff der Vollkommenheit]”<sup>5</sup> only to the extent that it becomes coeval with a hermeneutical openness to the possibility that we can only or only completely understand Bacon’s writings after having understood what Bacon considered his horizon to be. And we can endorse Gadamer’s emphasis on the importance of “prejudices” for hermeneutics only in the sense that the principal prejudice that could prevent us from understanding the subject matter of Bacon’s writings is the prejudice that a mere consciousness of history suffices to effect a historical consciousness.<sup>6</sup>

## Context

In any event, it is Bacon himself who testifies to the illuminative power of the writings' historical context for hermeneutics by explicitly counselling readers of books to take the "times" within which they were written into consideration, because these "in many cases giue great light to true Interpretations" (AL 2, 131, III: 414). It therefore seems to be the right time to put Bacon's early intellectual upbringing in context.

Sir Nicholas Bacon, who was Lord Keeper of the Great Seal during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1558–1603), must have intoxicated his youngest son with politics almost prematurely, as Rawley tells us that Her Majesty often termed young Francis *the young Lord-keeper*.<sup>7</sup> Lady Anne Bacon, formerly Anne Cooke, was the sister of the second wife of William Cecil (Lord Burghley), who was Queen Elizabeth's Secretary of State and Lord Treasurer. She was the daughter of Sir Anthony Cooke, a former tutor of Prince Edward, who subsequently became King Edward VI. The Protestant Sir Anthony Cooke fled to Geneva in 1554 to become one of the Marian Exiles after Mary Tudor had acceded to the throne in 1553, and had restored England to Roman Catholicism. A pious and zealous Puritan and a fervent supporter of the Nonconformists, Lady Anne was widely esteemed for her learning, and she is still known for her English translation (1564) of the *Apologia Ecclesiae Anglicanae* (1562), written by John Jewel, Bishop of Salisbury. The *Apologia*, which became one of the most influential attempts to establish the Church of England in the early Elizabethan years, tried to counter accusations of heresy by emphasizing the continuity and inner harmony of Christianity. Lady Anne took a personal interest in the translation, considering it to be the performance of her religious duty.<sup>8</sup> As it was she who saw to the early education of Francis and his older brother Anthony, the brothers were, in the words of a contemporary biographer, given "a solid grounding in the severer sort of radical Protestantism," the importance of which in later life would turn out to be "considerable."<sup>9</sup>

After having spent some of their early years (probably 1566–1569) under the tuition of John Walsall, a scholar from Christ Church, Oxford, Francis and his older brother Anthony were sent to Trinity College, Cambridge in 1573, where they were left in the care of John Whitgift, Master of Trinity and later Archbishop of Canterbury. In his capacity as Archbishop of Canterbury (1584–1604) Whitgift, whom Macaulay describes as a "tyrannical priest,"<sup>10</sup> was to pursue a line of strict orthodoxy. His intransigent policies were directed against the Nonconformists, and they provoked a pamphlet war that came to be known as the "Marprelate Controversy"

(1588–1589). The main combatants in this war of libelers were an unnamed Puritan writer who employed the pseudonym Martin Marprelate, and the Established Church with its leading figure Richard Bancroft. Bancroft was Whitgift's chaplain and his successor as Archbishop of Canterbury (1604). In his notorious *Sermon preached at Paules Crosse* (1589), he had approvingly referred to John Jewel's apology "to the justifieng of our doctrine," which had, ever since its publication, "obtained principall commendation amongst all the apologies and confessions" set forth "by any church in christendome."<sup>11</sup>

In 1575, Bacon left Trinity College, and in 1576 Sir Nicholas sent him to France, where he spent almost two and a half years (1576–1579) under the tuition of Sir Amias Paulet, ambassador to the French King and a fanatical Puritan. Bacon mainly lived in Paris, the center of the French Wars of Religion. It was the immediate aftermath of St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre (1572), in which thousands of Huguenots had been slaughtered by a Roman Catholic mob. Less than ten years after his return to England, Bacon closely witnessed the attempted invasion of his home country by the Spanish Armada (1588), to which Pope Sixtus V had granted a large subsidy—the same pope who had renewed the papal bull *Regnans in Excelsis* (1570), which had been issued by Pope Pius V, and which had declared Queen Elizabeth a heretic.

These experiences and observations, in conjunction with our author's upbringing, which had already made him well versed in the effects of religion on politics, can only have increased the confidence that speaks from his first work: *An Advertisement touching the Controversies of the Church of England* (1589). For although his two most influential teachers among contemporaries must have advised him otherwise, albeit for contrary reasons, Bacon decided not to pay attention to the inner voice of Lady Anne's and John Whitgift's tuition when he directed his *Advertisement* against both the Nonconformists and the Established Church. We therefore should not be surprised to find that Lady Anne, who wanted her sons to "serve the Lord duly and reverently," would soon afterward complain to Anthony that his brother Francis was "too negligent herein."<sup>12</sup> Bearing witness to a moderation reminiscent of the credo "Mediocria Firma,"<sup>13</sup> which had been chosen by Sir Nicholas as the family motto, Bacon's pamphlet aimed at finding "correspondence in their minds which are not embarked in partiality," and which "love the whole better than a part."<sup>14</sup>

Many other events that left an imprint on the young Bacon's mind should be mentioned in the context of the foregoing, events ranging from the Battle of Lepanto of 1571 to the assassination of King Henry III in

1589, and including the series of religiously motivated plots and conspiracies that led up to the execution of Mary Stuart in 1587. But this rudimentary sketch of Bacon's early intellectual biography may suffice to justify the conclusion that even from a tight correlation between Bacon and the times in which he lived and wrote, we cannot infer the nature of the influence these times exerted on him, unless we put Bacon's historical horizon in the context of what Bacon himself considered his horizon to be.<sup>15</sup>

Let us therefore transpose ourselves once more into the context of the art of transmission. At first sight it seems strange that it is only after having arrived at the "Appendices" of his book on the art of transmission that Bacon sheds light on the art of reading his transmitted writings, especially as it is Bacon himself who remarked that it is "strange, how long some Men will lie in wait, to speake somewhat, they desire to say; and how farre about they will fetch; And how many other Matters they will beat over, to come neare it." But it is also Bacon who considered this strategy to be a "Thing of great Patience, but yet of much Use." Moreover, it is in the same context that Bacon speaks of a person he knew, who used to "put that which was most Materiall, in the *Post-script*" of his writings, "as if it had been a By-matter" (E XXII "Of Cunning," 71–2, VI: 429, 431). Having learned that a thinker is to be read in context, we are willing to be patient enough to let Bacon speak of the writings of the person he knew best.

Immediately after having distinguished between the "guidance of teachers" and "man's own industry," Bacon takes over guidance by teaching us how to use the critical part of our own industry. The first part of the "critical part" of the art of transmission concerns the "refined correction and amended edition of approved authors" (DA 6.4, I: 708). Bacon points out that the "rash diligence" of some men has done "no little damage" to these studies. For, he explains, when coming across something they do not understand, many critics "at once suppose there is a mistake in their copy." According to Bacon, this perverse habit of critics has resulted in the fact that the "most corrected copies are often the least correct," as "someone [non-nemo] prudently remarked" (DA 6.4, I: 708). Strangely enough, though, Bacon illustrates this point by misrelating and misquoting a passage from Tacitus's *Historiae*, and by misquoting and falsely criticizing an unnamed critic for having expunged a word and having replaced it by another word.<sup>16</sup> Since in the *Advancement of Learning* our approved author had illustrated the same point by making a similar mistake in order to illustrate precisely the danger of making such mistakes (AL 2, 131, III: 414),<sup>17</sup> we may reasonably assume that these obvious blunders were intentional. Besides, Bacon elsewhere emphasizes that it contributes more to practice when the

“discourse attends on the example” than when the “example is subjugated to the discourse.” For, he explains, when the example is used to “serve as the basis of the discourse,” it is presented “with all the attendant circumstances,” which may “sometimes correct and sometimes supply the discourse, as a pattern for imitation and practice” (DA 8.2, I: 769). In other words, it is only by considering the “discourse” in light of the “example” that the reader is drawn into true discourse. But although the aforementioned examples only teach us not to confuse pedantry with understanding, the fact that modern editors have “diligently” supplied them with corrective comments only proves the ongoing relevance of Bacon’s warning against mistaking the “most corrected” for the “most correct.”<sup>18</sup>

In the context of the second part of the “critical part” of the art of transmission, which concerns the “interpretation and explication of authors,” Bacon explicates his intention to some extent. He points out that in labors of this kind some critics have been visited with the “bad disease of passing over many of the obscurer places, while expatiating and lingering to the point of nausea on those places that are likely enough [in satis vero],” as if the critic’s object were “not so much to illustrate the author as to show off on every possible occasion his own erudition and various reading.” Bacon adds that it were especially desirable, and that it is a matter pertaining “not to the appendices but to the principal part of the art of transmission,” if every writer who treats “arguments of the nobler and obscurer sort” should “subjoin his own explications,” so that “the text is not interrupted by digressions and explications, and the notes do not deviate from the writer’s intention” (DA 6.4, I: 709). But since Bacon never subjoined notes to his arguments, and the blunder immediately preceding this sole “note” of his was “obscure” precisely because it was so obvious, his principal intention in stimulating our critical faculties seems to be to encourage us to look for “internal” explications when he treats arguments “of the nobler and obscurer sort.” If this is true, then Bacon is right in counselling that “*Optimi Consiliiarii mortui; Books will speake plaine, when Counsellors Blanch*” (E XX “Of Counsell,” 67, VI: 426).

But the majority of modern editors and commentators neither blanched nor blushed when they vindicated their own erudition by “correcting” some of the many obscurities contained in Bacon’s writings. Sometimes out of negligence, more frequently out of indifference disguising itself as diligence, or out of a scholarly conscience unaware of its paternalistic pride, they imposed their own standard of careful writing on Bacon by assuming that his blunders were due to a fault of his memory.<sup>19</sup> But if they had taken into consideration the most obvious internal explication, which consists in a

careful comparison of the wording and the respective contexts of the original quotation and the misquotation, they would have noticed that simply leafing through Bacon's works already indicates the implausibility of their claim. For Bacon sometimes employs long Latin quotations without making any mistake,<sup>20</sup> and he sometimes omits part of a quotation in order to adapt it to the context in which he uses it.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, Bacon's commonplace book, *A Promus of Formularies and Elegancies* (1594–1596), which contains quotations and misquotations of Virgil, Horace, Erasmus, and Ovid, among others, as well as of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Psalms, turns out not to be the store room of Bacon's memory that some scholars thought it was. According to one contemporary scholar, the commonplace book illustrates Bacon's "method of gathering texts from the past," a method that became "intimately related to the development" of Bacon's "philosophical and scientific methods."<sup>22</sup> Spedding also looks upon the commonplace book as an "illustration of Bacon's manner of working." Since many of the quotations are "slightly inaccurate," the great nineteenth-century editor of Bacon's works concludes that Bacon was "in the habit of sitting down from time to time, reviewing in memory the book he had last read, and jotting down those passages which for some reason or other he wished to fix in his mind."<sup>23</sup> But how to interpret the fact that Bacon never uses the vast majority of the quotations and misquotations contained in his commonplace book, whereas the vast majority of the quotations and misquotations that he does use are nowhere to be found in the commonplace book? And how to interpret the fact that, although the commonplace book contains correct quotations that are subsequently used correctly, it also contains misquotations that are subsequently used as misquotations in the context of an argument that makes one suspect that Bacon already had that or a similar argument in mind when he wrote the misquotation down in his commonplace book?<sup>24</sup> Finally, how to interpret the fact that the commonplace book contains correct quotations that were subsequently distorted by Bacon in the context of an argument that makes the distortion almost immediately intelligible?<sup>25</sup>

For those editors of Bacon's books or interpreters of his mental faculties, however, who still remain unwilling to concede there is the *Comentarius Solutus* (1608), a collection of private notes from which it appears that Bacon composed four notebooks on the basis of his readings. In these notebooks, of which the commonplace book was the least important, our author carefully differentiated between different kinds of arguments, distilled from different kinds of books, and meant for different kinds of purposes.<sup>26</sup> That Bacon reserved the most important arguments for his most carefully written books is already indicated by his counsel that only "some Few"

books are to be “read wholly, and with Diligence and Attention,” and that only in the case of “the lesse important Arguments, and the Meaner Sort of *Bookes*” “Extracts” may be made by “Others.” For else, he warns, “distilled *Bookes*, are like Common distilled Waters, Flashy Things” (E L “Of Studies,” 153, VI: 498).

## Method

Fortunately enough, the dead counselor is alive to our need for guidance on how to read his most carefully written books, as appears from the fact that he devoted a whole chapter of the sixth book of *De Augmentis* to what he calls the “doctrine concerning the method of discourse.” Since placing the method of discourse “in the service of other arts” leads to “passing over many things relating to it that are useful to know,” Bacon decided to turn it into a “substantive and principal doctrine.” He emphasizes, however, that it is pointless to speak of a “unique method,” because “uniformity of method cannot be accommodated to the multiformity of matter.” Those who employ a unique method “torture their object with the laws” of this method, and if the object “does not aptly fall into the dichotomies of method,” it is “either laid aside or forced out of its nature.” It is therefore method that must “accommodate itself to the subject matter that is treated,” which goes a long way toward explaining why Bacon calls the method of discourse the “prudence of transmission” (DA 6.2, I: 662–3, 666). But notwithstanding method’s adaptive potential, Bacon must have known that it is only the coincidental that can make discourse actual.<sup>27</sup>

The first difference of method consists in the difference between the “magisterial” and the “initiative” method. Whereas the initiative method “discloses and lays bare the very mysteries of the sciences” by transmitting them for examination to the “sons of science,” the magisterial method “conforms the sciences to the vulgar” in order to have the vulgar use the sciences “as they are in their current state” (DA 6.2, I: 663–4).

The second difference of method, the “exoteric” and the “acroamatic” or “enigmatic” method, is “affinitive to the first as far as its intention is concerned,” although “in itself [reipsa] it is almost its contrary.” For although the two methods have in common that they both separate vulgar from select auditors, they are opposed as regards the manner of transmission. Whereas the former method employs a manner of transmission “more open than usual,” the latter employs a manner “more concealed.” The intention of the exoteric–acroamatic or exoteric–esoteric method is to “move the vulgar



away [summoveantur] from the secrets of the sciences,” and to “admit” only those who have either “received the interpretation of parables through the hands of teachers,” or who have “wits of such sharpness and discernment as can pierce the veil” (DA 6.2, I: 664–5).

The problem underlying a mixture of commonality and contrariety could hardly have been indicated more aptly than by means of a cursory reference to the one instrument the two contrary methods have in common. For it is not only the exoteric–esoteric method but also its contrary that uses parables, as appears from Bacon’s discussion of “parabolic poetry.” After emphasizing that he considers poetry not with respect to “words,” but with respect to “matter,” Bacon points out that parabolic poetry, which is the “most eminent form” of poetry, “reduces objects of the intellect to the sense.”<sup>28</sup> It is used “ambiguously and for contrary purposes.” For parables are used either for “illustration and as a method of teaching,” or for “enfoldment and as an artifice for concealment.” As a method of teaching they were “much used in ancient times,” because the “wits of men were hardly subtle enough to conceive the discoveries and conclusions of human reason that are now vulgar and trite, but that were at the time new and out of the common, unless they were reduced to the sense by images and examples.” Bacon adds that “even now, and at all times, the vigour of parables is exceptional, because arguments cannot be made as perspicuous, and true examples cannot be made as apt as parables.” Parables that serve for “enfoldment,” on the other hand, are used for “such things the dignity of which deserves that they be discerned as it were through a veil,” which is the case when the “concealments and mysteries of religion, politics, and philosophy are covered by fables or parables” (DA 2.13, I: 518, 520–1).<sup>29</sup>

To simplify matters for the sake of clarity, one could say that parables as a “magisterial” device “reduce objects of the intellect to the sense” in order to let the imagination of the vulgar tide over the time that is needed for certain “discoveries and conclusions of human reason” to become “vulgar and trite” enough to actually unite them with the sense (cf. AL 1.29, 23, III: 284–5). They are used in order to gradually unveil to the vulgar what has to be provisionally veiled from them, and they ultimately serve to bridge a provisional gap between the initiates and the vulgar to the largest extent nature allows. As spokesman of the initiates Bacon confirms this point in *Novum Organum* by saying that the initiates are pleased that the sciences are used as they are in their current state, because what the initiates bring about “cannot be wholly reduced to vulgar apprehension, except by means of effects and works” (NO Pr. 4, I: 153; NO 1.128, I: 220). As works require time in order to be effected, parables make the imagination of the

vulgar already perceive as sensible what by means of works does not become perceptible to the senses until after a certain period of time. Parables as an artifice for concealment, on the other hand, permanently veil from the vulgar what they want the select to unveil by reuniting with their own intellect the objects that the author's intellect reduced to the sense. They ultimately serve to widen the perennial gap between the select and the vulgar as far as prudence counsels, although the actual width of this gap is inversely proportional to the degree to which the select sensed it from the beginning. One could therefore say that the gap separating the select from the vulgar is ultimately identical to the difference in consciousness of those idols that can "never wholly be torn out" (IMDO 14–5, I: 139; DA 5.4, I: 643–6; NO 1.38, 41 ff., 45–60, I: 163–72). But the fact that the difference between the initiates and the vulgar is almost as bridgeable as the difference between the vulgar and the select is unbridgeable already indicates the natural tendency of commonality to oblivate the consciousness of contrariety.

We are running ahead of things, though. Because the difference between the vulgar, the select, and the initiates made his subject matter as it were multiform, Bacon had to paint his veils with multiple colors in order to prevent them from being lifted by the wrong persons or in the wrong manner. And because our author reserved the treatment of the perennial problems of politics, philosophy, and religion for his books, and books are available to every man who can read, this implied that he had to take long-term measures in order to secure that the reading man who is vulgar would or would ultimately be "moved away from" the very book the reading man with a "piercing" wit similar to his own was to be wholly drawn into. In other words, Bacon had to speak more than once by speaking once, that is, he had to conceal from the vulgar what he wanted to say to his equals in a speech that is and is not directed to both.

Although Bacon underlines this most important point by discussing the difference between the exoteric and the esoteric method as a difference within one method,<sup>30</sup> in an earlier version of the argument he made the same point in a less concealed way by describing the exoteric–esoteric method as "publishing in a manner whereby it shall not be to the capacity nor taste of all, but shall as it were single and adopt his reader" (VT, III: 248). The exoteric veil ultimately moves away vulgar readers by seeming to be in conformity with their opinions and prejudices, whereas only wits of such sharpness and discernment as can truly pierce the exoteric veil can unveil the esoteric center. The fact that Bacon discusses or in his expressions even conforms to the opinions and prejudices of the vulgar therefore does not justify the conclusion that Bacon's horizon was absorbed by the horizon of

the vulgar. After all, it was Bacon himself who emphasized that “Bookes (such as are worthy of the name of Bookes) ought to haue no Patrons, but Truth and Reason” (AL 1.24, 20, III: 281), seeing that the patronage of truth and reason consists in its refusal to submit to any patron. But at the same time it is only by understanding Bacon’s reasons for conforming in expression that we can understand his reasons for diverging in thought. In other words, we can only lift Bacon’s veils by piercing them after discerning his intention in drawing them and painting them with certain colors. We must think through the opinions and prejudices of the vulgar as well as Bacon’s reasons for diverging from them without neglecting them. But since opining oneself above the vulgar is a prejudice of the vulgar, we should guard ourselves against mistaking the opinion of knowledge for the knowledge of opinion, although the road to knowledge necessarily goes through opinion. Since the esoteric center is therefore also always on the exoteric surface, we can only reach the center by continuously descending from the surface and ascending to the surface.<sup>31</sup> It is only by considering all the parts separately and jointly that we can unveil the whole in its unity and trace back Bacon’s movement of thought. And it is only in this case that the relative part of the art of transmission is transhistorical to the extent that hermeneutics turns into the philosophic activity of tracing the threads of the web Bacon’s mind has spun.

As one cannot prudently approve of the art of concealment except by concealing that one approves of it, we have to go back to one of Bacon’s early and unpublished writings in order to read that exoteric–esoteric writing is “not to be laid aside, both for the avoiding of abuse in the excluded, and the strengthening of affection in the admitted” (VT, III: 248). But modern scholars tend to disapprove of exoteric–esoteric writing, as appears from the fact that they solve the problem underlying its ongoing necessity by disallowing its relevance or by disregarding it altogether.<sup>32</sup> It was, however, well into the modern era that John Toland observed that the exoteric–esoteric method is “as much now in use as ever; tho the distinction is not so openly and professedly approv’d, as among the Antients.”<sup>33</sup>

### Application

At the end of the *Advancement of Learning* and *De Augmentis*, after saying that he has propounded his opinions “naked and unarmed,” Bacon draws our attention to the method of reading that meets the requirements of his method of writing by saying that “in anything which is well set down” he

is “in good hope that, if on the basis of the first reading there emerges a scruple or an objection, the second reading will of itself make an answer” (AL 2, 192, III: 491; DA 9.1, I: 831). In other words, Bacon hopes that the second reading will “unclothe and disarm” what will still be “clothed and armed” at the time of the first reading.

We can best illustrate this procedure and the decisive importance of exoteric–esoteric writing for the possibility of understanding Bacon’s thought by looking somewhat more closely into the most hazardous argument in all of Bacon’s works. In *De Augmentis* Bacon observes that “in the reception and adoption of philosophic truth the same thing happens as in divine truth; *Veni in nomine Patris, nec recipitis me; si quis venerit in nomine suo, eum recipietis.*” However, so he adds, if we consider that this “heavenly aphorism” was applied “primarily to the Antichrist,” the “greatest deceiver of all ages,” we may discern well that the “coming in one’s own name, without regard of paternity, is a bad sign of truth, although it is oftentimes joined with the fortune of *Eum recipietis*” (DA 3.4, I: 549). Our first reading of this argument makes it seem as if Bacon warns against receiving “antichristian” men, who come in their own names, and are to be suspected of untruth because they do not “regard paternity.” By explicitly calling the Antichrist a “deceiver,” Bacon draws our attention to the Heavenly Book that explicitly calls the Antichrist a deceiver (2 John 7). But when we follow Bacon’s lead, we find that we have been deceived by the man who led us into following his lead. For it is exactly the fact that the Antichrist does *not* come in his own name, but goes out from the children of Christ, that makes him the “greatest deceiver of all ages” (1 John 2: 18–22). Earlier in the same paragraph, Bacon argued that where his own conceptions and notions are “novel” and “deviate from the ones received,” he would “retain the ancient words with the utmost religious care” (DA 3.4, I: 548). We therefore suspect Bacon of arguing that in order to be received as a father without being suspected of untruth, he “regards paternity” by “going out from” the Father without “being in” the Father. We find this suspicion confirmed when we have a closer look at Bacon’s version of the “heavenly” aphorism that constitutes the foundation of his argument. For Bacon subtly misquotes the words of Christ by omitting a most important word, since what Christ actually said was that He came in the name of *His* Father (“*Patris mei,*” John 5: 43). By thus misquoting the words of God’s Son, Bacon argues, we conclude, that the Father in whose name he comes is not *his* Father, although his paternity is dependent on the paternity of the Father.<sup>34</sup> But had we not paid attention to exoteric–esoteric writing, and had we not taken Bacon’s misquotation and its context into consideration, we would not have known

that Bacon deceived us into believing that he did not want to precipitate the coming of him whom he said to be detaining (cf. 2 Thess. 2: 6–7).

Since Bacon observed that the ancients “prudently and judiciously” used exoteric–esoteric writing in their books (DA 6.2, I: 664–5), it stands to reason that we look more closely into Bacon’s book on ancient wisdom, especially since it is in this book that Bacon transmits his teaching in the form of parables (DSV EpD1, VI: 619).

In the final fable of *De Sapientia Veterum*, Bacon says that “we find that the *Wisdom of the Ancients* is like grapes ill-trodden: something is squeezed out, but the best parts are passed over and left behind” (DSV XXXI “Sirenes,” VI: 685). As the words “Sapientia Veterum” stand out in different sorts of typeface in the early editions of *De Sapientia Veterum*,<sup>35</sup> and Bacon hardly ever uses the noun “veteres” to depict the ancients, we may reasonably assume that Bacon referred to his own book.

Bacon’s remark calls to mind the description of exoteric–esoteric writing given by the philosopher Maimonides, who himself was a master of the art of writing: “[A] saying uttered with a view to two meanings is like an apple of gold overlaid with silver filigree-work having very small holes . . . the external meaning ought to be as beautiful as silver, while its internal meaning ought to be more beautiful than the external one, the former being in comparison to the latter as gold is to silver. Its external meaning also ought to contain in it something that indicates to someone considering it what is to be found in its internal meaning, as happens in the case of an apple of gold overlaid with silver filigree-work having very small holes. When looked at from a distance or with imperfect attention, it is deemed to be an apple of silver; but when a keen-sighted observer looks at it with full attention, its interior becomes clear to him and he knows that it is of gold.”<sup>36</sup>

At the end of the Epistle Dedicatory to the Earl of Salisbury Bacon points out that, although to the “vulgar apprehension” his suggestions will be “vulgar,” he hopes that the “deeper intellect” will not “abandon” them, but will rather be “carried along” (DSV EpD1, VI: 619–20). Bacon is articulately silent on the question whether an intellect does not reveal its true depth by its degree of readiness to abandon his suggestions after having been “carried” to the conviction that they are not vulgar, although he puts us on the way toward the answer by prefacing his book with some directions for the use of his winepress.<sup>37</sup> He starts by saying that “usurping a licence almost similar to that assumed by the poets themselves would be done most sanely by sprinkling over more arduous contemplations, being either one’s own meditations or the readings of others, with some pleasure.” Bacon

wants us to know that it is not unknown to him “how freely the versatile material of which fables are made can be drawn any way it is commanded,” and how “with a little convenience and discourse of wit unintended meanings can be attributed to fables.” The thought also came to Bacon’s mind that “the thing was abused by men of no experience in matters, nor any learning beyond a few commonplaces, who only wanted to acquire the reverence of antiquity for inventions and doctrines of their own,” and who therefore “applied the meaning of parables to some generalities and vulgarities, without attaining their true force, genuine property, and deeper traces”; consequently, the “distinction and virtue of the thing were almost [fere] ruined” (DSV Pr., VI: 625, 628).

It needs no argument that it is Natale Conti’s *Mythologiae sive Explicationis Fabularum* (1551), a work that went through nineteen editions between 1551 and 1627, that Bacon deprecatingly alludes to here. But the fact that Bacon diminishes the importance of the *Mythologiae* for his interpretation of the ancient fables provides us with the opportunity to elevate the work’s importance for lending credibility to our interpretation of Bacon’s fables. For although we believe that Bacon knew how to thread his way through the woods of ancient mythology by himself, we acknowledge the encyclopedic value of Conti’s *Mythologiae*. And seeing that the credibility of our interpretation of Bacon’s fables will increase to the extent to which Bacon is believed to have found his way to the ancient sources, we concede that Bacon took Conti’s *Mythologiae* as his point of departure.<sup>38</sup>

But let us return to our discussion of Bacon’s directions on how to read his book of fables. After saying about fabulists in general what he wanted to say about himself in particular, Bacon says that in some of the fables of the ancient poets, either in the “texture of the fable” or in the “propriety of names used to indicate the persons and actors” in them, he finds “such an important and evident similitude and conjunction with the thing signified, that no one can persistently deny that this meaning was designed and thought through from the beginning, and was purposely shadowed out” (DSV Pr., VI: 626). But since the examples by means of which Bacon illustrates his finding are almost all derived from his own fables, and are nowhere to be found in the ancient sources, we cannot but conclude that Bacon acted “licentiously” when he purposely “shadowed out” his “more arduous” contemplations by making them seem fabulous and therefore pleasurable.<sup>39</sup>

Bacon goes on to emphasize that “no one needs to be disturbed if sometimes some history is found underneath a fable, or if times are confounded, or if part of one fable is transferred to another, and a new allegory

is introduced.” For, he explains, this is due to the fact that it is “inevitable for such things to occur in stories invented by men who lived in different ages and had different ends, some of which were more ancient, some more recent, and some of which related to natural things, and some to civil things” (DSV Pr., VI: 626). Bacon remarks that it is another “sign of no small value of a concealed and covered meaning if a fable is so absurd and stupid upon the face of the narrative taken by itself that it shows and as it were cries out from afar that there is a parable underneath.” For a fable that “sounds probable may be thought to have been composed merely for pleasure, as a similitude of history.” A story that “could never have entered a man’s mind either to think of or to narrate,” on the other hand, which Bacon considers to be the case when “things are so monstrous and beyond all normal ways of thinking that no mortal could ever dream them,” requires “some other use to be sought” (DSV Pr., VI: 627).

The usefulness of these observations for interpreting Bacon’s fables can best be illustrated by the following example, an example that will receive substantial treatment in the next chapter. The narrative of the second fable presupposes the narrative of the “monstrous” and “at first hearing very foolish” thirtieth and penultimate fable. For whereas the second fable relates that, in response to Jupiter having begotten Pallas by himself, jealous Juno posed a threat to the tyrant’s rule, the thirtieth fable relates the birth of the goddess of wisdom from the head of Jupiter (DSV II “Typhon,” VI: 630–1; DSV XXX “Metis,” VI: 683). But since the thirtieth fable is silent on Juno’s jealous response to Jupiter’s self-begetting act, we suspect that Juno’s anger had been appeased in the meantime. It is in the sixteenth and central fable that our suspicion is proved correct. For it is in this fable that we find Jupiter seducing Juno by turning himself into a “wretched cuckoo.” The sixteenth fable is the only fable in which the central character is not mentioned by name either in the title or the subtitle of the fable. It is also the only fable whose narrative is nowhere, in whatever form, to be found in the ancient sources, which raises the likelihood that there is “some history” to be “found underneath.”<sup>40</sup> Ironically enough, the sixteenth fable is also the center of five fables beginning with “narrant poëtae,” and of thirteen fables beginning with a conjugation of ‘narro.’ Although Bacon says that Juno represents persons of a “proud and malignant disposition” (DSV XVI “Procus Junonis,” VI: 654), he did not and did not need to say that the father of gods and mortals represents the Heavenly Father. But by not mentioning the name of Jupiter in the title and the subtitle of the fable on Juno’s suitor, Bacon suggests that the “proud and malignant” are seduced by an unnamed suitor, who turned himself into the shape of the

representative of the Heavenly Father in order for the goddess of wisdom to be born from the head of Jupiter. It was, however, only by making this grave metamorphosis seem “absurd” that Bacon could draw our attention to its parabolic meaning.

Although to the extent that the problems of religion, philosophy, and politics are perennial, exoteric–esoteric writing is a possibility coeval with philosophy itself, the “most obvious and crudest reason,” as the philosopher who retrieved the art of exoteric–esoteric writing from oblivion calls it,<sup>41</sup> already induced Bacon to employ exoteric–esoteric writing as an answer to the danger of religious persecution.

But despite being only the crudest reason, persecution is commonly believed to be the only legitimate reason for authors to avail themselves of exoteric–esoteric writing. To set aside the more timeless moral appeal that goes out from visible and therefore self-forgetful subversiveness, a present-day explanation for this reductionist view may be found in the tendency of liberal societies to venerate dissidence elsewhere in order to have a good conscience when suppressing dissident voices at home.

Confining ourselves, however, to the religious persecution that is commonly acknowledged to have taken place in the times of Bacon, we find that Bacon’s friend Tobie Matthew, a Roman Catholic convert who had spent six months in prison on account of his conversion, repeatedly and at Bacon’s explicit request “censured” his works and warned him when he fell asleep.<sup>42</sup> The influential Bishop Lancelot Andrewes, a former chaplain of John Whitgift who had performed a leading function in the coming to fruition of the “Authorized Version” of the Bible (1611), functioned as Bacon’s “inquisitor,”<sup>43</sup> although in the case of *De Augmentis Scientiarum*, Bacon himself played the part of “*Index Expurgatorius*,” as he writes in a letter to the Protestant King James.<sup>44</sup> But although the official manuscript decree *Donec corrigatur* of April 3, 1669 caused *De Augmentis* to be put on the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*,<sup>45</sup> the overall reception of Bacon’s works raises the question whether Bacon’s precautionary measures may not have been almost too successful, either in the sense that they have left an opening only to their most acute object, or in the sense that they only seem to have left an opening to their most acute object.

Reserving the answers to this question for the places where they belong, we continue our discussion of the matter of self-censorship, which can best be illustrated by the example of Bacon’s apologetic treatment of the principal matter subject to censorship. In the fifth paragraph of the first book of the *Advancement of Learning*, Bacon distorts three biblical quotations on the temptation or sin of human knowledge. In the sixth paragraph,



immediately before saying: “let those places bee rightly understoode, and they doe indeede excellently sette foorth the true bounds and limitations, whereby humane knowledge is confined and circumscribed” (AL 1.5 and 6, 6–7, III: 264 and 266; cf. Eccl. 12: 12 and 1: 18; Col. 2: 8), he distorts the third of these quotations for the second time. But whereas the first time Bacon had only added the adjective “*vaine*” to the philosophy Paul had warned the believer not to let himself be spoiled by, the second time he also replaced “*spoyled*” by “*seduced*,” which he must have felt confident enough to do in light of the fact that he had already obscured philosophy’s seductive power by making philosophy as such seem vain. With regard to the third limitation of human knowledge, “that we doe not presume by the contemplation of Nature, to attaine to the misteries of God,” Bacon explicitly says that this point “deserueth to be a little stood vpon, and not to be lightly passed ouer.” The contemplation of “Gods creatures and works produceth (hauing regard to the works and creatures themselues) knowledge, but hauing regard to God, no perfect knowledg, but wonder, which is broken knowledg.” But if we follow Bacon’s admonition and “stand upon” this point, we detect that we almost “passed over” Bacon’s earlier description of wonder as the “seede of knowledge” (AL 1.6, 7–8, III: 266–7).

In *A Crittical Essay upon the Faculties of the Mind* (1707), Jonathan Swift, in a comical fashion, provides the discerning reader of his *Essay* with counsels on how to read Bacon’s *Essays*. Swift introduces his parody on Bacon by saying that he is “offended” with writers of essays “for running into stale Topicks and thread-bare Quotations, and not handling their Subject fully and closely.” His own *Essay*, however, abounds with inexact and superfluous quotations, unintelligible digressions, and sentences like “BUT to return to our Discourse.”<sup>46</sup> Divesting Swift’s *Essay* of its comedy, we find that wittingly or unwittingly Swift argues that one can only fully disclose the subject matter of Bacon’s *Essays* by paying close attention to how inexact quotations, apparent disorder, seeming superfluities, and meaningful digressions constitute a coherent discourse if taken in conjunction.<sup>47</sup>

As the first *Essay* (E I “Of Truth,” 7 ff., VI: 377 ff.) sets the stage for the argument and the action of the *Essays* as a whole, a movement of speech and deed that will occupy us in chapters to come, it provides us with a good example of this order within seeming chaos.

The prospect of “Giddinesse,” which goes with the perception of those “Philosophers” and “discoursing wits” who are practicing “Free-will in Thinking,” induces a number of men to “fix a Beleeve” and to submit themselves to “Bondage,” as Bacon makes us distil from his “giddyng” amalgam of words. It is, however, “not onely the Difficultie, and Labour,

which Men take in finding out of *Truth*; Nor againe, that when it is found, it imposeth upon Mens Thoughts; that doth bring *Lies* in favour: But a naturall, though corrupt Love, of the *Lie* it selfe.<sup>48</sup> Lucian, who had already “stood upon” this matter, and whose argument Bacon refers us to by “coming to a stand” at it, had concluded that men love lies for the sake of their substance.<sup>49</sup> It is therefore not the “*Lie*, that passeth through the Minde” that “doth the hurt,” but the “*Lie* that sinketh in, and setleth in it,” because in “mens depraved Judgements and Affections” its object supplies a natural need and is therefore “corruptly loved.”

Passing in deed from “Theological, and Philosophicall *Truth*” to the “*Truth* of civill Businesse” he will soon pass to in speech, Bacon observes that although truth is a “Naked, and Open day light” that unclothes and discloses “the Masques, and Mummeries, and Triumphs of the world,” it does not show them “halfe so Stately, and daintily, as Candlelights.” For “Truth may perhaps come to the price of a Pearle, that sheweth best by day: But it will not rise, to the price of a Diamond, or Carbuncle, that sheweth best in varied lights.” Bacon does not doubt that “if there were taken out of Mens mindes, Vaine Opinions, Flattering Hopes, False valuations” and “Imaginations,” it would “leave the Mindes, of a Number of Men, poore, shrunkn Things; full of Melancholy, and Indisposition, and unpleasing to themselves.” The wine of poetry can prevent the minds of these men from becoming “giddy” with disillusionment at the “naked” sight of having been “unmasked as mummery” what was believed to be true, albeit that it can only do so by filling the imagination with the “shadow of a *Lie*.”<sup>50</sup> But man’s natural love of the lie causes a “Mixture of Falshood” to be like “Allay in Coyne of Gold and Silver,” as it makes the “embased” metal that his mind is made of “worke the better.” And although the “winding, and crooked courses” of untruth are the “Goings of the Serpent,” the “dove” cannot remain innocent unless “serpentine prudence” teaches him about the “nature of evil,” as Bacon emphasizes elsewhere (DA 7.2, I: 729–30).

There is, however, “no Vice, that doth so cover a Man with Shame, as to be found false, and perfidious.” For the word of the lie is “such a Disgrace, and such an Odious Charge,” that, as Bacon makes Montaigne say: “*If it be well weighed, To say that a man lieth, is as much to say, as that he is brave towards God, and a Coward towards men.*”<sup>51</sup> For a Lie faces God, and shrinkes from Man.” But if it is evil to speak evil of evil, Bacon had good reason to “shrink back” from being “found false and perfidious” by men ready to persecute him on the charge of being evil. Although he knew that by seducing men with poetic lies he would eventually have to “face

God,” who is immune to lies, he was “brave toward God” by preferring to be a “coward toward men.”

But to return to our *Essay*: Bacon invites the sober reader not to become giddy with the wine of his poetry,<sup>52</sup> and to “stay for an Answer” to the question his Pilate jested about after having received an answer from Truth Himself: What is truth?<sup>53</sup>

Being untrue without being “found false and perfidious,” in other words, concealing one’s heterodoxy by a veil of orthodoxy, is the subject matter of the sixth *Essay* (E VI “Of Simulation and Dissimulation,” 20 ff., VI: 387 ff.). “*Dissimulation* is but a faint kind of Policy, or Wisedome; For it asketh a strong Wit, and a strong Heart, to know, when to tell Truth, and to doe it. Therefore it is the weaker Sort of Politicks, that are the great Dissemblers.” But is it not precisely because one cannot prudently counsel on the wisdom of dissimulation except by inducing a wakefulness toward its policies that Bacon dissembles the fact that the wisdom of dissimulation primarily consists in having the “strength of wit and heart” to make one’s policies depend on the knowledge of the occasion that teaches when and when not to tell the truth?

There are three degrees of “this Hiding, and Vailing of a Mans Selfe.” The first is “*Closetnesse, Reservation, and Secrecy*; when a Man leaveth himselfe without Observation, or without Hold to be taken, what he is.” The second is “*Dissimulation, in the Negative*, when a man lets fall Signes and Arguments, that he is not, that he is.” The third is “*Simulation, in the Affirmative*; when a Man industriously and expressly, faigns, and pretends to be, that he is not.” Bacon makes it clear that these three degrees naturally follow from each other; although throughout the *Essay* he dissembles this fact by making the attributes of dissimulation seem mutually exclusive.<sup>54</sup> Because “*Nakednesse* is uncomely,” it “addeth no small Reverence, to Mens Manners, and Actions, if they be not altogether Open.” Dissimulation follows upon secrecy “by a necessity,” because others “will so beset” the secret man “with Questions, and draw him on, and pick it out of him, that without an absurd Silence, he must shew an Inclination, one way; Or if he doe not, they will gather as much by his Silence, as by his Speech.” The “affirmative” side of this picture is simulation and “false Profession,” which Bacon does not consider “culpable” if the matter is “great and rare” enough.

Bacon concludes his *Essay* on dissimulating untruth with the principal counsel that the “best Composition, and Temperature is, to have *Opennesse* in Fame and Opinion; *Secrecy* in Habit; *Dissimulation* in seasonable use; And a Power to faigne, if there be no Remedy.” We, for our part, conclude

our discussion of Bacon's *Essays* on simulating truth with the relative part of their counsel, which is directed to those able to measure the "state of the weather" in which nakedness "covers" a man with such "shame" that "secrecy" dissembled as "openness" is the only shelter from a storm severe enough to exculpate even a "false profession," and which teaches that the "signs and arguments" by means of which the dissimulator dissimulates also state "in the affirmative" that the dissimulator is not in truth what he is to those toward whom he dissimulates.

In accordance with the teaching of the sixth *Essay*, Bacon elsewhere reveals the dissimulation of Augustus Caesar by referring to a letter of Cicero to Atticus in order to illustrate how little of a dissimulator the Roman Emperor seems to have been (DA 8.2, I: 782–3). On his entry into public affairs, "when he was still the favourite of the senate," Augustus used the following form of oath in his harangues to the people: "As I hope to attain the honours of my parent," which, Bacon interprets, were in fact "nothing less than the tyranny." At the same time, "in order to lessen the envy his hope would arouse," Augustus extended his hand toward a statue of Julius Caesar, which had been erected in the place. Men "laughed, applauded, and wondered at this," and said to each other: "What is this, what kind of adolescent is this?" Yet they thought that "a man who had spoken his feelings so candidly and ingenuously could not be suspected of any maliciousness."

In his letter to Atticus Cicero briefly mentions the *contio* delivered by Octavian on his first visit to Rome, only pointing out that Octavian made the oath: "Ita sibi parentis honores consequi liceat," and that at the same time he extended his right hand towards the statue of Julius Caesar. Cicero adds the following exclamation in Greek: "Μηδὲ σωθῆιν ὑπόγε τοιούτου!" [May they not be saved by somebody like that!], which implies that he realized that Augustus may have been dissimulating his true aim of becoming the same kind of "savior" as his father.<sup>55</sup>

One could say that Augustus dissembled his boldness by being so bold that almost nobody suspected him of having been deliberately bold. Exoteric–esoteric writing is thus a form of Augustean dissimulation to the extent that the boldness of the exoteric surface both dissembles to the many and discloses to a few the boldness of the esoteric center. Leaving aside for now the question whether the true boldness at the center is necessarily in line with the boldness visible on the surface, we consider it certainly in line with the speech of Augustus that envious responses to the naked boldness of the center are anticipated by the embedded boldness of the surface. And since "*Envy* is ever joynd, with the Comparing of a Mans Selfe" (E IX "Of Envy," 29, VI: 394), a comparison with the person whose jealousy would be