

This is an electronic reprint of the original article. This reprint may differ from the original in pagination and typographic detail.

---

## A pragmatic model of hypocrisy

Sorlin, Sandrine; Virtanen, Tuija

*Published in:*  
The Pragmatics of Hypocrisy

*DOI:*  
[10.1075/pbns.343.02sor](https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.343.02sor)

Published: 01/03/2024

*Document Version*  
Accepted author manuscript

*Document License*  
Publisher rights policy

[Link to publication](#)

*Please cite the original version:*  
Sorlin, S., & Virtanen, T. (2024). A pragmatic model of hypocrisy. In S. Sorlin, & T. Virtanen (Eds.), *The Pragmatics of Hypocrisy* (pp. 15-42). (Pragmatics and Beyond New Series; Vol. 343). John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.343.02sor>

### General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

### Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

## Chapter 2

### A pragmatic model of hypocrisy

*Sandrine Sorlin*

*University Paul-Valéry – Montpellier 3*

*Tuija Virtanen*

*Åbo Akademi University*

#### Abstract

Based on the general definition of hypocrisy given in the introductory chapter, this chapter shows how pragmatics can deepen and add to the understanding of hypocrisy. It first guides the reader to think differently about this traditionally morally-laden and negatively-evaluated notion. It then sets out to establish the pragmatic space of verbal hypocrisy by confronting it with the notions of face, tact, flattery, politeness, deception, irony, deception, and lying. To be identified as such, hypocrisy appears to require a reveal by or through a third party, but it can be left unexposed in contexts where people jointly play along with it, and occasionally even be disclosed by the hypocrite. As a first attempt to date, we devise a pragmatic model of verbal hypocrisy. The chapter concludes with a comment on the need for a renewed philosophy of language.

#### Keywords

verbal hypocrisy, model, pretence, (im)politeness, civil hypocrisy, sincerity, (dis)simulation, face, impression management

#### 1. Introduction

Understanding hypocrisy as a pragmatic phenomenon, we argue, requires a broad and multifaceted approach. By addressing verbal hypocrisy, rather than mere behavioural hypocrisy, our aim is to detail the complexity of the phenomenon through a pragmatic conceptualization that goes beyond its contemporary social definition of a mismatch between private practices and public pronouncements. While allegations of malign verbal hypocrisy tend to concern unearned moral or other benefits, benign uses of hypocrisy are instead grounded in the prospect of joint pretence and geared towards the smooth running of social interaction. Hence, the dark sides of hypocrisy are in reality counterbalanced by its brighter sides in the service of expected or “normal” communicative practices between individuals and organizations.

Regarding hypocrisy solely as a failure or derailment of communication between reasonable and rational human beings cannot therefore do justice to this intricate phenomenon which is a non-trivial aspect of people's everyday lives.

This chapter has a threefold aim: (i) to open new vistas on hypocrisy and consider it from a pragmatic point of view; (ii) to identify the pragmatic space of verbal hypocrisy; and (iii) to devise a general pragmatic model of hypocrisy. To start with, Section 2 guides readers to perceive hypocrisy in a new light and Section 3 serves as an introduction to our pragmatic analysis of the phenomenon, raising the issue of the lack of interest to date in this topic across disciplines of the study of language(s). Next, Section 4 provides an analysis of verbal hypocrisy in relation to adjacent pragmatic notions. We characterize hypocrisy by approaching it from a number of key perspectives in pragmatics. In doing so, we show that the territory covered by what can be interpreted as hypocrisy is, in fact, much wider than might be suspected at first glance. Section 5 presents the first general pragmatic model of verbal hypocrisy, consisting of five parameters and four types. The model reflects a continuum of hypocrisy from an unethical phenomenon to a prosocial one. The concluding remarks of Section 6 include a comment on the need for a renewed philosophy of language.

## **2. Thinking differently about hypocrisy**

From an unforgivable vice that should be unremittingly denounced, hypocrisy proves to be, by the very fact of its ubiquity, something more essential to human behaviour, both in face-to-face interactions and at the diplomatic level between nations in peace time, than one would be ready to admit. Significantly, when Russia invaded Ukraine on 24 February 2022, the president of Finland declared, "...now the masks have been taken off. Only the cold face of war is visible."<sup>1</sup> The usefulness of hypocrisy in maintaining peaceful relations in diplomatic spheres becomes apparent in President Sauli Niinistö's mention of mask-falling. As such, hypocrisy seems to be the necessary price to be paid for a prospect of non-violence in peace time. Instead of a diplomatic compromise, however, the mask of diplomacy referred to in the quotation had for a long time concealed warlike intentions, thus providing false grounds for a peaceful life. Even so, international vain efforts had been made to keep up polished appearances for the sake of non-violence: the declaration continues, "Here, dialogue did not work, despite long and relentless negotiations on many levels. [...] Now we are on a different path."

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.presidentti.fi/en/news/president-niinisto-finland-strongly-condemns-russias-actions-and-warfare/>

Demonstrating the necessity of hypocrisy in democratic societies, Runciman (2008) draws on George Orwell's essays to show that fascism (and various other totalitarian regimes) does not need hypocrisy, as nothing needs to be concealed any more. If British democracy, Orwell states, is governed by the "sword", it is one that "must never be taken out of its scabbard" and he continues, alluding to hypocrisy, "[e]ven hypocrisy is a powerful safeguard . . . [It is] a symbol of the strange mixture of reality and illusion, democracy and privilege, humbug and decency, the subtle network of compromises, by which the nation keeps itself in familiar shape" (quoted in Runciman 2008:181). In this light, hypocrisy can be regarded as an effort towards civility that more outspoken people would not go to any lengths to make. Priding himself on speaking his mind in a direct, transparent and sincere manner, Donald Trump for instance likes to denounce hypocrisy as the vice of those who do not know how to call a spade a spade. Gill (this volume) shows how the rhetoric of contrast between hypocritical "them" and authentic "us" is central to populist discourse. Trump does not bother with the need to appear virtuous and considerate of others. This lack of restraint is part of what Wodak (2020) calls a rhetoric of "shamelessness" (for a discussion of the breaking of taboos, see also O'Driscoll 2020:166). Shameless bullying seems to have displaced the safeguard for polite and civil mutual respect which hypocrisy affords. Analysing Berlusconi's and Trump's official press conferences, Wodak, Culpeper and Semino (2021) delve into the two men's "shameless normalization of impoliteness" as they unapologetically pronounce racist and misogynist insults. As a phenomenon is better observed in its absence, their shameless rhetoric brings to light the role of hypocrisy as a conflict-avoiding social necessity with a virtuous impact, the ultimate rampart against hatred and the ensuing political polarization it generates.

To stay with the world of politics, stating that hypocrisy is inevitable in such communities of practice is to take the notion out of outright moral condemnation. Runciman even goes as far as to say that denouncing hypocrisy in politics is itself hypocritical. For him, spending time regretting this fact does not bring us nearer to finding solutions to the problem of hypocrisy. Recognising the inevitability of hypocrisy on the contrary is the first step towards finding ways to see where it can become a significant problem:

But if our politics is hypocritical in its very nature, then calls for more sincerity are themselves hypocritical, and may threaten the entire charade that we, as liberal democrats, are committed to uphold. It does not matter whether or not our politicians are all wearing masks, if that is what is needed to make our form of politics work. What does matter is if people are hypocritical about that. (Runciman 2008:43-44)

That hypocrisy can serve as a protective shield in western civilization is also one of the reasons why it can be looked at in a more positive light, especially when it is performed to preserve one's sense of self. Hypocrisy can indeed become the arm of the weaker or less powerful. As Kittay (1982) exemplifies, it may be a self-defense weapon against a hostile environment and be used by the subaltern against their superior. The author quotes the example of Julien Sorel, Stendhal's hero in *The Red and the Black* (1830), who rises from peasant to a powerful position but uses hypocrisy with his aristocratic colleagues in order to preserve his sense of where he comes from. The use of hypocrisy is "a way of preserving the worth of his own person against the aristocratic society of his age which would deny the equal human worth of a peasant" (Kittay 1982:288). This preservation of one's personhood echoes one of the reasons given by people for their use of lies (see Hart et al. 2019): some interviewees asked why they lie would answer that they do so to keep their secrets to themselves and not make anyone privy to their own private thoughts/life that are no one else's business.<sup>2</sup> Kittay (1982:288) also shows that hypocrisy serves the black person "who passes as white" and who may want "to escape the menaces posed to those who are clearly black. The same may be said for the Jew who passes as a Gentile or the gay person who passes as heterosexual." The protection of privacy lies at the heart of online discourse where many people are willfully or volitionally engaged in performances of online selves, cyberselfing, rather than exposing their true selves, their private thoughts and so forth. Hypocrisy can serve as a means to preserve or construct an identity. As this volume shows, in digitally mediated communication, identity construction and pretence may go together in intriguing forms (for self-declared hypocrisy on Twitter in the form of self-directed metapragmatic acts like \*pretends to be shocked\*, see Virtanen, this volume, and for reactions to hypocritical assertions by young people in British discussion forums, see Tanskanen, this volume).

We saw that hypocrisy lies at the core of power politics, but power relations can be at stake among individuals as well. Interestingly, hypocrisy is historically linked with a key notion in pragmatics: politeness (see 4.4, below). In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, being "polite" meant being "civilized". Politeness cannot then be dissociated from social and political divisions (see Klein 1989; Watts 2002, 2003; see also Sorlin 2013) as it was a means to distinguish the refined upper class (or those aspiring to this class) from the "rude". What came to be known as "polite society" in Britain emerged with the concomitant rise of the notion of hypocrisy. Indeed good manners came to be associated with dissimulation. As Davidson (2004:8) puts it in *Hypocrisy and the Politics of Politeness: Manners and Morals from Locke to Austen*, "while politeness and good manners can and should arise from

---

<sup>2</sup> See Table 1 (Hart et al. 2019:346).

the heart, they are also the product of years of discipline directed towards the suppression of true feeling.” Hypocrisy arises from the gap between frontstage discipline and backstage feelings.

“Polite hypocrisy” is even regarded as a useful social means to be embraced by 18<sup>th</sup>-century scholars studied by Davidson (2004:8), precisely because it deflects conflict and violence. For Lord Chesterfield, for instance, it is no less than a means of social survival. In his letters addressed to his son, he states, “[a] man of the world must, like the Chameleon, be able to take every different hue; which is by no means a criminal or abject, but a necessary complaisance; for it relates to manners, and not to morals” (Chesterfield in Roberts 1998:106). Chesterfield uses the image of the chameleon as one who knows how to weave their way through the meanders of polite societies, how to be pleasant company, and fit in with people that count. The chameleon is the one who is able not to stand out, who takes on the colours of one’s surroundings. Chesterfield separates hypocrisy from the world of morals, which explains why his words shocked many a reader as these lessons were addressed to his son. The amorality assessment comes from the fact that where readers saw identity in terms of truth to oneself – a pre-existing authentic hidden truth – Chesterfield construes it as performance on the world stage offering pre-fabricated social roles. The chameleon’s hypocrisy ties in with the etymological origin of the term, mentioned in Chapter 1, as ‘acting a part’. For Chesterfield indeed the construction of a reputation inevitably leant on non-natural artifices; it arose from theatrical performances: “you must resolve to be an actor”, he tells his son (Roberts 1998:296). Chesterfield’s letters reveal the backstage of human theatre where the ideology of politeness, characteristic of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, is exploited for social promotion.

But hypocrisy has also become a gender issue: women were associated with hypocrisy in 18<sup>th</sup>-century and then 19<sup>th</sup>-century novels (especially in Jane Austen’s less well-off heroines). If Richardson’s Pamela’s virtue is often construed as a mask of hypocrisy (see Fielding’s *Shamela*),<sup>3</sup> it can also be interpreted as a way for her to protect herself from B’s dishonourable actions against her virtue. Her hypocrisy seems to be justified by her low dependent status. Likewise, some of Austen’s novels can be read as a defence of empowering hypocrisy rather than a symptom of deceit and false modesty (Davidson 2004:13). Hypocrisy as usually associated with women in terms of manipulateness can thus be rethought

---

<sup>3</sup> Fielding’s *An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews*, or *Shamela* for short, was published in 1740. It is regarded as a satire of Samuel Richardson’s epistolary novel *Pamela*, published in 1740. Richardson’s book is about a 15-year-old maid named Pamela Andrews who religiously resists the seductive moves made by her rich employer, Mr B. Fielding’s *Shamela* reveals that the heroine (Pamela) is not as virtuous as she may seem and that her true name is in fact Shamela.

in light of their dependency and lack of power.<sup>4</sup> It can be seen as the consequence of social forces and the human need to negotiate those social relations as hypocritical politeness cannot be separated from power relationships and social norms (for the 19<sup>th</sup> century, see Paternoster and Fitzmaurice 2019).

### 3. A pragmatic analysis

The above discussion, as well as the general definition given in Chapter 1, show that hypocrisy has to do with the image one wishes to give of oneself. As McKinnon (1991:323) puts it,

The hypocrite, then, is one who shams, who presents her motives as other than they are. But it is not simply this, for her motives have to be presented in what she takes to be a more favourable light. She dissembles precisely because she wants people to think better of her than they would were her true motives revealed.

The hypocrite wants to influence “for the better the moral judgments of her audience” (McKinnon 1991:323). Speaking hypocritically consists in creating in others a favourable image of the speaker that conceals selfish intentions. Hypocrisy thus deserves a pragmatic treatment in terms of face-work and impression management (Goffman 1967). To appear virtuous, one needs to attend to one’s face and those of others and thus resort to what Brown and Levinson (1987) call politeness strategies. Surprisingly, pragmatics has not devoted particular attention to hypocrisy. One reason for this might be that hypocrisy is hard to detect: there are no markers of hypocrisy, no patterns that could be easily identified or prosodic features that would immediately point the addressee towards a hypocritical interpretation of the speakers’ words. There are no more identifiable speech acts of hypocrisy than there are formal linguistic characteristics of it: this is not a discourse type but, in a way similar to manipulation, “it is on the contrary a type of pragmatic usage of language” (de Saussure 2005:118). And yet in cases of verbal hypocrisy where hypocrisy is not the result of word-deed misalignments but concerns what people say (or prevent themselves from saying or say without saying), there must be some signals leading the audience to the hypocrisy interpretation – the “false signals”

---

<sup>4</sup> In a brief conclusion, Davidson shows that the stereotype of the manipulative woman still persists. In seduction manuals, such as *The Rules: Time-Tested Secrets for Capturing the Heart of Mr Right* by Ellen Fein and Sherrie Schneider (1995), the authors give Chesterfieldian stratagems to have a good party bite the hook: “Self-control, for Fein and Schneider, is something that you fake until it becomes real, though you’re welcome to stop pretending once the ring’s on the finger” (Davidson 2004:177).

given off by the hypocrites (Jordan et al. 2017). Much of pragmatics is, in fact, concerned with implicitness, indirectness, silence and other less straightforward phenomena in language use such as, say, intentionality, lying, and myriad ways of persuading or manipulating others (witness for instance the range of topics included in the *Handbook of Pragmatics (Online)* edited by Östman and Verschueren). In this sense, hypocrisy is no different from many of the complex pragmatic phenomena that have, in contrast, attracted the attention of linguists over the years.

Another reason why pragmatics has not taken hold of the notion is that the dominant traditional philosophy of language is ill equipped to come to grips with such a phenomenon involving psychological and sociological aspects. Grice's maxims are predicated on Kantian moral imperatives oriented towards cooperation between rational beings. But people conceal, dissimulate and lie, for reasons that are not always amoral but that can be explained in terms of cooperation – social cooperation rather than the Gricean linguistic one. As Tomasello (2014:110) shows from an evolutionary perspective, “Many lines of evidence suggest that the main function of reasoning is to convince others [...]. In this view, convincing others is good for individual fitness, and so humans evolved reasoning abilities not for getting at the truth but for convincing others of their views.” Verbal hypocrisy is one aspect of social interaction that plays an essential role in convincing others, and as such, it cannot be reduced to some deviation from cooperative language. We will come back to this in the concluding Section 6 but before that, we will need to establish how hypocrisy can be theoretically analysed in the vicinity of more studied pragmatic notions. The next section outlines a “pragmatic space” (Jucker and Taavitsainen 2000) of hypocrisy through discussions of adjacent well-established pragmatic notions. And in Section 5, we single out the main pragmatic findings discussed in this chapter in an attempt to devise a general pragmatic model of verbal hypocrisy.

#### **4. Proximity to established pragmatic notions**

This section approaches hypocrisy in light of the pragmatic phenomena of face, tact, flattery, politeness, irony, deception, and lying, comparing and contrasting major characteristics.

##### **4.1. Face**

From what precedes, we could deduce that hypocrisy can best be conceived through the lens of “face” in pragmatic terms. O’Driscoll (this volume) goes as far as to state that “face makes hypocrites of us all”, bringing to the fore, through detailed examples, the role of the others “in giving us a face”.



Although Goffman (see e.g. 1967) never seems to have used the word, for Wieting (2015) this cannot be seen as an “anomaly”. Hypocrisy is not mentioned because it is for Goffman intrinsic to the artifice of social life:

Goffman’s approach from the beginning of his rich production of insights and terminology considers all social life as artifice. In his whole scheme, the meanings of hypocrisy [...] are ordinary and predictable. (Wieting 2015:185)

A hypocrite seeks to protect her own face – as well as those of the others – in the theatre of life. Hypocrisy is closely linked to “frontstage”, that is, the image one wishes to project for specific purposes. The role of the “audience” is crucial in granting the hypocrite a face; people may, for instance, choose to enhance the face of the hypocrite while protecting their own. As a fundamental concept in pragmatics, face is commonly understood in the broad sense of a relational and identity-constructing notion. As O’Driscoll (this volume) recalls, face is what one projects of oneself as a result of what others deduce from one’s behaviour or what they know about one (or think they know). In studies of hypocrisy, it seems important to unravel the interplay of the different kinds of face people are constructing for themselves and giving one another, as well as the roots of those faces in personal actions, character, dignity, self-image, creations and evaluations of identities and impressions (see Virtanen, this volume), and of efforts to maintain or alter ideologies, dependencies, and power relations. In politics, adopting a hypocritical face could be essential to satisfy an electorate with conflicting interests or to be perceived as more virtuous than one is (see Sorlin, this volume). O’Driscoll presents cases of impersonation where one has to maintain a hypocritical face in order not to lose face, keeping up the dissemblance for as long as possible. Another typical example – which must have happened to all of us – is when we *feign* recognizing someone who obviously recognizes us very well. We pretend to know them using means that avoid mutual face damage. This is a case where hypocrisy is meant well. O’Driscoll (this volume) speaks of “a case of hypocrisy bestowing grace”.

#### 4.2. Tact

The tools of the hypocrite could include tact (which Berlusconi and Trump are devoid of; see Wodak et al. 2021) and flattery as part of (positive) politeness strategies. In Leech’s general framework of politeness strategies, tact consists in giving “a low value to S’s wants”, meaning the speaker is trying to attenuate their own wants to save the other’s face as much as possible (Leech 1983, 2014:91). Tact would be in tune with decorum, that

is, what one ought to say not to offend the other or put them in an uncomfortable situation. This generous way of placing high value on the other's well-being and face can be illustrated by a famous anecdote recalled by Denise Riley (2005:74-75). For Riley, tact sometimes requires a "chosen blindness" and a "careful refusal of frankness". Very often this kindness works both ways as the speaker also spares their own face in pretending not to have noticed anything. Tact can thus often be identified as tact. As Riley (2005:74) puts it, "True tact not only looks away but needs to contrive to be seen by its objects to have looked away." Riley then goes on with the anecdote of a bellboy of legend who, when asked what tact is as compared to mere politeness, answers from experience:

one day I was told to take an armload of fresh towels to one of the bedrooms. So I took them, went there, and knocked. There was no answer, so I tried the doorknob and found the room unlocked. I thought the guests who'd wanted the towels must have gone out, so I went across the room to leave them in the bathroom. When I opened the bathroom door, there was a woman in the shower. I said quickly, 'Excuse me, sir', and I backed out. Now saying 'Excuse me' was politeness, but the 'sir' part, that was tact. (Riley 2005:74-75)

The bellboy pretended to be shortsighted, thereby making sure with a single word "sir" that the naked guest would not be offended in her sensibility. Tact can require a generous lie.

How then does tact connect with hypocrisy? We would contend that hypocrisy is self-interested tact, reversing the arrows of generosity, as it is meant to protect the hypocrite first and foremost. As saying what one really thinks, directly and abruptly, can prove counter-productive, tactful hypocrisy can help avoid hurting the other's feelings, and by ricochet, oneself. A tactful hypocrite is never generous for the other's sake but only because hurting the other's feelings can reflect back negatively on her. As we have seen, the rituals of civility can be a safe armour for the hypocrite. Yet, while tact may need to be identified as tact, self-interested hypocrisy is best kept under wraps.

#### 4.3. Flattery

Like tact, flattery is first and foremost other-directed. It would be one of the pragmatic tools of the chameleon (as in Chesterfield's simile in Section 2, above). Praising the other is one technique used by the chameleon to achieve their ends. It may consist of systematic alignment with the flatteree's opinion in their attempt to please at all cost. According to Kapust (2018:17), flattery is used to persuade by indirect appeal to the addressee's

self-love and vanity. It is as such a form of manipulation since it serves to get the flatteree to do something for the flatterer unawares. Yet even when the intended perlocutionary effect of flattery is recognized (as a means to achieve an ulterior goal), the excessive praise has been shown to work all the same on the flatteree. As counter-intuitive as it may seem, empirical work has indeed evidenced that the positive impact of flattery remains intact even when the flatterer's selfish goal is perceived: "insincere flattery actually works" (Chan and Sengupta 2012). In her work on flattery, Danziger (2020:420) distinguishes between three kinds that may sometimes overlap:

- Transactional flattery: "flattery is offered for what the flatterer desires"
- Self-promotional flattery: "flattery is used for image management with the ultimate goal of getting people to like the addresser, which has been discussed as the main motive of flattery in social psychology [...] and organizational sociology"
- Relational flattery: "Flattery is used to establish a relationship, to make a relationship closer, or to redress harm and affected relation." Flattery is here a solidarity-oriented strategy (for a discussion of "firgun" and flattery in the Hebrew-speaking community in Israel, see Danziger 2023).

Flattery can also be a way to claim a relationship that does not exist, as with sycophancy.

There is a common denominator to hypocrisy and flattery: both can be transactional, self-promotional and relational. Besides, both are interpretive effects. What Culpeper (2011:22) says about impoliteness could be applied to them: "[i]mpoliteness is very much in the eye of the beholder, that is, the mind's eye. It depends on how you perceive what is said and done and how that relates to the situation." Flattery and hypocrisy can only be recognized and labelled as such by the beholder. But as seen above, even when identified, flattery can still have a positive emotional impact on the addressees and put them in a good disposition towards the interested flatterer. It is thus a powerful tool for the hypocrite. To sum up, the hypocrite uses flattery when she insincerely praises an addressee for her own best interests, be they transactional, self-promotional or relational. But while the two may have some false pretence in common, they differ in that only the hypocrite is fully concerned with her own image: "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" (Eylon and Heyd 2008:701). Only the hypocrite wishes to appear to be up to the social norms and values she aspires to conform to.

#### 4.4. Politeness

As intimated above in relation to tact, the hypocrite needs to be polite if she wants to have her interlocutor(s) make positive inferences about her. Strangely enough, as Haugh (this volume) rightly points out, politeness studies have not been interested in phenomena such as hypocrisy. This, he argues, is probably due to a lack of concern for the role of (in)sincerity. The lack of concern is surprising because politeness theorists have always been aware of the insincerity potential of altruism, politeness being after all about appearing to care about others no matter how sincere one is in doing so. Here for instance are Leech's words about the altruism of politeness:

The 'altruistic meaning' conveyed via communication should not be equated with genuine altruism, where someone does or says something unselfishly, for the sake of some other person(s)—to extend a helping hand to them. Often communicative altruism and genuine altruism do coincide, but it is not difficult to imagine or recall cases where they do not. (Leech 2014:4)

Politeness studies have tended to leave non-genuine and insincere issues to the domain of psychology (Terkourafi 2015). But it is our contention that such aspects of human life and interaction deserve a pragmatic analysis because they are central to what passes between interactants and as such they can reveal new ways of apprehending politeness phenomena. The need to engage with (in)sincerity issues is something that Sifianou (2023) acknowledges as what also needs to be embraced by politeness theories – if only because language users make extensive reference to such matters.

As seen in Section 2, above, politeness and hypocrisy are historically connected. Forms of hypocrisy are used by the underprivileged or vulnerable, as a way to move through class, age, race or sex divisions. Likewise, politeness is the key to the maintenance (or disruption) of the social order. For instance, according to Mills,

The use of politeness is not simply about concern for the other and the desire to have one's actions unimpeded, as Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) argued. Instead, we need to view politeness as having a role in constituting social divisions, as marking those divisions and keeping social classes distinct. Politeness and impoliteness also should be seen as a means whereby those boundaries between classes are breached. (Mills 2017:110)

But a hypocrite is not merely polite. McKinnon (1991) recalls that hypocrisy and politeness should not be confused, although they often are.

The motives of the genuinely polite person and those of the hypocrite differ. In pragmatic terms (which are not McKinnon's), the polite person could be said to be moved by a concern for the other's face, as someone who deserves that kind of respect. The hypocrite is polite only in order to make sure the other will think well of her: "the concealed motive of the hypocrite can never be 'politeness' (why disguise that?); rather it must be something like 'so and so is a respected or influential member of the community and I wouldn't want to cross him'" (McKinnon 1991:324). The hypocrite always has self-serving motivations to say what she says. Because she wants others to see her as better than she is, the hypocrite is very conventional and will always side with the safest opinion. As McKinnon (1991:324) aptly puts it, "[the hypocrite] is determined not to offend and, even more, she is determined to be approved of. So she will behave in ways which are endorsed by community standards. The hypocrite is no maverick; we cannot look to her to challenge or to improve our morality." We are back with the idea of hypocrisy as a protective shield or mask and a means to better "fit in".

So would hypocrisy simply be an instance of insincere politeness, using the tools of politeness in a non-genuine way, concealing higher-order intentions and goals? It might indeed be the case in contexts where you compliment someone (say) for her new glasses that you do not in fact like at all. You might be polite in acknowledging the new purchase while failing to be genuine about your true feelings and thoughts. The speaker's "internal" or private hypocritical polite behaviour would become external if they then went on to tell some third party what they really thought of the glasses, or if they were overheard expressing their true opinion. But the hypocrisy may well be seen through by the addressee if the utterance is *obviously* insincere (see Sorlin, this volume). Indeed the signals marking hypocrisy could appear when for example the recipients know the hypocrite cannot possibly think what she seems to think or cannot think so highly of them for instance by virtue of their past encounters or joint history. Some implicature of insincere politeness can ensue, leading to an accusation (formulated or kept to oneself) of hypocrisy. This would be an instance of hypocritical politeness which tends to be negatively evaluated. Hypocrisy can be suspected when words are not perceived as fitting the nature of the interactants' previous relations. As intimated above however, one may not mind compliments and flattery despite *knowing* they are hypocritical. The implicature of insincere politeness comes from the gap between the hypocrite's words and what the addressee assumes she thinks of her. In being (insincerely) polite, the hypocrite's goal may be to re-establish "rapport" (Spencer-Oatey 2005) – the addressee might not want to play along though.

But although insincerity has been deemed an essential feature of hypocrisy by moral philosophers (see Kittay 1994), it cannot cover all the

hues that hypocrisy can take. The hypocrite might, in fact, truly want to project a good image of herself and be sincere in her wish to show consideration for the recipient's feelings. There are indeed instances that Haugh (this volume) calls "sincere hypocrisy". He takes the case of offers that are hypocritically made in the sense that the speaker does not expect the recipient to accept that offer (and the recipient may well know it). But the speaker expects the recipient to see that the offer is sincerely made out of consideration for the recipient's feelings. The offer is made by the speaker to preclude any inference from the other party that she does not care about the recipient. If the offer may be insincere, what is sincere or not disingenuous is the reason for making that offer. The hypocritical offerer wants to show respect for the recipient. In other words, while the speaker is not making the offer with the wish that the other accepts it, she is doing so with the sincere goal that the recipient will recognize why such an offer was made in the first place (that is, to show consideration for the other). In order for the interaction to go smoothly, or to go on at all, or to avoid any awkwardness, the ostensive offer is both hypocritical (the recipient is not expected to act upon it) and sincere (the speaker does want to attend to all faces concerned, the other's feelings and her own face as one who takes the other into consideration).

Sorlin (this volume) speaks of "civil hypocrisy" when a speaker is being hypocritical in what she says but says it as a form of sincere or insincere courtesy paid to the other as required by a situation – especially when such an utterance is expected by social norms or etiquette. This would be an instance, not of hypocritical politeness as discussed above, but of polite hypocrisy. Our contention is that this pretence to acknowledge the other is part of the "civilizing force of hypocrisy", to use Elster's phrase (2005:73; see Chapter 1). Similarly, we could distinguish between hypocritical politeness which would, like hypocritical tact, receive negative evaluation and polite or civil hypocrisy which, like tactful hypocrisy, would be used more conventionally to oil the wheels of civil conversation. We argue that polite/civil hypocrisy is a broader category that includes Haugh's sincere hypocrisy. Its general aim is to have the other make the right inference about the hypocrite for her own sake (self-promotional aim), for the sake of obtaining something from the recipient (transactional aim) or for the sake of maintaining a good rapport (relational aim) in case the hypocrite for instance needs the other's help or support at some point in the future. Civil hypocrisy consists in saying, for a self-serving goal, what needs to be said to attend to all faces in a given context irrespective of whether what is said is sincere. Sincere hypocrisy as a sub-category concerns cases such as hypocritical offers (Haugh, this volume) 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. Sincere hypocrisy can also apply to other speech acts, such as apologies (see Halmari, this volume), although sincerity here applies

to the speech act itself, not the reason for making the apology: Clinton's public apology after the Lewinsky's affair may well be sincere but what is hypocritical about this sincerity is the perlocutionary effect of the apology that aims at manipulating the audience.

#### 4.5. Irony

In the first chapter, hypocrisy was defined as a discrepancy between two conflicting or inconsistent elements. If such a general definition is adopted, hypocrisy could be said to be an example of "mixed messages" (Rockwell 2006; Culpeper 2011; Culpeper, Haugh, and Sinkeviciute 2017) which contain elements that could point the recipient towards a polite interpretation and other elements pointing the other way. The mismatching between polite and impolite attitudes is likely to engender some kind of interpretive dissonance and different interpretations on the part of participants. One instance of mixed messages that has received much pragmatic attention is irony. Would we regard a hypocritical utterance as a form of mixed message the way an ironic utterance can be?

Irony and hypocrisy share some surface characteristics (see also Gill, this volume): both revolve around a notion of pretence, as evoked in certain theoretical accounts of irony as pretence (e.g. Clark and Gerrig 1984), but also on the idea of a clash between two elements that cannot be reconciled (see e.g. Clark 1996). If we follow Simpson's (2011) definition of the trope, going beyond the mere reversal between what one says and what is the case as in "lovely day for a picnic" when it is pouring cats and dogs, there is some "paradox" at the heart of any ironical statement. Bringing then this broad term down to two sub-definitions, he highlights the idea of a (conceptual) "gap" or "mismatch" between what is said and what is meant on the one hand or between what is known and a discursive context on the other (Simpson 2011:39; for a theoretical overview, see Jobert and Sorlin 2018). The difference between hypocrisy and irony is that irony needs to be detected if the ironical effect is to work and unlike hypocrisy, irony may be signalled prosodically. The failure to take up the irony would leave all parties in an awkward position; the ironic tone or the obvious mismatch between what is said and what the interactant knows about the situation or about the addresser immediately alert the addressee to the ironical statement's intended meaning. Hypocrisy is not meant to be that overt. It can be suspected and recognized for what it is but its effect does not at all lie in its detection. Although we could say there is a discrepancy or a distance between the polite utterance of a hypocrite and what she really thinks, a hypocritical utterance can hardly be qualified as a mixed message because the mismatch is not what is exploited by the utterer as it would be in the case of irony or other similar phenomena (sarcasm, banter, teasing, jocular

mockery, mock (im)politeness, overpoliteness, etc.). In Gricean terms (1975), it could be said that irony is a maxim flout (thus generating an implicature), whereas hypocrisy ranges from flouting (see 4.4., above) to maxim violation, in the case of deceptive hypocrisy (see 4.6, below).

For Dews et al. (2007:316), irony has two main “overarching” functions: it is used to “save face” and “be funny”. Irony is used by a speaker to appear “less angry” and more “in control of her emotions” and thus to maintain damage control in relationships (297). Other authors (Kreuz et al. 1991; Colston and O’Brien 2000; Toplak and Katz 2000) have shown that it can be more biting than straightforward utterances. Hypocrisy can similarly help in appeasing tensions and humour can be a tool for the hypocrite. It can also have malign effects as seen in Chapter 1. But in the case of biting hypocrisy, the maliciousness of it must be entirely concealed as it is not meant to be taken up by the recipient – unlike sarcasm for instance, which is meant to be taken up. Irony is supposed to be picked up whatever the effect performed by the ironical statement. The ironist is meant to be unmasked. Besides it is not the ironist’s systematic aim to have the recipient make the “good” inferences about her. An intriguing online phenomenon, the self-reflexive “autohypocrisy” discussed by Virtanen (this volume) boils down to a technology user virtually performing exposure of their own hypocritical act. Such essentially playful metapragmatic instances of virtual hypocrisy may come through as self-ironical and even sarcastic. Yet, the simultaneous enactment of a hypocritical act and its exposure might, paradoxically enough, serve to invite “good” inferences pertaining to the desired commodity of online approval by giving the impression that the self-communicating user is, in fact, a sincere person, genuine and likeable, on top of being well versed in digital literacy.

#### 4.6. Deception

Another notion that has been delved into by pragmaticians and that has surfaced several times in the course of the previous introductory chapter and this theoretical chapter is deception. Drawing on Bacon, Runciman (2008) distinguishes between the simulator and the dissimulator. One could say that the simulator deceives while the dissimulator misleads. Simulation in Runciman’s dichotomy implies a willful desire to obtain from the other something that is only in the simulator’s interest, whereas the dissimulator keeps some aspects of what she says to herself. To use a common expression, one could state that the dissimulators tend to “beat about the bush” rather than say what they would like to say out loud. They conceal things from recipients, refraining from saying what they truly think of others or of a situation as outspokenness could be prejudicial to them then or later. By contrast, the simulators do not simply hide things, they also pretend to be



someone they cannot be. They usually simulate being somebody ethical and considerate to give an appearance of virtue, thus going further into deception, using this imposture to exploit recipients for self-promotional goals:

Dissimulation means concealment, or holding something back. Simulation requires going out of your way to put something in the public domain that you know to be false. Both fall short of the whole truth, but only simulation is a deliberate policy of deception. (Runciman 2008:86)

In appearing as a shield, dissimulation may appear less morally dubious but it is not so. For instance hypocritical dissimulation can take the form of *hints* at negative traits of a third party. In practice, the frontier between the simulator and dissimulator is not easy to draw. Some form of complicity, as mentioned in the first chapter (see Verschueren 2022), lies at the heart of dissimulation.

Even though hypocrisy can be (more or less) deceptive, that is not true of all its forms. As argued above, we think that the civilized game of hypocrisy can be recognized by all present and played along with or even expected in certain communities of practice (witness, for instance, online self-presentation and politics). To the simulator and the dissimulator, we must therefore add a third type of hypocrite, the chameleon (in Chesterfield's sense). This third type may use flattery, compliments and (in)sincere politeness to please an audience and have them draw the best inferences about her. Still, we could say that all three types (the simulator, the dissimulator, and the chameleon) engage in lying. The chameleon complimenting someone on a new haircut she does not like is also lying. In contrast, our fourth type, the virtual hypocrite, is a metapragmatic construct playfully exposing their own deceptive act.

#### 4.7. Lying

An interesting comparison to be made is that between hypocrisy and lies. Lies have been shown to have different colours. It seems to us that there are similar hues to hypocrisy to be emphasized. As pragmatic studies of lies and lying have shown, there is a whole spectrum of lies from white to black through blue lies. If white lies are meant to protect the other and spare their feelings – as when saying you like your friend's haircut while you do not because you know that telling the truth would hurt her feelings – black lies are deceitful and manipulative. A black lie benefits “the sender at the cost of the receiver” (Capraro et al. 2020). Along the benefit-cost axis, Capraro et al. (2020:2) distinguish between two more lies on each side of the white and black

continuum: the “Pareto white lies” that are reciprocally beneficial to both sender and receiver and the “spiteful lie” that is harmful to both in the end. Fu et al. (2008:n.p.) speak of “blue lies” when people lie in the name of the collective good. The colour, they explain, “purportedly originat[es] from cases where police officers made false statements to protect the police force or to ensure the success of the government’s legal case against an accused.”

It seems to us that white lies become hypocritical when the ingratiation is merely a means to further the hypocrite’s own goals. They are still prosocial on the surface but selfish at heart. The hypocrite’s lies are thus Pareto white lies in terms of Capraro et al.’s categories; that is, they are reciprocally beneficial to both sender and receiver. They can be used by hypocrites as a way to be useful to all faces present. Perhaps some form of a collective blue lie might be thought to serve the hypocrite well in organizational discourse, for instance to ensure good continuation of business talks or of difficult dialogue in situations of conflict.

If discovered, a black lie may cost a lot to the sender, especially if the discrepancy between the words and the hidden behaviour or belief could not be any wider. A good example would be the French Minister for the Budget, Jérôme Cahuzac, swearing in front of the whole *Assemblée Nationale* in 2013 that he had never ever had an undeclared bank account abroad all the while knowing he was lying. Such a lie, widening the gap between the sworn declaration and his goal to chase tax fraud and evasion, made the accusation of hypocrisy even more scathing. The outrage that followed in France was proportionate to the gravity of the hypocritical lie professed face-to-face with other members of parliament. Saying the exact opposite of what he knew to be true made the hypocritical assessment all the tougher. He was blamed not so much for the Swiss bank account – he was not the only one to have had one – but for concealing it so forcefully.

Apart from shades of colour, another feature that lies and hypocrisy have in common is that they both seem to be debate-ending accusations. What can you say to someone accusing you of lying or of being a hypocrite apart from claiming you are not, or turning the tables on the accuser and say that in fact they are just as hypocritical (see Gill, this volume, and for resistance or negotiations of the allegation, see Tanskanen, this volume)? This might be the reason why in the US Congress,<sup>5</sup> the labels “liar” or “hypocrite” are both proscribed, even though the speakers make blatant use of both:

Among other things, the House rules caution members who have the floor not to call their fellow liars even if they are not telling the truth,

---

<sup>5</sup> The same can be said about the UK Parliament. The following link leads to a 2021 exchange with Labour MP Dawn Butler ordered to leave the House of Commons after calling Boris Johnson a liar: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PkRkoPDikH4>, last accessed 16 November, 2022. For an extract, see also O’Driscoll (2020:73).

not to impugn their integrity even if their actions invite it, and not to call another member a hypocrite even if he or she is being hypocritical. These guides to appropriate conduct are designed to create a climate conducive to deliberation. And central to the ability to deliberate is a rhetoric of mutual respect. (Jamieson and Harvey 2012:422)

One needs to be hypocritical about hypocrisy by turning a blind eye for the sake of deliberation. Lies and hypocrisy can be blatant and yet not exposed for what they are because that would either disrupt debate or undermine social harmony and civility.

In day-to-day interactions, the hypocritical game can also be played along with. Hypocrisy may be detected but be met with reciprocal hypocrisy. In this case one could say that the actors abide by a principle of reciprocity in line with the one proposed by Culpeper and Tantucci (2021) around (im)politeness: the Principle of (Im)politeness Reciprocity (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” (150). The same balance of payments could be maintained in cases where (perceived) hypocrisy is matched by (perceived) hypocrisy.

## **5. A pragmatic model of hypocrisy**

In Chapter 1, we offered a general definition of hypocrisy as a phenomenon emerging from a misalignment between inconsistent elements (for instance real beliefs and pronounced words), usually involving some sham on the part of the hypocrite in the concealment of self-interests while providing her with some “feel-good” attitude. In light of the above discussion, we can now come up with a pragmatic definition:

Verbal hypocrisy is a pragmatic phenomenon of pretence that aims at concealing self-serving motivations by enhancing the hypocrite’s face as well as other faces, and/or by avoiding mutual face damage. The hypocritical pretence can be performed in order to deceive or mislead others, or out of polite civility and on occasion even playfulness. When revealed by a third party, deceitful and disguised hypocrisy is exposed for the blameworthy mismatch it is between public pronouncement and private behaviour, beliefs, thoughts, utterances, goals, or intentions. In contrast, civil hypocrisy consists in saying what is expected by the social situation even though the hypocrite’s words are not genuine and the recipient may not be fooled by the pretence. This is a case of joint pretence hypocrisy that the

participants may choose to play along with, reciprocate in kind, or denounce at the risk of social awkwardness. What can be sincere about civil hypocrisy is the hypocrite's wish to have the recipient perceive her as one who is considerate of face concerns.

As a complex notion, hypocrisy deserves a pragmatic treatment that goes beyond identifying types of hypocrites. The purpose of a pragmatic analysis is to see to the heart of how hypocrisy is constructed, responded to or co-constructed in interactions. What is pragmatically interesting is how the hypocrite is leading recipients to make the right inferences about her, to build the appropriate image she wants them to have of her. Since pragmatics is concerned with the use of language in context, the different genres and registers that interactions take part in are of paramount importance, and the level of tolerance of hypocrisy can differ across communities of practice. Even in everyday interactions between strangers, hypocrisy seems inevitable to guarantee good first impressions or simply get the conversation going. The notions of politeness reciprocity and social expectations appear to be central to the pragmatic analysis of hypocrisy. In order to maintain faces, keep the conversation going or avoid any awkwardness, people engage in reciprocal hypocrisy for their own sake (transactionally or self-promotionally) but also for the sake of the social relationship. In other words, hypocrisy can be seen as a kind of joint pretence – which is rarely acknowledged in accounts of hypocrisy in other disciplines. Some participants may fake not noticing the hypocrisy game or be willing to play along with it or adapt to the situation for different reasons. Power relations have proved to be a crucial aspect of the extent to which hypocrisy is adopted, accepted, or even expected. The will to engage in hypocrisy in the end depends on a gain/loss ratio: do I gain more by restraining myself from saying what I would like to say? Equally, as a co-speaker shall I reciprocate in kind to a hypocritical discourse according to the reciprocity principle and maintain social cohesion or do I dare expose (and/or benefit from exposing) the hypocrisy? What are the gains and losses of each response to it? And what might the desired social gains be for the autohypocrite virtually exposing their own act?

We have so far established the pragmatic space of hypocrisy and sketched the different hues that hypocrisy may take, depending on which point of view we adopt – that of the hypocrite,<sup>6</sup> the recipient or the observer, or the three of them combined. Figure 2.1 brings together the different threads drawn in the previous sections. It starts with the most deceitful kind of hypocrisy that is not meant to be uncovered and the more we move to the

---

<sup>6</sup> We use the term “hypocrite” for convenience. Being hypocritical in a given situation does not necessarily make one a hypocrite in essence.

right, the more exposed hypocrisy is for all to see. In between, hypocrisy can be played along with or tolerated.

<INSERT Figure 2.1 about here>

<b>Type of hypocrite</b>	The Simulator	The Dissimulator	The Chameleon	The Virtual Hypocrite
<b>Social action</b>	Deceiving	Disguising	Pleasing	Playing
<b>Language game</b>	Black lies Manipulation of inferences	Blue lies Half-truths Omissions Euphemism Redescription Bullshit	Pareto white lies Flattery (In)sincere politeness Self-serving tact	Virtual performatives Metapragmatic acts
<b>Kind of hypocrisy</b>	Deceptive Hypocrisy	Misleading Hypocrisy	Sincere or Civil Hypocrisy	Autohypocrisy
<b>Exposure</b>	Hypocrisy concealed (by hypocrite)	Outspokenness censured (by hypocrite)	Joint pretence hypocrisy	Hypocrisy exposed (by hypocrite)

Figure 2.1. A general pragmatic model of verbal hypocrisy

Figure 2.1 details four different categories of hypocrisy. The vertical column on the left-hand side indicates five parameters to distinguish them with. Hence, the first row includes the “types of hypocrites” discussed above. They are of different nature: the first three are predominantly pragmatic while the virtual hypocrite assumes a metapragmatic dimension. The second row gives an instance of the “social actions” that these hypocrites may aim at, and the third row establishes the potential “language resources” that verbal hypocrisy can employ in each category. In the fourth row, the label “kind of hypocrisy” conveys what we regard as the basic pragmatic quality of the hypocrisy involved. The fifth row displays the parameter of “exposure”, determining whether and to what extent the hypocrisy is revealed, and by whom (the speaker herself, the addressee or a third party).

Let us start from the left-hand side of the grid and comment further on the four variants of hypocrisy identified. The progression goes from the darker aspects of hypocrisy where deceit prevails to the lighter ones on the right-hand side, from malign to more benign relational practices.

On the left-hand side of the grid, the **Simulator** clearly hides self-interested motives at the expense of the recipient. The concealment of hypocrisy by the simulator is absolute; her hypocrisy must not be revealed and no third party can have access to the concealed thoughts, beliefs and feelings. This is the darkest, most deceptive form of hypocrisy where the victims of the hypocrite are deceived into doing, thinking or believing

something that is clearly not in their best interest. Black lies can be a tool of deceptive hypocrisy, as can willful attempts to manipulate the inferences that the hypocrite's utterances lead the victims to make, constraining contextual assumptions and interpretive effects (see Maillat 2013; Sorlin 2016, 2017). When this type of totally unethical, deceptive hypocrisy is exposed, the consequences can be dire. Witness, for instance, the public outrage around the 2020-2021 Partygate scandal in the UK mentioned in Chapter 1.

In order to protect herself from any retaliation, the hypocrite can turn into a **Dissimulator** who would rather sweeten or tone down what should be said so as to get away with a delicate situation. What is important for the dissimulator is to refrain from any form of outspokenness and thus to practice self-censorship. Indeed the dissimulator prefers to disguise what she says through rhetorical redescription, euphemistic verbiage or metaphorical colouring, applying a form of self-protective censorship. This is the opposite of the shameless outspoken individual who values freedom of expression at the risk of hurting, by being deliberately politically incorrect. Of course the breaking of social oughts can be exhilarating – it might be why we enjoy rule-breakers so much. As we have grown accustomed to that sociality of pretence – starting with “how are you?” which is rarely a real enquiry about someone's true feelings – we may get a thrill when such norms of sociality are broken. As Feinberg (2002:69) states, “[w]hen we hear the truth expressed unexpectedly in a society that has accustomed itself to expect hypocrisy, we are pleased because we are enjoying the violation of an artificial social restriction.” This might in part explain Trump's success (for an explanation of Trump's accusations of hypocrisy in moral terms directed towards the elites, see Gill, this volume). A hypocrite will refrain from breaking conventional rules or offending a recipient whose power is superior to hers. This strategy does not only concern individuals. It can apply to institutions, corporations, whole nations, and diplomacy. Recall, in Chapter 1, Yale's hypocritical argument that looked impartial on the surface but disguised less avowable intentions. The extract from *Devs* (see Chapter 1) also displays a show of doublespeak where Americans are accused of speaking with a forked tongue, saying one thing but meaning another. This misleading hypocrisy thrives on lies by omission, blues lies, half or attenuated truths through mitigating language, with the intent to generate a feel-good effect concealing complicit less noble objectives. Another tool for the dissimulator to get away with what she tries to conceal might be bullshit since the bullshitter is able to beat about the truth, which would serve the hypocrite's self-interested goals. As Frankfurt (2005:56) shows,

[the bullshitter] is neither on the side of the true nor on the side of the false. His (sic) eye is not the facts at all, as the eyes of the honest

man and of the liar are, except insofar as they may be pertinent to his interest in getting away with what he says. He does not care whether the things he says describe reality correctly. He just picks them out, or makes them up, to suit his purpose.

Hypocrisy also seems vital in diplomatic spheres to maintain dialogue and find ways to live with irreconcilable differences; in diplomacy there can be overlaps between the hypocrisy types of the dissimulator and the chameleon in diplomacy. When masks fall, violence is revealed. Further, the shift from global warming to “climate change” could be interpreted as an instance of hypocritical “rhetorical redescription” that makes it possible not to scare the general public too much while conveniently preserving the economic interests of those who might pay the price for measures intended to stop global warming. The processes of disinformation to the benefit of huge lobbies are part of this type of verbal hypocrisy consisting in finding words that deny reality or pretend danger is limited or nonexistent. To take an earlier example, conservative think tanks have been shown to have elaborated arguments denying the danger of cigarettes for the benefit of the tobacco industry (see Conway and Oreskes 2015).

The third type of hypocrite, the **Chameleon**, appears to pervade almost all civil communication, making this a good candidate for the most common form of verbal hypocrisy. The hypocrisy is here recognized for what it is by all participants but played along with in a kind of joint pretence. Recipients might know about the real intentions or aims of the hypocrite but may be willing to keep up the pretence. The hypocrite may even know that the other knows, but both participants may carry on interacting out of joint understanding. In any case this type of hypocrisy is characterized by its self-serving adaptability. The chameleon changes hues as often as necessary, ready as she is to say what needs to be said for the other to construct the best image of her by making the right inferences. The chameleon can be sincere, for instance, in wanting to be well-perceived although she is just pretending to please (see Sorlin, this volume), apologize (see Halmari, this volume), recognize somebody she does not in fact remember (see O’Driscoll, this volume) or make offers that she knows or hopes the other will not act upon (see Haugh, this volume). This type of hypocrite means to protect all faces, say what etiquette requires, reciprocate in kind to politeness even if this means telling Pareto white lies or using self-serving tact either to build her positive face or for the sake of smooth conversation. The hypocrite may aim to have the other appreciate her in case she needs the recipient or the latter has reward power over her. But the aim is as much to protect, even enhance, the face of the recipient for its own sake (consider the example of feigned recognition studied by O’Driscoll, this volume).

Lastly, the **Virtual Hypocrite** performs linguistic acts, playful or otherwise, which are geared towards shared online self-communication and digitally mediated interactions. Technology users readily engage in self-reflexivity and metapragmatic acts of various kinds. The virtual hypocrite may, for instance, make self-directed metapragmatic claims such as the disclaimer “I know it sounds hypocritical” occurring in the discussion forum examined by Tanskanen (this volume). Like in similar instances of offline conversation, people may for various pragmatic reasons admit to the (possible) hypocrisy of what they have just said/typed or are about to say/type in their message. But users may also resort to what Virtanen (this volume) calls “autohypocrisy”: here the self-oriented hypocrisy is both enacted and disclosed instantaneously and nondeniably by the power of the virtual hypocrite’s words. Users may thus virtually enact being shocked by some revelation and, simultaneously, debunk the shock by exposing it through a performative predication of the type \*pretends to be shocked\*. In this case, virtual performativity is enabled by the use of the self-referential third-person performative construction. This perspectival distance is crucial: consider “I pretend”, which would not have the same performative effect and might at best be interpreted as a “mock-performative” (Virtanen 2013). Also consider the mere description of ongoing action through the first-person progressive “I’m pretending to be shocked”. In autohypocrisy, the two virtual acts in one (the enactment of the emotion of being shocked and the disclosure of it as mere play-acting) are carried out simultaneously. Rather than disguised or deceptive, virtual autohypocrisy is overtly prosocial. While other-directed charges of hypocrisy are rampant online (for examples, see the three chapters in this volume by Gill, Gillings, and Tanskanen), they are concerned with the previous three categories of hypocrisy.

To sum up, our model has five parameters and four categories. It consists of the two extremes of the simulator and the virtual hypocrite while the middle ground is occupied by the dissimulator and the chameleon. Hypocrisy ranges from unethical to prosocial phenomena, from dark to light, or malign to more benign relational practices. The more prosocial the form of hypocrisy, the more it involves its targets in the act, its recipients, but also its observers. For its selfish purposes, hypocrisy relies on manipulation and black lies in the case of the deceptive simulator, strategies of self-censorship in that of the misleading dissimulator, self-serving adaptability in the case of the civil chameleon, and metapragmatic self-reflexivity in that of the virtual autohypocrite. Hypocrisy constitutes, we have argued, a much broader socio-pragmatic phenomenon than might be suspected at first sight. What is conspicuous is that while the extremes of this model are the unethical, deceitful simulator and the playful autohypocrite, in the middle ground we find a wide range of clearly self-serving linguistic behaviours as the dissimulator and even more so, the



chameleon, set out to create complicity or joint pretence for selfish purposes. Future studies would do well to examine the macropragmatic and micropragmatic nature of the presumably very common phenomena of “benign” prosocial hypocrisy, which we have identified as civil or sincere hypocrisy, both good candidates for joint pretence hypocrisy.

## 6. Concluding remarks

For a pragmatic account of hypocrisy, the reader may wonder why (Neo)Gricean pragmatics has not emerged more often in this chapter. Hypocrisy seems to violate the maxim of Quality (insincerity), as well as those of Manner (in the use of camouflaging, ambiguous or euphemistic language) and Quantity (with restraints on disclosing the full truth). These violations may become ostentatious in cases where hypocrisy is perceived by the recipient drawing an implicature of insincere politeness (see Section 4.4 above). Irrespective of the potential exposure of such violations, however, the conventional or conversational implicatures triggered are too restricted to explain hypocrisy. Nor are the workings of hypocrisy with the maxim of Relation straightforward as both sincere hypocrisy and undisclosed deception or manipulation may appear to be highly relevant in a particular communicative situation. Arguably, an elusive notion such as hypocrisy cannot be thoroughly studied within the mere confines of (Neo)Gricean pragmatics.

If hypocrisy has hardly ever been studied through a pragmatic lens, it might be because traditional philosophy of language can only relegate such phenomena to the margins of communication and perceive them as communicative loss or deviation. This is especially so if hypocrisy is merely construed as a moral vice failing to abide by the (morally-oriented) maxims of interaction (tell the truth; do not lie; be as informative as need be; be relevant, be clear and orderly). Yet the first pragmatic step would be to humbly recognize the ubiquity and necessity of hypocrisy. Setting moral standards that are too high to reach for human beings inevitably leads to the perpetuation of hypocrisy. For instance, Shklar (1984) shows how puritanism could only generate hypocrisy as too many fell short of the religious ideals set forth. We would argue that the same applies to politics: once people recognize that masks are inescapable in democratic regimes, they can start to tell white from darker hues of hypocrisy, and avoid condemning politics altogether, which has the effect of accentuating general distrust towards politicians. Denouncing hypocrisy in politics is therefore not only hypocritical but can only contribute to its maintenance.

A renewed philosophy of language would not take as its premises truth, sincerity, relevant and sufficient information, or unambiguous language: these linguistic virtues should be more realistically regarded as

the ethical horizon towards which every individual should tend. Exposures of self-oriented or other-oriented hypocrisy, as well as decisions not to expose observed hypocrisy, may be motivated by myriad pragmatic functions that are related to social interaction rather than morality or rationality in any strict sense. The exposures of moral failings are particularly prevalent in public allegations of hypocrisy that can thus be weaponized in political contexts (see Gill, this volume). Although often unobservable at first sight, hypocrisy is worthy of pragmatic analysis in its own right. Its study can be expected to have an impact on how politeness and related pragmatic theories are conceived and it is likely to throw renewed light on the social game carried out in interactions.

Ranging from prosocial to entirely unethical, hypocrisy constitutes a wider socio-pragmatic strategy than might be suspected. This volume is an attempt to get to grips with the phenomenon in linguistic terms, approaching it from an essentially pragmatic perspective. We are aware that our perspective is mostly western-centered and would greatly benefit from cross-cultural analyses. The present volume should be regarded as a first step towards understanding the pragmatics of hypocrisy. The pragmatic model of verbal hypocrisy devised for this purpose offers, we would hope, a worthwhile starting point for future investigations of the subtle phenomenon.

## References

- Brown, Penelope, and Stephen C. Levinson. 1987. *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Capraro, Valerio, Matjaz Perc, and Daniele Vilone. 2020. "Lying on Networks: The Role of Structure and Topology in Promoting Honesty." *Physical Review E* 101.
- Chan, Elaine, and Jaideep Sengupta. 2010. "Insincere Flattery Actually Works: A Dual Attitudes Perspective." *Journal of Marketing Research* 47 (1): 122-133.
- Clark, Herbert H. 1996. *Using Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Clark, Herbert H., and Richard J. Gerrig. 1984. "On the Pretense Theory of Irony." *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 113 (1): 121-126. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0096-3445.113.1.121>
- Colston, Herbert, and Jennifer O'Brien. 2000. "Contrast and Pragmatics in Figurative Language: Anything Understatement Can Do, Irony Can Do Better." *Journal of Pragmatics* 32: 1557-1583. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166\(99\)00110-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166(99)00110-1)
- Conway, Erik, and Naomi Oreskes. 2015. *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming*. Bloomsbury Press. Reprint edition.
- Culpeper, Jonathan. 2011. *Impoliteness: Using Language to Cause Offence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Culpeper, Jonathan, Michael Haugh, and Valeria Sinkeviciute. 2017. *The Palgrave Handbook of (Im)politeness*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Culpeper, Jonathan, and Vittorio Tantucci. 2021. "The Principle of (Im)politeness Reciprocity." *Journal of Pragmatics* 175: 146-164.

- Danziger, Roni. 2020. The Pragmatics of Flattery: The Strategic Use of Solidarity-oriented Actions." *Journal of Pragmatics* 170: 413-425.
- Danziger, Roni. 2023. *Positive Social Acts: A Metapragmatic Exploration of the Brighter and Darker Sides of Sociability*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Davidson, Jenny. 2004. *Hypocrisy and the Politics of Politeness: Manners and Morals from Locke to Austen*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- de Saussure, Louis. 2005. "Manipulation and Cognitive Pragmatics: Preliminary Hypotheses." In *Manipulation and Ideologies in the Twentieth Century: Discourse, Language, Mind*, ed. by Louis de Saussure, and Peter Schulz, 113–145. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Dews, Shelly, Joan Kaplan, and Ellen Winner. 2007. "Why not Say it Directly? The Social Functions of Irony." In *Irony in Language and Thought: A Cognitive Science Reader*, ed. by Raymond W. Gibbs, and Herbert L. Colston, 297–317. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Elster, Jon. 2005. "L'usage stratégique de l'argumentation." *Négociations* 2 (4): 59-82.
- Eylon, Yuval, and David Heyd. 2008. "Flattery." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 77 (3): 685-704.
- Feinberg, Leonard. 2002. *Hypocrisy: Don't Leave Home Without It*. Greeley: Pilgrims' Process.
- Fein, Ellen, and Sherrie Schneiber. 1995. *All the Rules: Time-tested Secrets for Capturing the Heart of Mr. Right*. Boston: Little, Brown & Company.
- Fielding, Henry. 1967 [1742]. *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and of his Friend Mr Abraham Adams and An Apology for the Life of Mrs Shamela Andrews*. Edited by Douglas Brooks-Davies. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fu, Genyue, Angela D. Evans, Lingfeng Wang, and Kang Lee. 2008. "Lying in the Name of the Collective Good: A Developmental Study." *Developmental Science* 11: 495-503.
- Grice, H. Paul. 1975. "Logic and conversation." In *Syntax and Semantics, Vol 3: Speech Acts*, ed. by Peter Cole, and Jerry L. Morgan, 41-48. New York: Academic Press.
- Goffman, Erving. 1967. "On Face-Work: An Analysis of Ritual Elements in Social Interaction." In *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior*, 5-45. New York: Doubleday.
- Hart, Christian L., Jelisa M. Jones, John A. Terrizzi, and Drew A. Curtis. 2019. "Development of the Lying in Everyday Situations Scale." *The American Journal of Psychology* 132 (3): 343-352.
- Jamieson, Kathleen Hall, and Bruce Hardy. 2012. "What is Civil Engaged Argument and Why Does Aspiring to It Matter?" *PS: Political Science & Politics* 45 (3): 412-415. doi:10.1017/S1049096512000479
- Jobert, Manuel, and Sorlin, Sandrine. 2018. "Introduction: The Intricacies of Irony and Banter." In *The Pragmatics of Irony and Banter*, ed. by Manuel Jobert, and Sandrine Sorlin, 3-21. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Jordan, Jillian J., Roseanna Sommers, Paul Bloom, and David G. Rand. 2017. "Why Do We Hate Hypocrites? Evidence for a Theory of False Signaling." *Psychological Science* 28 (3): 356-368.
- Jucker, Andreas H., and Irma Taavitsainen. 2000. "Diachronic Speech Act Analysis: Insults from Flyting to Flaming." *Journal of Historical Pragmatics* 1 (1): 67–95.

- Kapust, Daniel J. 2018. *Flattery and the History of Political Thought: That Glib and Oily Art*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kittay, Eva Feder. 1982. "On Hypocrisy." *Metaphilosophy* 13 (3-4): 277-289.
- Klein, Laurence E. 1989. "Liberty, Manners, and Politeness in Early Eighteenth-century England." *The Historical Journal* 32 (3): 583–605.
- Kreuz, Roger, Debra Long, and Mary Church. 1991. "On Being Ironic: Pragmatic and Mnemonic Implications." *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity* 6: 149–162.  
[https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327868ms0603\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327868ms0603_1)
- Leech, Geoffrey. 1983. *Principles of Pragmatics*. London: Longman.
- Leech, Geoffrey. 2014. *The Pragmatics of Politeness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Maillat, Didier. 2013. "Constraining Context Selection: On the Pragmatic Inevitability of Manipulation." *Journal of Pragmatics* 59: 190–199.
- McKinnon, Christine. 1991. "Hypocrisy, with a Note on Integrity." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 28 (4): 321-330.
- Mills, Sara. 2017. *English Politeness and Class*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- O'Driscoll, Jim. 2020. *Offensive Language: Taboo, Offence and Social Control*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Östman, Jan-Ola, and Jef Verschueren (founding eds). 1995-. *Handbook of Pragmatics*. Available online since 2003. International Pragmatics Association (IPrA) Research Center. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.  
<https://doi.org/10.1075/hop>
- Paternoster, Annick, and Susan Fitzmaurice (eds). 2019. *Politeness in Nineteenth-century Europe*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Richardson, Samuel. 1740/2013. *Pamela or Virtue Rewarded*. London: Oxford World's Classics.
- Riley, Denise. 2005. *Impersonal Passion: Language as Affect*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.
- Roberts, David (ed). 1998. *Lord Chesterfield's Letters (1737–68)*. London: Oxford World's Classics.
- Rockwell, Patricia Ann. 2006. *Sarcasm and Other Mixed Messages: The Ambiguous Ways People Use Language*. Lewinston: Edwin Mellen Press.
- Runciman, David. 2008. *Political Hypocrisy: The Mask of Power from Hobbes to Orwell and Beyond*. Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Shklar, Judith. 1984. *Ordinary Vices*. Harvard University Press.
- Sifianou, Maria. 2023. "Dangerous Politeness? Understandings of Politeness in the Covid-19 Era and Beyond." *Journal of Politeness Research: Language, Behaviour, Culture*. file:///Users/sandrine/Downloads/10.1515\_pr-2022-0011.pdf
- Simpson, Paul. 2011. "'That's not Ironic, that's just Stupid:' Towards an Eclectic Account of the Discourse of Irony." In *The Pragmatics of Humour across Discourse Domains*, ed. by Marta Dynel, 33–50. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.  
<https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.210.04sim>
- Sorlin, Sandrine. 2013. "The Power of Impoliteness: A Historical Perspective." In *Aspects of Linguistic Impoliteness*, ed. by Denis Jamet, and Manuel Jobert, 45–58. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Sorlin, Sandrine. 2016. *Language and Manipulation in House of Cards: A Pragmatic-Stylistic Perspective*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Sorlin, Sandrine. 2017. "The Pragmatics of Manipulation: Exploiting Im/politeness Theories." *Journal of Pragmatics* 121: 132-146.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2017.10.002>
- Spencer-Oatey, Helen. 2005. "(Im)Politeness, Face and Perceptions of Rapport: Unpackaging their Bases and Interrelationships." *Journal of Politeness Research: Language, Behaviour, Culture* 1 (1): 95-119.
- Terkourafi, Marina. 2015. "Review of the *Pragmatics of Politeness*." *Language* 91 (4): 957-960.
- Tomasello, Michael. 2014. *A Natural History of Human Thinking*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Toplak, Mary, and Albert Katz. 2000. "On the Uses of Sarcastic Irony." *Journal of Pragmatics* 32: 1467–1488. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166\(99\)00101-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166(99)00101-0)
- Verschueren, Jef. 2022. *Complicity in Discourse and Practice*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- Virtanen, Tuija. 2013. "Performativity in Computer-Mediated Communication." In *Pragmatics of Computer-Mediated Communication*, ed. by Susan C. Herring, Dieter Stein, and Tuija Virtanen, 269-290. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Watts, Richard J. 2002. "From Polite to Educated Language: The Re-emergence of an Ideology." In *Alternatives Histories of English*, ed. by Richard J. Watts, and Peter Trudgill, 155-172. London: Routledge.
- Watts, Richard J. 2003. *Politeness: Key Topics in Sociolinguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wieting, Stephen G. 2015. *The Sociology of Hypocrisy: An Analysis of Sport and Religion*. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Wodak, Ruth. 2020. *The Politics of Fear: The Shameless Normalization of Far-Right Discourses*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Wodak, Ruth, Jonathan Culpeper, and Elena Semino. 2021. "Shameless Normalisation of Impoliteness: Berlusconi's and Trump's press conferences." *Discourse & Society* 32 (3): 369–393.