#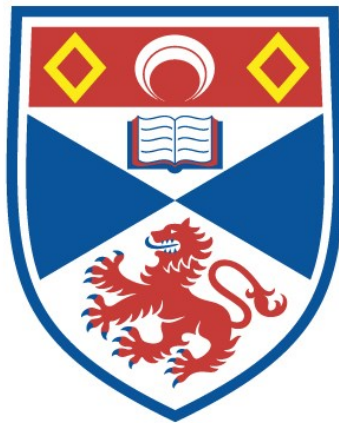 ENGLISH RENAISSANCE PARADOX : INTELLECTUAL CONTEXTS AND TRADITIONS WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO JOHN DONNE'S`PARADOXES' AND`BIATHANATOS'

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The English Renaissance Paradox:

Intellectual Contexts and Traditions with Particular Reference to John Donne's *Paradoxes* and *Biathanatos*

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Abstract

This study examines the intellectual background of the paradoxes of John Donne. In the first chapter, the classical foundations of the concept of paradox are detailed. These foundations reflect basic philosophical differences which are manifest in a writer's approach to the defense of a paradox or uncommon opinion. The first chapter also discusses the derivation of classical concepts of paradox by sixteenth-century writers in an effort to correlate these concepts with the respective philosophical positions with which Donne would have been familiar. The second chapter focuses on the dialectical procedure of the *thesis*. Aristotle explicitly associated the *thesis* with paradox, and he delineated its fundamental role in the investigation of contested speculative questions. Cicero adapted it to his rhetorical theory but continued to observe its essentially dialectical character. In the sixteenth century, writers on both rhetoric and logic drew heavily on the works of Aristotle and Cicero for their own formulations of the *thesis*. These formulations reflect precisely the relationship which Aristotle and Cicero observed between the paradox and the *thesis*. The third chapter begins by examining the challenge posed by Peter Ramus to the Aristotelian dialectic upon which the scholastic curricula of European universities was based. Donne's English contemporaries, Gabriel Harvey and Thomas Nashe, disagreed on the value of Ramus' innovations, and their comments on them in their quarrel reveal an awareness of the profound epistemological ramifications of Ramus' denial of the sceptical use of the *thesis* which Aristotle had observed in his *Topics*. The fourth chapter details those epistemological theories which competed with Ramus' neoaristotelianism. The majority of these theories are neoplatonic; they exhibit the characteristic features of Platonic Idealism which Aristotle had rejected in his *Metaphysics*, and which would be later rejected by Aquinas. Donne was familiar with these neoplatonic alternatives and was not wholly unreceptive to them. However, he explicitly denies the value of neoplatonic theories of mind for the practical affairs of Christian life, and maintains that the doubt implicit in matters to which revelation and reason have not delivered absolute precepts insures the viability of paradoxical opinions. The fifth chapter compares Donne's Aristotelian notion of paradox with other paradoxes of the sixteenth century. Through this comparison, the scholastic foundation of Donne's dialectical argumentation is exposed. Once exposed, his characteristic tentativeness with regard to the doctrinal differences of his day is understood to be a consequence of his Aristotelian and Thomist regard for the difficulty with which reason attains knowledge. The sixth chapter examines Donne's paradox and *thesis*, *Biathanatos*, in light of the Thomist principles which it employs in its exposition of the problem of suicide. Throughout *Biathanatos* Donne criticizes the value of Augustine's moral doctrine in practical life, and accepts an epistemological doctrine which accomodates doubt and error in the manner detailed by Aquinas and denied by Augustine. It is with this doubt and error in mind that Donne's paradox proceeds towards its conclusion's request for charitable interpretation, an interpretation which is informed specifically by Aquinas' doctrine of charity.

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Introduction

The aim of this study is to examine the intellectual tradition which informed the Renaissance conception of paradox, and to demonstrate the importance of this tradition for the articulation of fundamental epistemological and ethical positions relating to the sceptical critique of knowledge and to the problem of the application of knowledge in Christian moral life. The paradoxes of John Donne have been chosen for special attention not only because they are representative of the intellectual tradition with which we are concerned, but also because an understanding of this tradition is fundamental to an understanding of the relation of his ethical and epistemological views to the general currents of thought in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. There have been many studies of Donne's thought which have attempted to reconcile the fallacious argumentation of the eleven short paradoxes, which he composed in the early 1590's as a law student at Lincoln's Inn, and the apparently serious argumentation of his long paradox defending suicide, *Biathanatos*, which was written about 1607 or 1608.[1] As a perusal of the notes of this study will clearly indicate, the opinions expressed in these, and related, studies are so numerous and varied that any attempt to engage with them individually in the midst of our examination of the primary material would undermine the coherent exposition of the central issues concerning this study. It is for this reason that the relevant views of other critics and scholars have been recorded in notes which detail the main points with which we agree or disagree. These notes may be consulted by the reader who would like to learn more about the critical debates which surround particular issues treated in this study, but they are not necessary for an understanding of the primary material discussed in the body of the work.

The intellectual tradition which is most relevant to the Renaissance conception of paradox is the tradition of academic disputation. And the tradition of academic disputation, as Donne observes in his ninth paradox, 'That By Discord Things Increase', is principally concerned with the treatment of discordant opinions.

As we will see by the end of this study, discord could be initiated both as a threat to the harmony enjoyed by those united in a common or 'orthodox' opinion, or as a means to secure that harmony through a clarification of the contentious issues upon which opinion could become divided. In his ninth paradox, Donne prefers to characterize discord as a means of clarification. He says, 'We are ascertained of all disputable doubts only by arguing and differing in opinion, and if formal disputation which is but a painted, counterfeit, and dissembled Discord, can worke us this benefit, what shall not a full and maine discord accomplish?'[2] Earlier in his essay, he had identified discord as the source of his paradoxes. 'Whilst I differ from common opinions,' he explains, 'by this discord the number of my Paradoxes encreaseth.'[3] Donne's description of his paradoxes as views contrary to the common opinion places them most obviously in the tradition of Cicero's *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, a collection of six essays in which Cicero defends Stoic ethical tenets according to his own principles of rhetorical exposition. Less obviously, but perhaps more importantly, by differing from the common opinion, Donne's paradoxes follow in the tradition of the *thesis*, which Aristotle was the first to describe, and which continued to form a fundamental part of academic disputation throughout the seventeenth century.[4] Donne called his defense of suicide (*Biathanatos*) both a paradox and a *thesis*, and thus made explicit the integral relation between the tradition of paradox stemming from Cicero's *Paradoxa* and the tradition of the *thesis* recorded by Aristotle.

In *Biathanatos*, Donne described the function of his serious *thesis* in much the same terms as he had described the function of his youthful paradoxes over a decade earlier. He says of the uncommon opinion which he will defend, 'As in the pool of Bethsaida there was no health till the water was troubled, so the best way to find the truth in this matter was to debate and vex it'.[5] Again, we see that it is by discord that Donne intends to clarify the doubts which must be resolved before the truth can be found. It is important that we recognize that Donne believed that his defense of paradoxes or *theses* could conduce to a discovery of some obscured truth, as such a recognition cannot but expand our understanding of the famous advice of his third satire to 'doubt wisely' and 'stand inquiring right'.[6] The central concern of

this satire, as of so much of Donne's intellectual life before his ordination in 1615, is with the religious controversies in which the rival opinions of Protestants and Catholics were disputed.[7] Though Donne may not have thought that all of the issues upon which these sects disagreed could be settled with certainty, he never ceased to stress the importance of developing an informed opinion in which one could find the security of a rectified conscience. And this informed opinion, we will see, is sometimes acquired at the expense of the common opinion, through the proof of a paradox, or at the expense of the paradox itself, through the exposure of the weakness of the argumentation which recommends it. In a letter accompanying the ten paradoxes, which he sent to his friend Henry Wotton in 1600, Donne reminded him that the uncommon opinions expressed in them were created to be refuted, and should be viewed as practice in the disputation from which informed opinions may emerge. He says:

> if they make you to find better reasons against them they do there office: for they are but swaggerers: quiet enough if you resist them. if perchance they be pretyly guilt, that is there best for they are not yet hatcht: they are rather alarums to truth to arme her then enemies: and they have only this advantadg to scape from being caled ill things that they are nothings: therfore take heed of allowing any of them least you make another.[8]

We will see that Aristotelian methods of refutation were part of every university-educated man's knowledge, and particularly of those, such as Donne, who studied law in the Inns of Court after completing their undergraduate course.[9] Integral to this method is the ability to expose the fallacies hidden in the argumentation of sophistical paradoxes such as those which Donne wrote while at Lincoln's Inn.[10] The *thesis* of *Biathanatos*, however, is itself a refutation (that suicide is not always a sin), and therefore, will seek to vex the truth by introducing a discord into the debate over suicide which genuinely reflects the contentiousness of the issue.

Not all paradoxes written in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were intended to affirm the benefits of contention, however. Some paradoxes were expressed in the form of paradoxical encomia, and as we will see, did not employ logical techniques for the refutation of a *thesis*. Among these paradoxical encomia,

Erasmus' *Praise of Folly* (1511) was clearly the most influential in the sixteenth century. Although it is aptly called a paradox in so far as it praises an object which the common opinion would not consider worthy of praise, our failure to recognize the paradoxical encomium's essentially rhetorical character will result in a confusion of the taxonomic distinctions which Donne and his contemporaries observed with respect to the Renaissance paradox.[11] Though both may be called paradoxes, the paradoxical encomium is properly composed according to the prescriptions of epideictic oratory, while the paradox as a defense of a *thesis* is composed according to the principles of dialectical analysis. It is vital that we distinguish Donne's own paradoxes as defenses of *theses* which participate in the Aristotelian and Ciceronian tradition of philosophical inquiry from uncritical paradoxical encomia which only loosely deserve to be called paradoxes, such as those we find in the *Essayes of Certain Paradoxes* (1616) written by Donne's friend, William Cornwallis. Three of Cornwallis' four essays are entitled praises; only the last 'That it is Good to be in Debt' is a paradoxical *thesis* of the type described by Aristotle and defended by Cicero and Donne.[12] After composing his praises of Richard the Third, the French Pox and Nothing according to the rhetorical criteria for the encomium upon which, we will see, Isocrates had insisted in his criticisms of Gorgias' encomium of Helen, Cornwallis distinguishes his final essay as a defense of a *thesis* which, like Donne's paradoxes, affirms the benefits of contention. He explains that 'in tender commiseration of mankinde,...[he] will endevour to rectifie their iudgement in a Paradox, then which there hath none more intricate, been discussed and canvassed among the Stoiks in *Zenos* porch'.[13] As will see when we examine Isocrates' prescriptions for epideictic oratory in relation to the sophistical and paradoxical defenses of Gorgias, the generic distinctions drawn there continued to be observed by sixteenth-century writers of paradoxical encomia and paradoxes.

In his *Apology for Poetry* (1595), Philip Sidney decried the abuses of paradoxical encomiasts in similar terms to those which, we will see, Isocrates used in his criticisms of the sophists in his *Helen*.[14] Sidney calls the worse sort of these encomiasts 'poet-haters' and declares that 'they do prodigally spend a great many wandering words in quips and scoffs, and carping and taunting at each thing which,

by stirring the spleen, may stay the brain from a thorough-beholding the worthiness of the subject.'[15] Although he is careful to recognize that Erasmus' and Cornelius Agrippa's paradoxical encomia of ignorance had 'another [morally serious] foundation' (a foundation which we will see influenced the moral objective of the most popular paradoxist of the sixteenth century, Ortensio Lando), Sidney describes the majority of these 'faultfinders' as 'playing wit[s]' whose 'itching tongue[s]...confute others' knowledge before they can confirm their own'.[16] Donne will describe those paradoxists who draw upon the learning of renowned scholars such as Erasmus and Agrippa in much the same way in his *Courtier's Library*. He explains that in his time 'men move along a middle way, and in their efforts to shun the disgrace of ignorance and to save themselves the tedium of reading they all use one art that they may keep up the appearance of knowing the rest of the arts.' 'Hence', Donne continues, 'the taste for epitomes and paradoxes and for the itchy outbreaks of far-fetched wit.'[17] Despite their distaste for these 'itchy' wits, both Donne and Sidney agree that an ability to detect the ignorance of these dilettantes is the mark of the wise man; as exercises which cultivate this ability, both could recommend paradoxical encomia as morally edifying as Erasmus' *Praise of Folly* and paradoxes as logically challenging as Donne's. Just as Sidney observes that 'good fools' such as we find in Erasmus' *Praise* deserve to be laughed at, so Donne recognizes, in his seventh paradox, 'That a wise man is knowne by much Laughing', that Erasmus' *Folly* was meant to make her 'beholders laughe.'[18] At the end of his paradox, Donne affirms the challenging wit which, once discerned, will simultaneously raise the 'alarum to truth' and delight those wise enough to detect its fallacies. 'Which promptnes of laughing is so great in wise men, that I thinke all wise men (yf any wise men do read this paradox) will laugh both at it and me.'[19]

The character called 'Paradox' in the Gray's Inn Revels of 1618 was created to provoke just this type of wise laughter. As his lineage indicates, he is the offspring of three doctrines which the Anglican members of the Inn would have considered paradoxical. After declaring that he is 'a meere Greek, a Sophister of Athens', he says, 'Know then, my name is Paradox...I am a slip of darkness; my father a Jesuit, my mother an Anabaptist...And Methode breeds my name

Paradox.'[20]   Paradox's Jesuit father refers to the equivocal arguments with which

Catholic dissenters in England attempted to elude the inquisitions of their Anglican

interrogators and to avoid taking the Oath of Allegiance to the English monarch. In

the first decade of the seventeenth century, Donne assisted the Anglican

controversialist, Thomas Morton, in the preparation of his arguments against the

Jesuits, and he would certainly have been familiar with Morton's *Apologia*

Catholica (1605), in which the Jesuits' equivocal defenses of their allegiance to the

Pope are called 'Paradoxa, Haereses, Blasphemiae, [and] Scelera'.[21] As we will see

later in our discussion of his own defense of the Anglican position against the

Jesuits, *Pseudo-Martyr* (1610), Donne believed that the source of the paradoxes of

the Jesuits lay in their willingness to maintain a dangerous uncommon opinion in

spite of their own recognition of the weakness of the arguments supporting it.   The

mother of the Gray's Inn Paradox, refers to the Puritan disparagement of reason in

the defense of their own doctrines. As we will see when we examine the neoplatonic

views of advocates of fideism such as Erasmus and Lando, the mystical nature of the

Christian paradoxes (e.g. the Trinity, the fortunate fall), was asserted as proof

against the power of the Aristotelian dialectic of the scholastic philosophers to assist

in the discovery of moral knowledge. As our study proceeds, it will become

increasingly clear that Donne's paradoxes operate according to this dialectic, and

therefore, reflect his opposition to the Puritans' own paradox, that Aristotelian

philosophy is of no use to the Christian. Finally, the 'Methode which breeds' the

name of Paradox, refers to the dialectical method of Peter Ramus, which he

introduced as a simplification of what he believed was the corrupt Aristotelian

dialectic of the schoolmen. As we will see when we examine the details of his

dispute with the Ramist, Gabriel Harvey, for Thomas Nashe, the method of Ramism

was as dangerous an innovation to traditional Aristotelian logic as the Jesuits'

equivocal abuses, and hence, deserved to be called a paradox. As an Anglican,

Donne had to reject the paradoxes of the Jesuits, the Puritans and the often

Puritanical Ramists.[22] In doing so, however, he was forced to take their arguments

seriously, and to postpone his derision of their subversive doctrines until he had

digested the matter thoroughly. As Sidney had advised, Donne would have laughed

at the 'good fool' satirizing these paradoxes in the Gray's Inn Revels, but only after he had judged the strength of their arguments to be weaker than his own against them. The wisdom necessary to justify his laughter at these paradoxes is acquired only through a sober appraisal of their *theses*.

There is little doubt that Donne would have applied himself soberly to the consideration of the twenty-eight *theses* of Luther's 1518 *Heidelberg Disputation*. Luther's *theses*, he says, were devised to function as paradoxes (*paradoxae*) against the commonly held theological and philosophical opinions of the Roman church in order to determine whether they accorded with the teachings of the two most important Christian authorities in his view, St. Paul and St. Augustine.[23] Not surprisingly, Plato's doctrine of Ideas is preferred to Aristotle's causal explanations of intelligibles on the same grounds as we will see Luther's sometime antagonist and fellow Augustinian, Erasmus, dismissed Aristotle in favor of Plato in his *Enchiridion* (1503).[24] Luther's twenty-ninth and and thirty-sixth *theses* summarize his criticisms of Aristotle and his scholastic proponents. The twenty-ninth reads, 'Whoever is minded to apply himself to the Aristotelian philosophy without danger to his soul must first be made truly foolish in Christ.' The thirty-sixth reads, 'Aristotle was in the wrong when he reproved and scoffed at Plato's philosophy of ideas which is a better philosophy than his own.'[25] In the ninety-seven *theses* of his 1517 *Disputation against Scholastic Theology*, Luther reveals his distrust of the Aristotelian syllogistic upon which he and his fellow reformers (e.g. Erasmus, Agrippa) maintain the proud rationalist theology of the schoolmen is founded. His forty-fifth *thesis*, he says, is 'against the generally accepted opinion' that 'a theologian who is not a logician is a monstrous heretic', and is therefore a paradox. This paradox is followed by others which deny the value of syllogistic argument in theological matters. In his forty-seventh *thesis*, Luther says, 'No syllogistic form is valid in reasoning about God', and in his forty-ninth he explains why, 'If the syllogistic form were valid in theological thinking, then the trinitarian formula [so fundamental to Augustine's theology] would be a matter of knowledge and not faith.'[26]

Although it would be incorrect to call Luther anti-intellectual, his view that it is necessary to become 'foolish in Christ' by denying reason the power to discover the truths of God's law through the use of Aristotelian syllogistic is an indication that his paradoxes will not be acceptable to the common opinion unless that opinion enjoys the assistance of God's grace in the cultivation of faith in the mysteries they express.[27] As we will see, Donne's confidence in the power of syllogism to yield reliable, if not certain, conclusions regarding Christian ethics places him in opposition to Luther and other reformers who similarly denied the utility of Aristotelian logic.[28] While Luther could explain the wonder which his paradoxical views aroused in those whose syllogistic analyses of his opinions revealed logical contradictions by insisting that such wonder is a result of an encounter with the inscrutable truth of God's law, Donne continued to trust the power of logic to reveal at least the likelihood of an opinion's conformity with the truth.[29] Donne's scholastic sympathies were not lost in his conversion from Catholicism. For him, as with those scholastic dialecticians considering the logical problems of their *sophismata*, a paradox which cannot be made amenable to the common opinion because it appears self-contradictory is often an indication that it is fallacious, not that it expresses a mystical truth.[30] Certainly, Donne does not fail to wonder at the Christian mysteries for which no rational explanation can be attempted, but as Paradox in the Grays Inn Revels explains, paradox is a 'strain of wit and invention screwed above the vulgar conceit, to beget admiration.'[31] This admiration, we will see, is the same wonder which Cicero claims the Stoic's believed the logical demonstrations of their paradoxes aroused. As Cicero had in his exposition of the Stoic paradoxes in the *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, however, Donne will suspect the wonder which paradoxes produce in their admirers, and create paradoxes of his own which seek to diminish this effect.[32] His earlier paradoxes will accomplish this end by inverting the method of Cicero in his *Paradoxa* in an attempt to move his readers to find better reasons against them by identifying the fallacies responsible for their apparent paradoxicality. His later paradox, *Biathanatos*, will make an earnest attempt to prove the uncommon opinion, that suicide is not always a sin, by carefully specifying the conditions under which his view may be acceptable in the manner of

Cicero's defense of the Stoic *theses*. Our account of the function of Donne's paradoxes must begin, therefore, with an account of the influence of Cicero's notion of paradox on the sixteenth-century understanding of the term.

Notes to Introduction

[1] On the date of Donne's early paradoxes, see Donne, 1980, pp. xv, xxvi-xxvii. On the dates of the *Paradoxes and Problems* and of *Biathanatos*, see Bald, 1970, pp. 200-201.

[2] Donne, 1980, p. 20, ll. 31-35

[3] Ibid., p. 19, ll. 7-8

[4] In the introduction to his 1929 edition of Donne's poems, H. J. C. Grierson indicated that he was aware of the relationship between paradox and the *thesis*, when he commented that the paradoxes found in Donne's poems may be understood 'as witty and paradoxical theses suggested by Donne's naturalistic revolt.' See Donne, 1929, p. xix. Brian Vickers claims that 'as A. E. Malloch has shown that the paradox became associated with the *thesis* (a "proposition" laid down to be proved by argument), and so with the *disputatio* or debate' (p. 306). The article to which Vickers is referring does not discuss the philosophical *thesis* and its relation to the *quaestio* in great detail, and neither Vickers nor Malloch trace the *thesis* and the *quaestio* to their source in Aristotle and Cicero. Vickers does, however, usefully emphasize the philosophical nature of the paradox. See Vickers, 1968, pp. 305-314; and Malloch, 1956, pp. 191-203. M. T. Jones-Davies, expands Vickers's observation of the philosophical nature of paradox, and rightly emphasizes that the paradox was 'une forme de dialectique utile dans la quête du vrai' (pp. 106-107). She does not, however, distinguish the paradoxical encomium from the paradox, as we will below. See Jones-Davies, 1982, pp. 105-123. In his appraisal of the scholastic methods of teaching in sixteenth and seventeenth-century Cambridge, W. T. Costello has described the student's exhibition of his learning (in all areas of his study) as a series of defenses of *theses* or *quaestiones*. See Costello, 1958. For an account of the medieval development of *quaestiones disputatae*, see Copleston, 1972, pp. 150-153. It should be noted that the term *thesis* was also used more broadly by Donne, as well as his contemporaries, to signify any position advanced in debate. It is according to this broad definition that Malloch and Vickers understand the term. *Theses* thus defined were not specifically restricted by the generic limitations elaborated by Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian. In his *Courtier's Library* (1650), which was probably written between 1603-1611, Donne refers to *theses* advanced *pro* and *contra* in the context of a *controversia*. Though his use of the term expresses some of the general characteristics of the *thesis*, which we describe below, it does not distinguish it from the *controversia*, nor does it refer to its paradoxical nature. It should be emphasized, however, that Donne's description of *Biathanatos* as a *thesis* does correspond with the more specific understanding of the term outlined below. See Donne, 1930, pp. 49-50; on the date of composition, see Donne, 1930, p. 7.

[5] Donne, 1982, ll. 1147-1150

[6] *Satire* III, ll. 77-78

[7] For a list of the controversial works in Donne's library, see Keynes, 1972, pp. 258-279.

[8] Quoted in Donne, 1980, p. xxvi. In the introduction to her edition of the *Paradoxes and Problems*, Helen Peters discusses I. A. Shapiro's unpublished view that the letter was not addressed to Wotton, which is contrary to E. M. Simpson's view. Shapiro does not question Simpson's dating of the letter at 1600, however. See Donne, 1980, p. xxv; and Simpson, 1948, pp. 316-317. For further discussion of this letter, see Summers and Pebworth, 1991, pp. 26-27.

[9] W. T. Costello has noted that even at sixteenth-century Cambridge, which has been traditionally considered to be less conservative in its deference to Aristotle than Oxford, the study of logic was 'genuinely Aristotelian'. See Costello, 1958, p. 45.

[10] C. L. Hamblin reminds us that as late as 1950, Lincoln's Inn conducted debates derived from scholastic and Aristotelian methods of dialectical disputation, See Hamblin, 1970, p. 126, n. 2.

[11] It should be noted here that 'encomium' in the Greek for 'paradoxical encomium' may only function as a substantive when it denotes a song of praise. Therefore, there can be no doubt that the Greek for 'paradoxical' is the adjective when the genre is described in the Greek 'paradoxical encomium'. See *Liddell and Scott*, 1980, p. 191; and H. K. Miller, 1956, pp. 145-178, esp. 146.

[12] H. K. Miller has mistakenly observed that Cornwallis' *Essayes* 'are all mock encomia'. See H. K. Miller, 1956, p. 160. Miller, does not, as we do below, distinguish between the serious yet paradoxical encomium of Isocrates and the sceptical mock encomium of Gorgias.

[13] Cornwallis, 1616, sig, G2. Helen Peters discusses Cornwallis' *Essayes* in relation to Donne's *Paradoxes and Problems*, and asserts that both collections reflect the influence of Ortensio Lando's *Paradossi*. This influence will be contested later in the study. See Donne, 1980, pp. xxi-xxii.

[14] Isocrates, *Helen*, 1

[15] Sidney, 1965, p. 121

[16] Ibid., p. 121

[17] Donne, 1930, pp. 39-40

[18] Sidney, 1965, p. 121; Donne, 1980, p. 14, l. 12

[19] Donne, 1980, p. 16, ll. 61-63

[20] Quoted in Bullough, 1972, p. 66

[21] Quoted in Bald, 1970, p. 203. On Donne's interest in the religious controversies of his time, and particularly his involvement with the Anglican controversialist, Thomas Morton, see Walton, 1928, pp. 6-7, 12-15, 18, 23-27; Bald, 1970, pp. 200-301; and Flynn, 1975-1976a, pp. 1-17; and Flynn, 1975-1976b, 178-195. For a brief summary of the Jesuit doctrine of equivocation in the 1590's, see Malloch, 1979-1981, pp. 387-395.

[22] In a letter to Henry Goodyer in 1609, Donne had warned against the 'in-obedient Puritans' and the 'over-obedient Papists'. See Donne, 1977, p. 101. W. T. Costello has noted that the theology of both Oxford and Cambridge in the late sixteenth century was predominantly scholastic and Anglican. He also notes that Cambridge's reputation for Puritanism in the early seventeenth century has arisen from the Puritanical leanings of only two of its colleges, Emmanuel and Sidney Sussex. See Costello, 1958, pp. 108-110.

[23] See Luther, 1962, p. 276. For a discussion of Luther's Heidelberg *theses* with respect to Aristotelian directions for the handling of fallacy and paradox, see Evans, 1998, pp. 202-204.

[24] In his *Exercitationes paradoxicae adversus Aristoteleos* (1624), Pierre Gassendi pursued a more decidedly sceptical end in his critique of Aristotle. Like Luther, however, Gassendi acknowledged the prominence of Aristotelian philosophy among the common opinion of the learned by calling his arguments against Aristotle 'paradoxes'. For a discussion of Gassendi in light of the Gianfrancesco Pico's sceptical critique of Aristotle, see Schmitt, 1964, pp. 105-132, esp. 127-130.

[25] Luther, 1962, pp. 280-281

[26] Ibid., p. 270

[27] On the high value attributed to the practice of academic disputation as a preparation for involvement in religious controversies, see Watson, 1908, pp. 91-97. On the prominence of Aristotelian syllogistic in the academic disputations in which Donne would have taken part, see Costello, 1958, pp. 19-31, 48-49. An illuminating illustration of the importance of syllogism in religious disputations can be found in the apology for the Jesuit doctrine of equivocation written by Robert Persons and addressed to Donne's Anglican associate, Thomas Morton, as a response to his *Full Satisfaction Concerning a Double Romish Iniquitie* (London, 1606). In his *Treatise Tending to Mitigation towardes Catholicke-Subiects in England* (London, 1607), Persons seeks to refute Morton's position by attacking the validity of his syllogisms. Morton had argued his own position by advancing a series of formal syllogisms in which the major and minor premises, as well as the conclusions, were asserted with explicit reference to their syllogistic function. See for instance, Persons, 1607, pp. 442, 472-477; and Morton, 1606, pp. 50, 57, 60-63, 88-90.

[28] For an examination of Donne's use of Aristotelian logic in his poetry, see Wiggins, 1945, pp. 41-60.

[29] In a 1625 sermon preached upon Whitsunday, Donne described the syllogistic process of the disputation of paradoxes in religious controversies with particular reference to to Aristotle's methods of refutation and his formulation of the probable basis of opinion in the *Sophistical Refutations*. There he warned that 'paradoxicall imaginations' must not become the subject of formal disputations

because they have not achieved the status of opinion, paradoxical or otherwise. See Donne, 1953, VI, pp. 316-319. In a 1629 sermon preached on Christmas day, he discussed the virgin birth as a subject for disputation, and called it '*Paradoxa virgo*'. There he likened it to the case of 'Amelberga, the wife of one of the Earls of Flanders, who lived continently even in marriage, and is therefore called *Paradoxa virgo*, a virgin beyond opinion'. See Donne, 1953, IX, p. 143.

[30] Cicero felt similarly. He referred to the *sophismata* of Stilpo, Diodorus and Alexinus as '*fallaces conclusiunculae*', which denote fallacious and misleadingly precise syllogisms. See *Academica* II, 75. For an overview of the late medieval scholastic treatment of *sophismata* and their relation to paradox undertsood as logical contradiction, see Kretzmann, 1982, pp. 211-245.

[31] Quoted in Bullough, 1972, p. 66

[32] For views which mistakenly conclude Donne's wish to arouse wonder (admiration) in his paradoxes, see Quinn, 1969, pp. 626-647; and Klause, 1987, pp. 41-66.

Chapter I

Sixteenth-Century Paradox and the Classical Foundations of Doubt

1

English Concepts of Paradox and Cicero's *Paradoxa Stoicorum*

The *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, while principally a philosophical work, represented for sixteenth-century readers a middle ground between the sceptics and the dogmatists, the rhetoricians and the dialecticians, and the orator and the philosopher.[1] Their understanding of the term 'paradox', therefore, would have been derived not simply from Cicero's Latin rendering of the Greek *paradoxa* (*admirabilia*), but from the seminal method of exposition according to which the first formal paradox was composed, which, we will see, was also the method of the philosophical *thesis* first described by Aristotle in the *Topics*.[2] Cicero says that the Stoic tenets he defends in the *Paradoxa Stoicorum* are 'opinions that by no means meet with the acceptance of the multitude'; they 'are surprising and they run counter to universal opinion'.[3] The etymology of *paradoxa* indicates precisely this understanding of the term, *para* meaning 'beside' and *doxa* meaning 'opinions'.[4] Fittingly, the term came also to mean 'marvelous' or 'wondrous' in Greek and was accordingly translated into Latin maintaining this connotive meaning as well as the stricter original Greek denotation. Hence, when Cicero discusses why the Stoics call their ethical tenets *paradoxa* in the preface to the *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, he explains that it is because these 'doctrines are surprising and they run counter to universal opinion'. In *De Finibus*, he characterizes them in the same way. 'The Stoics,' he says, 'call these *paradoxa*, as we might say 'startling truths'.[5] Cicero's Latin term for both 'surprising' and 'startling truths' is *admirabilia*. We should recall at this point, the description of Paradox in the Gray's Inn Revels; his function, he tells us, is 'to beget admiration.' Sixteenth-century English writers deferred to Cicero's translation of the Greek *paradoxa*, and consistently

rendered the term with reference to the wondrous or marvelous quality which *admirabilia* connoted.

In *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), George Puttenham described the rhetorical function of the *paradoxon* by referring to the practice of the current model of eloquence in English, Philip Sidney. Translating strictly from the sense given by Cicero, Puttenham terms *paradoxon* 'the wondrer' in the adjacent margin and goes on to explain Sidney's use of the device in similarly faithful terms.[6] 'Many times our Poet [Sidney] is caried by some occasion to report of a thing that is marvelous, and then he will seeme not to speake it simply but with some signe of admiration'.[7] In *The Garden of Eloquence* (1577), Henry Peacham continues to associate paradox with wonder by emphasizing the disbelief aroused by the experience of contrariety which necessarily accompanies paradoxical statements. He defines *paradoxon* as a statement in which 'we affyrme something to be true, by saying we would not have beleeved it, nor yet once suspected it,' and illustrates its use as a figure of rhetoric with an example of his own.[8] 'It was such as lucke as you never heard of, almost incredible, that when fyre should have consumed him, fyre saved him, and lykewyse at another tyme, when water should have bene his death, it saved his lyfe'.[9] In his *Thesaurus Linguae Romanae et Brittanicae* (1565), Thomas Cooper reveals his knowledge of the *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, *De Finibus* and the *Academica* by explicitly identifying Cicero as the Latin originator of the term *paradoxus* and indicating (though not explicitly) that it represents his translation of the Greek *paradoxa*, the same form of the term which Cicero himself provided in the original Greek in the preface to the *Paradoxa Stoicorum* and in the *Academica*.[10] And like Puttenham and Peacham, he is careful to mention that paradoxes are not just contrary to common opinion (*praeter opinionem*), but also strange and incredible (*inauditus*). He defines *paradoxus* as: '*Latine admirabilis dicitur, praeter opinione, & inauditus. unde paradoxa, neutro genere. Cicero. Sentences staunge and contrarie to the opinion of the most part.*'[11] Continuing the heritage of Cicero, Thomas Elyot's *Dictionary* (1538) defines 'paradoxa' as 'a sentence contrary to the opinion of dyverse', and 'mirabilis' as 'meruaylous, wonderfull'.[12] Elyot's definition of paradox, though not explicitly associated with *admirabilia*,

conforms to the definition utilized by Cicero, and therefore, retains its connotations of wonder and marvelousness.[13]

In his English translation of the *Paradoxa Stoicorum* (1569), Thomas Newton, the translator of Seneca's *Tragedies* (1581), calls the *admirabilia* of the Stoics 'meruaylous sentences, and suche as are contrary to the opynion of all men'.[14] Not content to leave the reader to associate Cicero's Latin *admirabilia*, Zeno's Greek *paradoxa* and his own English 'meruaylous sentences', Newton supplements the Latin text with a brief definition of paradox with which his readers would already have been familiar. He says that these 'meruaylous sentences...are by them termed Paradoxa, whych signifyeth, thinges merueilous and inopinable.'[15] Paradoxes and things 'inopinable' were identified by sixteenth-century readers in keeping with the Latin version of the *Paradoxa Stoicorum* with which they would have been familiar from their school curricula.[16] Cicero had described the Stoic *paradoxa* both as *inopinata* as well as *mirabilia* in his fifth paradox, 'That only the wise man is free, and that every foolish man is a slave'. There he says, '*Servi igitur omnes improbi, servi! Nec hoc tam re est quam dictu inopinatum atque mirabile*' ('All wicked men are slaves therefore, slaves! Nor is this really so startling a paradox as it sounds').[17] Newton translates these lines '...and therfore all naughty persons are slaves and bondmen. Neyther is this so staunge inopinable and merveilous in deede, as it is in wordes.'[18] In his collection of rhetorical tropes and schemata, *Epitome troporum ac schematarum* (1541), Johannus Susenbrotus identified *paradoxum* with *inopinatum*, and emphasized both its function as an argument against common opinion and its utilization of a language which produced wonder.[19] By additionally calling the *paradoxa* 'inopinable' in his translation of the preface to the *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, therefore, Newton was taking liberties with the original text of which its author, and his commentators in the sixteenth century, would have approved. As Susenbrotus and Newton had emphasized, the paradox, both as a rhetorical figure and a dialectically argued *thesis*, should retain the sense contained in Cicero's definition in the *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, '*admirabilia contraque opinionem omnium*', for, as we will see, the impression of wonder which is caused by a paradoxical *thesis* consists in the combination of ambiguous words in the context of a dialectically disputed argument.[20]

2
Surprise and Deception: Orthodox and Paradox

In so far as it had been defined as something wonderful or marvelous contrary to the expectations of most people, paradox could be used to express a variety of incredible or contradictory states. In his *Greene in Conceit* (1598), John Dickenson wonders at a funeral procession which has 'confounded' joy and sorrow. He says:

> It is a custome still in use with christians, to attend the funerall of their deceased friendes with whole chantries of choyce quire-men, singing solemnly before them but behind followes a troop all clad in blacke, which argues mourning: much have I marueled at this ceremony, deeming it till now, some hidden paradox, confounding thus in one, things so opposite as these signes of joy and sorrowe.[21]

Dickenson's amazement at this spectacle is in response to the apparent violation of the law prohibiting the coexistence of contradictory qualities in one subject, the law of non-contradiction. Peacham's illustrations of the figure, *paradoxon*, embody this aspect of the paradoxical situation by insisting on the simultaneous presence of opposing conditions such as living while engulfed in fire or water. For Dickenson what makes this funeral custom paradoxical is that it may be said to be both happy and sad, which in logical language may be translated into contradictory statements such as: 'it was both happy and not-happy' or 'it was sad and not-sad.' To a logician such a state of affairs is a clear indication of absurdity, and therefore, grounds for disbelief. When considering whether 'what men think is always true or...sometimes true and sometimes false' in the *Theaetetus*, Socrates draws a conclusion which appears to violate the law of non-contradiction. 'From either supposition', he says, 'it results that their thoughts are not always true, but both true and false'. Theodorus naturally responds, 'That is incredible Socrates'; his response to Socrates' inference from the Pythagorean principle that 'man is the measure of all things' is precisely that which we would expect from one who believes he perceives the copresence of contradictory qualities.[22] Though Dickenson's readers could not have failed to recognize that the law

of non-contradiction was not actually violated by his account, it is important to notice that the condition in which he claims the marvelous quality of paradox to be contained is integrally related to a confounding of contradictory states just, as we will see, Isocrates had noticed in his *Panathenaicus* and Donne had in his *Paradoxes*.[23] As we will see when we analyze the details of the fallacious syllogistic by which the arguments of the *Paradoxes* identify normally opposed terms such as death and perfection, the impression that the law of non-contradiction has been violated is necessary to move their readers to suspect the validity of their wondrous conclusions. It is precisely this impression of miraculous unification in the expression of the Stoic *paradoxa* that Cicero attempts to dispel by expounding them rhetorically.

Cicero's defense of the Stoic *paradoxa* explains how the apparently startling tenets of the Stoics are amenable to natural reason, and thus negates their marvelous impact. In his *Book of Notes and Commonplaces* (1581), John Marbeck undertakes the similar task of explaining how the incredible biblical account of the earth's foundation upon the sea may be made acceptable to the common view, but discovers ultimately that this paradox retains its mystery. While pondering the inscrutable relation of earth and sea described in Psalm 24 (23 in Vulgate), Marbeck exclaims in terms faithful to the definitions employed by Cooper, Puttenham, Peacham, Elyot and Newton, 'What a wonderful paradoxe and inopinable sentence is this, to saye: *quia ipse [super maria] fundavit [eum et super flumina stabilivit illum]*'.[24] After acknowledging that natural reason must identify earth as the 'heaviest and lowest of all the four Elements', he concedes that the patently unlikely suggestion that the earth is founded upon the sea may only gain credence by divine mandate. And as the source of this account is David (the 'Prophet') himself, we can only conclude that the 'almightie and most mightie creatour of all things, by his myraculous and his divine power, hath altered the order generall, and hath made a lawe and statute particular'.[25] Marbeck's comments here provide more than just a confirmation that Newton's translation of Cicero's *paradoxa* as 'thinges merueilous and inopinable' conformed to the popular understanding of the term in the sixteenth century, however. They also reveal that paradoxes present exceptions to general principles, and therefore, demand that the universality of those principles be scrutinized.

For Marbeck, such scrutiny simply results in a faithful acknowledgement of the power of God to institute a law which appears to reason to violate a universal principle. The exceptional conclusions of Donne's *Paradoxes* as well as of *Biathanatos*, however, require a critical involvement with the terms of the arguments which results in the more fundamental questioning of the power of language and logic to convey truth. Such questioning, we will see, is an integral part of sceptical tradition of which Cicero's *Paradoxa Stoicorum* is a product, and to which Donne's dialectical analyses of terms must be addressed. Like the *thesis* described by Aristotle in the *Topics*, the dialectical function of the paradox is to stimulate debate by advancing a view which appears untenable to the common opinion, and therefore, particular with respect to the general view.[26] Aristotle had said that 'practically all dialectical problems indeed are now called theses' and that such *theses* represent the 'paradoxical belief[s] of...eminent philosopher[s]' whose task it is to make a plausible case for their uncommon opinions. The utility of the disputation of *theses*, as Donne is careful to declare in both the *Paradoxes* and *Biathanatos*, is to dispel the wonder produced by disbelief and to clarify the likelihood or certainty of the common opinion.[27] For Marbeck, however, the wonder of the paradox of Psalm 24 (23 Vulgate) is not diminished when he searches natural reason for an explanation of such an 'inopinable sentence' because the particularity of the divinely imposed law permitting earth to float on water remains so radically opposed to the universal natural law which prohibits it; and thus, the paradox and wonder remain. To Cicero, however, the paradoxes of the Stoics 'appear to be...far and away the truest'; and when he attempts to '[expound them] in a form to win acceptance', he discovers that they are not so marvelous after all.[28] Thus, Cicero's project in the *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, as with the eminent philosophers mentioned by Aristotle, is to make what appears to be a paradox orthodox, or, to use Marbeck's terms, to make the particular appear general.

If Cicero was committed to rendering apparently startling conclusions acceptable to the common opinion in his *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, it would seem that Donne had undertaken precisely the opposite task in his own *Paradoxes*. For Donne argues explicitly for both the delight and the utility of dissent from the majority view. He explains that, unlike Cicero, who would 'expound [the paradoxes of the Stoics] in a

form to win acceptance', he intends to follow the Stoic dialectical method by increasing 'the number of [his] Paradoxes' through a deliberate effort to 'differ from common opinions'.[29] Though it is clear from Donne's warning to Wotton against 'allowing' his paradoxes that he did not genuinely accept their conclusions, for the present we must acknowledge simply that he was conscious of the tradition of paradox which informed Cicero's *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, and that both their subjects and their method of exposition were recognized by Cicero as common points of debate in his and preceding eras. When arguing, in his second paradox, for the uncommon view 'That Women Ought to Paint Themselves', Donne exploits the ancient sceptical position on the reliability of the senses (which we will see was most fully articulated by Cicero in the *Academica*), that what we perceive by the senses only seems to be as it appears to us.[30] He says, 'The Stars, the Sun, the Skye, whom thou admirest, alas have no color, but are faire because they seeme color'd; If this seeming will not satisfy thee in her, thou hast good assurance of her color when thou seest her lay it on.'[31] As we will see when we examine his reversal of Cicero's maxim of the good house in *De Officiis*, Donne is arguing for the virtue of allowing oneself to be deceived by perverting Cicero's moderately sceptical view that we may maintain the probability of presentations which we receive through the senses.[32] Hence, Donne recommends that men be as content with the fair impression that they receive from a painted woman as they are with that which they receive from objects of beauty in nature, despite what Cicero would have recognized to be an obvious difference in the likelihood that the perceived fairness of these two objects accurately reflects their real beauty. Donne's quibble on 'color' indicates his awareness of this difference in likelihood, for when he asserts that for those who are not satisfied with the potentially false impression of a woman who wears cosmetics, the mere fact that she has resorted to such artificiality is sufficient to assure the likelihood that her true, unsupplemented color would be unappealing.

In his eleventh paradox, 'A Defence of Women's Inconstancy', Donne asks, 'Are not your witts pleased with those Jeasts which cozen your Expectatyonn?'[33] Though ostensibly an attempt to further his argument in defense of inconstancy, Donne's question simultaneously refers to the intellectual satisfaction derived from a display of ingenuity which results in an unexpected conclusion, the same satisfaction

with which Sidney had claimed the wise read the witty paradoxical encomia of 'good fools'.[34] Hence, while Donne is defending the inconstancy of women by appealing to the delight of surprise, he is also defending the value of the deceit woven into the fallacious fabric of his *Paradoxes*. He makes explicit this reference to his own act of deception in the method of his argumentation by accusing his amused readers of judging the inconstancy of women and paradoxes according to a double standard. He says, 'You can call it pleasure to be beguyled in Tryfles, and in the most excellent Toye in the world you call it Treacherie.'[35] Implicit in Donne's statement is the view that the inconstancy in which his readers are currently taking pleasure is the same as the inconstancy by which they claim to be betrayed by unfaithful women. More importantly, however, he is emphasizing that the ambiguity with which he has deployed the critical terms of his paradoxical arguments is responsible for this inconstancy. By drawing his readers' attention to the ambiguities which invalidate his arguments, Donne honors the promise of his ninth paradox to assist his readers in becoming 'acertaind of all disputable doubts' as well as that of his letter to Wotton to raise the 'alarum to truth [in order] to arme her'. It is this commitment to the investigation of the doubtful and inconstant terms utilized in controversial argumentation that establishes the *Paradoxes* and *Biathanatos* as paradoxes specifically derived from the tradition of the philosophical *thesis* articulated by Aristotle, Isocrates and Cicero.[36]

3
Paradoxical Encomia and Defenses of Uncommon Opinion

Aristotle explained that a paradox as a defense of an uncommon opinion is properly called a *thesis*, and denotes 'a belief of some eminent philosopher...such as...the view that contradiction is impossible, as Antisthenes said; or the view of Heraclitus that all things are in motion; or that what exists is one as Melissus says'. He continues expanding the definition to encompass all uncommon opinions regardless of

their proponent. 'Or it may be a view contrary to men's usual opinions about which we have an argument, e.g. the view maintained by the sophists that what is need not in every case have come to be or be eternal'.[37] Isocrates offers the same explanation of the paradox as defense of uncommon opinion when he criticizes those 'who are much pleased with themselves if, after setting up an absurd or self-contradictory [*paradoxon*] subject, they succeed in discussing it in tolerable fashion'.[38] These paradoxists are philosophers and sophists who defend their unorthodox opinions through precisely the same type of 'verbal quibbles' to which Cicero objects in the syllogistic proofs for the paradoxes of the Stoics. Cicero had complained that 'the Stoics hold a different view of good and bad from all their fellow citizens or rather from all other nations, and give a different meaning to "honour", "disgrace", "reward", "punishment"-whether correctly or otherwise does not concern us now, but if we were to adopt their terminology, we should never be able to express our meaning intelligibly about anything.'[39] It is this uncommon usage that, Cicero claims, produces the startling conclusions of the Stoic's arguments.

> The Stoics construct foolish syllogisms to prove pain no evil, just as if the difficulty in question were a verbal one and not one of matter of fact. Why deceive me, Zeno? When you say that what is dreadful in my eyes is not an evil at all, I am attracted and long to know how it can be true that the condition I regard as utter wretchedness is not an even evil. "There is nothing evil," says he, "except what is base and wicked." Now you are talking foolishly, for you do not take away the cause of my torment: I know that pain is not villainy; stop teaching me that; tell me that it makes no difference whether I am in pain or not in pain.[40]

Aristotle recognized that arguing *theses* such as these could provide valuable practice in discerning ambiguous terminology in dialectical disputations, but the Stoics, as we will see, sought to restrict their terminology in order to allow their 'foolish syllogisms' to reach valid, and therefore, genuinely startling conclusions. Aristotle had advised disputants, 'Look not only in the case of the subject mentioned, but also in the case of its contrary, for the contrary predicate: e.g. argue that good is not necessarily pleasant; for neither is evil painful; or that, if the latter is the case, so is the former.'[41]

After listing Antisthenes' view that contradiction is impossible and the proto-Stoic paradox derived from Plato that 'courage and wisdom and justice are identical', Isocrates complains that these 'captious disputations' have not recently come into vogue and that other paradoxists have long been advancing similar *theses*.[42]

> who is so backward in learning as not to know that Protagoras and the sophists of his time have left to us compositions of similar character and even far more overwrought than these? For how could one surpass Gorgias, who dared to assert that nothing exists of the things that are, or Zeno, who ventured to prove the same things as possible and again as impossible, or Melissus who, although things in nature are infinite in number, made it his task to find proofs that the whole is one![43]

Had Zeno of Citium (c. 334-262 B.C.), the founder of Stoicism, lived before Isocrates, he may also have been included in the above list for propounding his own *paradoxa*, for the Stoic attempt to use deductive logic to demonstrate the certainty of its *theses* produced no less paradoxical results than the sceptical attempts of Gorgias, and the other 'eminent philosophers' mentioned by Aristotle and Isocrates.[44] Of all those mentioned, Antisthenes the Cynic (446-366 B.C.) is the only defender of uncommon opinion who was not overtly sceptical, though his tutelage under Gorgias and later, under Socrates, suggests that he may have felt similarly tentative about the knowledge of the wise man.[45] All the rest, Heraclitus, Melissus, Protagoras, Gorgias and Zeno of Elea, advocated sceptical positions on the possibility of knowledge. Though Heraclitus (c. 540-480 B.C.) does not seem to have completely dismissed the possibility of knowledge of truth, according to Diogenes Laertius, he mistrusted the ability of the human mind to yield such knowledge sufficiently enough to justify saying, 'Let us not conjecture on deepest questions what is likely,' advice that we will see the second-century (A.D.) Pyrrhonist, Sextus Empiricus, would have found to be eminently sceptical.[46] And although Heraclitus claimed that he knew nothing when he was young and everything when he was grown, his positive doctrines were reputed to be so obscure that 'none but adepts should approach' them.[47] According to Sextus, Heraclitean knowledge, such as the doctrine that all things are in motion, was so impenetrably expressed that it could be esteemed to be nothing less than paradoxical; it

was this obscurity which prompted the numerous admirers and expositors of his writing to draw such apparently diverse conclusions about its real meaning.[48]   Melissus (c. 440 B.C.) was a pupil of Parmenides, whose doctrine of relativism is recorded in Plato's dialogue, *Parmenides*. Diogenes tells us little about Melissus, but in so far as he followed Parmenides, we can conclude that he would have agreed with Plato's representation of his master's view that 'beauty itself or goodness itself and all the things we take as forms in themselves are unknowable to us'.[49]   Melissus' defense of the Parmenidean One is discussed in the pseudo-Aristotlelian, *Melissus, Xenophanes, and Gorgias*; the paradox in which Melissus claims we are bound if we accept the evidence provided by our senses that there are a multiplicity of things is summarized as follows. 'If there are many things, he [Melissus] says they must arise from what is not; and if this is impossible, what is, is not many; for, being ungenerated, anything which is, is unlimited, and therefore one'.[50]

Protagoras (481-411 B.C.) was the most radically sceptical of those appearing in the above lists maintaining that 'soul is nothing apart from the senses' and that 'everything is true'.[51] These two doctrines, as Plato explains in the *Theaetetus*, result from Protagoras' famous relativist dictum that 'man is the measure of all things', which is to say that there exists no objective standard to which perceivers may refer to confirm the universal accuracy of their perceptions.[52]   Diogenes also records that 'Protagoras was the first to maintain that there were two sides to every question, opposed to each other, and [that] he even argued in this fashion, being the first to do so'; as we will see, the dialectical maxim '*in utramque partem dissere,*' though advocated by Cicero's probabilist scepticism, did not originate with him and actually reflects the long tradition in Greek rhetoric and dialectic which established the role of the paradoxist in formal disputation.[53] Protagoras was also a professional teacher of disputation, a sophist who was the first 'to institute contests in debating, and to teach rival pleaders the tricks of their trade.' Most importantly to our discussion and most irritatingly to Isocrates, Diogenes tells us that 'in his dialectic he neglected the meaning in favour of verbal quibbling, and he was the father of the whole tribe of eristical disputants now so much in evidence'.[54] Isocrates undoubtedly was thinking of

Protagoras, his fellow sophists and their desire to delight young students with paradoxical arguments when he complained that:

> the truth is that these men care for naught save enriching themselves at the expense of the youth. It is their 'philosophy' applied to eristic disputations that effectively produces this result...These young men, to be sure, may well be pardoned for holding such views; for in all matters they are and always have been inclined to what is extraordinary and astounding (*thaumatopoiias*).[55]

Ultimately, Isocrates dismisses such sophistical quibbling, but we may wonder whether it was Donne's fear of more severe censors than Isocrates that led him so anxiously to limit the circulation of his own paradoxes.[56] As Donne was fully aware, the defender of a paradox was regularly suspected of obscuring his subversive intentions through the use of sophistical and equivocal language. Though we will see that Donne was committed to the clarification of the issues which he investigated in his paradoxes, even those playfully examined in the *Paradoxes*, the conscious attempt to disguise the fallacious argumentation of one's *thesis* was considered in late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century England to be the mark of the libertine, the atheist and most insidious of all, the Jesuit.[57]

Zeno of Elea (born c. 490 B.C.), like Melissus, was a pupil of Parmenides. Diogenes reports that he 'was the first to propound the argument of the "Achilles"', which is one of the four paradoxes for which he is most often remembered.[58] Zeno devised these paradoxes as a denial of the Pythagorean view that the universe was comprised of distinct units of extended space, the view which most obviously conflicted with Parmenides' view that the universe was one. The likelihood that these paradoxes were attempts to discredit an opposing argument is significant in light of what Aristotle believes the role of the paradox in dialectic to be. In *Sophistical Refutations*, he explains that paradox is the third best way (following plain refutation and proof of falsity) of defeating one's rival in dialectical disputation.[59] In the *Physics*, Aristotle himself provides refutations of all these paradoxes, as well as the paradox concerning possibility mentioned by Isocrates, in an attempt to demonstrate that the paradoxes have proceeded from fallacies incorporated into the arguments by Zeno and not as necessary consequents of the conjunction of the premises.[60] As we will see

when we examine his notion of paradox in greater detail, Aristotle, like his scholastic disciples, did not believe that contradictory conclusions could follow necessarily from valid premises; and so, he concludes that even if we are unable to solve Zeno's paradoxes 'it is surely absurd that...[we] should make [ourselves] slaves of [our] inability, and should commit [ourselves] to still greater errors'.[61] The role of paradox for Aristotle is merely to draw the argument of one's opponent into doubt, not to demonstrate a contradiction.[62] Diogenes suggests that the objective of Zeno's paradoxes was as Aristotle described, to call some view into doubt. It is for this reason, Diogenes reports, that Zeno is classified a sceptic. 'They find Xenophanes, Zeno of Elea, and Democritus to be sceptics: Xenophanes because he says, "Clear truth hath no man seen nor e'er shall know"; and Zeno because he would destroy motion, saying "A moving body moves neither where it is or where it is not".'[63]

Gorgias (born c. 490-460 B.C.) is popularly recognized as the founder of the paradoxical encomium. Both of the two works which have survived, the *Encomium of Helen* and the *Defence of Palamedes*, are exhibitions of the power of rhetoric to persuade its listeners to forgive faults which had long been attributed to such notorious figures as Helen and Palamedes. Isocrates, his pupil, considered the *Encomium of Helen* to be a failure as an example of epideictic rhetoric because it defended her impugned actions according to forensic practice and neglected its putative objective of praising her virtues. Isocrates' recognition of Gorgias' failure to deliver his promised praise is significant because it indicates a familiarity with the three fundamental rhetorical classifications, the forensic, epideictic and deliberative, adumbrated by his contemporary, Aristotle, in the *Rhetoric*. These classifications, once codified by Cicero, will contain the rhetorical prescriptions to which subsequent oratorical and literary enterprises will refer to guide the method of their composition, and against which the principally dialectical exposition of philosophical *theses* will be opposed by critics of misleading rhetorical elaboration such as the Stoics. In the preface to his own encomium of Helen, *Helen*, Isocrates clarifies the mistake of Gorgias:

> Although he asserts that he has written an encomium of Helen, it turns out that he has actually spoken a defence of her conduct! But the composition in defence does not draw on the same topics as the encomium, nor indeed does it

deal with actions of the same kind, but quite the contrary; for a plea in defence
is appropriate only when the defendant is charged with a crime, whereas we
praise those who excel in some good quality.[64]

Although both Aristotle and Quintilian would observe that the distinctions between the

three rhetorical classifications were not absolute, the paradoxical encomium was

properly classed as a type of epideictic speech.[65] Paradoxical arguments advanced in

the form of the Aristotelian *thesis*, however, were not classed under any of the three

rhetorical headings. The encomiast must focus on amplifying the qualities which make

the subject worthy of praise, such as noble lineage and dignity of birthplace. The

forensic speaker may choose to amplify such qualities, but his primary aim is to defend

the accused by analyzing the circumstantial details in an attempt to discover the

particular contextual features which countermand the pronouncement of the supposedly

violated law. The challenge for the forensic speaker is to discover the spirit in which

the law was conceived in the hope that the actions of his client will be seen to be in

accordance with that spirit despite their divergence from the letter of the law. In so far

as this spirit represents the general philosophical basis for the particular law, the ideal

lawyer, such as Cicero will describe in *Brutus*, will be required to undertake the more

speculative consideration of *theses pro* and *contra* in order to arrive at a balanced view

of the just interpretation of the law (*aequitas*).[66] Though such speculative

consideration is not governed by any of the three rhetorical classifications, it is, Cicero

will contend, especially useful for the forensic speaker. The epideictic speaker,

whether he be conventional or paradoxical, must avoid analysis of the virtues or vices

being praised or blamed, and merely display them. Such a display may indicate the

critical activity of the speaker, but as Isocrates maintains, this activity, philosophically

serious as it is, must not be represented in the epideictic speech itself. Because the

sixteenth-century paradoxical encomia of Erasmus, Agrippa, Cornwallis and Nashe

were composed in accordance with the rhetorical prescriptions recorded by Isocrates,

Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian, therefore, we do not expect to find the philosophically

serious matter of the *thesis* disputed dialectically in them, though their judgements

about what subjects to praise may imply such a logical consideration. The speculative

consideration of paradoxical *theses*, we will see, is reserved for the paradoxist who defends an uncommon opinion.

In addition to his criticisms of Gorgias' failure to observe decorum, Isocrates also complains that those who undertake the rhetorical challenge of praising the unpraiseworthy foolishly claim that success in making the blameworthy seem laudable insures their success in persuading their listeners of the virtues of the truly praiseworthy. Speaking of the same sophistical rhetoricians whom he had condemned for polluting the minds of their students with the apparently 'extraordinary and astounding' proofs of Protagoras, Zeno, Melissus and Gorgias, Isocrates says:

> they have caused mendacity to increase to such a degree that now certain men, seeing these persons [the sophists] prospering from such practices, have the effrontery to write that the life of beggars and exiles is more enviable than that of the rest of mankind, and they use this as proof that, if they can speak ably on ignoble subjects, it follows that in dealing with subjects of real worth they would easily find abundance of arguments.[67]

He summarizes his attack by asking, 'What sensible man would undertake to praise misfortunes?' and responds that it is 'because of weakness...that they take refuge in such topics'.[68] The sophists, Isocrates concludes, have trivialized both the philosophically serious defense of *theses* in paradoxes such as Zeno's and the rhetorically challenging paradoxical praise of a conventionally despised subject in their mock encomia of unworthy subjects. Isocrates is quick to remind us that he will not follow Gorgias, and the other sophists, in his own praise of Helen. He will maintain that despite her sullied reputation, she is truly a 'remarkable woman, one who in birth, and in beauty, and in renown surpassed all others.'[69] His encomium of Helen, though it has chosen a notorious subject, will attempt to praise the acknowledged and undisputed virtues which legend reports that she possessed. His undertaking is all the more worthwhile because worthy subjects such as high-birth, association with nobility and physical beauty, unlike the conventional trivial subjects of the mock encomiasts, are difficult to support with original arguments. Isocrates explains, 'While it is easy by eloquence to overdo the trivial themes, it is difficult to reach the heights of greatness of the others; and while on famous subjects one rarely finds thoughts which no one has

previously uttered, yet on trifling and insignificant topics whatever the speaker may chance to say is entirely original.'[70] Isocrates has drawn an important distinction between his own praise of a conventionally unpraiseworthy subject and those of the sophists. His encomium of Helen may be paradoxical, but it is not trivial; and in so far as it praises the good qualities possessed by a notorious figure, the term 'mock encomium' is inappropriately applied to it. Those encomia, such as Gorgias' praise of Helen, which question our ability to discriminate good from bad qualities genuinely mock the attempts of philosophers and orators alike to defend the just, praise the virtuous and advise the right course of action. These sceptical praises, which affirm neither good nor bad, are properly called mock encomia.[71]

4
The Rhetorical Encomiast and the Dialectical Paradoxist

In the prefatory letter to Thomas More of his paradoxical encomium, the *Praise of Folly* (1511), Erasmus cites the works which served as the generic rhetorical model for his and other paradoxical encomia of the sixteenth century. He mentions Lucian's *Encomium of the Fly*, Polycrates' and Isocrates' apology for the Egyptian tyrant, Busirus, and Synesius' *Laus Calvitii*, all of which treat subjects similar to those criticized by Isocrates.[72] Erasmus citation of these works provides the standard prefatory justification for what, to some, might be considered a trivial work by deferring to the authority of those universally respected writers who have produced similar works.[73] But Erasmus lists other works, such as Homer's parodic *Battle of the Frogs and Mice*, and Plutarch's ironic dialogue between the pig, Gryllus, and Ulysses, neither of which are strictly speaking encomia. In addition to associating the *Praise of Folly* with parodies and mock dialogues, Erasmus calls his paradoxical encomium a 'little declamation' (*declamiuncula*).[74] In light of Isocrates' insistence that encomia be composed according to the principles of epideictic oratory, this mix of literary precedents would appear to make specific rhetorical classification of the work difficult.[75] The solution to this problem lies in recognizing first, that Erasmus was principally interested in placing the levity of his encomium in the company of esteemed

authors such as Homer and Lucian in order to preempt accusations of frivolity such as Isocrates had leveled against the sophistical mock encomiasts, and second, that he never intended to compose the *Praise of Folly* strictly according to the prescriptions of epideictic oratory.[76]

What we may find surprising about Erasmus' otherwise conventional deference to classical precedent to countenance the paradox which is to follow, however, is that it makes no mention of Cicero's *Paradoxa Stoicorum*. This omission cannot be attributed to oversight or ignorance as Erasmus' editions of and commentary on the *Paradoxa Stoicorum* were used throughout the sixteenth century.[77] The tradition from which the *Praise of Folly* derives did not include non-ironic and philosophically speculative works such as the *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, despite Erasmus' insistence upon its moral seriousness in his letters to More and Martin Dorp.[78] Thomas Nashe, whose 'Prayse of the Red Herring' in his *Lenten Stuffe* (1599) never pretended to attempt any morally serious comment, clearly demarcates the generic boundary separating paradoxes written in the tradition of the *Paradoxa Stoicorum* and the paradoxical encomia, mock eulogies and parodies cited by Erasmus as precedents for his own praise.[79] He says:

> Homer of rats and frogs hath heroiqut it; other oaten pipers after him praise of the Gnat, the Flea, the Hasil nut, the Grasshopper, the Butterflie, the Parrot, the Popiniay, Phillip sparrow, and the Cuckowe; the wantonner sort of them sing descant on their mistris gloue, her ring, her fanne, her looking glasse, her pantofle...Phylosophers come sneaking in with their paradoxes of pouertie, imprisonment, death, sicknesse, banishment, and baldnesse, and as busie they are about the bee, the storke, the constant turtle, the horse, the dog, the ape, the asse, the foxe, and the ferret.[80]

Nashe claims jokingly that his 'catalogue of wast authours' is cited merely to illustrate that tradition has countenanced the activity of praising and defending things as apparently unworthy as his red herring, but it is significant in light of his association of paradoxes with philosophers, that he calls his own work an encomium.[81] In so doing, Nashe, like Erasmus, announces that the work which is to follow is not properly a philosophical work; it is not like Donne's *Paradoxes* and *Biathanatos*, Ortensio Lando's *Paradossi* (1543), nor James Sandford's supposed translation of the French

Mirrour of Madnes: or a Paradoxe maintaining madnes to be most excellent (1576), a

philosophical defense, serious or otherwise, of a *thesis*, which will be properly analysed

according to a dialectical, not a rhetorical, scheme.[82]

Although Synesius' praise of baldness, which Erasmus does include in his list

of precedents for his encomium, is called a praise (*Laus Calvitii*) and is also

occasionally humorous, its method, we will see, is explicitly related to the method of

the *thesis*.[83] It was the insignificance of Synesius' theme which Erasmus believed

made the *Praise of Folly* similar to it. In his refutation of the claim of the Paris doctor

of theology, Josse Clichtove, that his *Declamation in Praise of Marriage* (1518) treated

a serious subject with excessive levity, Erasmus insists that the work was merely a

'declamation devised to develop skill in speaking' and was, therefore, to be judged for

its merit as an academic exercise.[84] In his defense, he again defers to the authority of

the trivial works of Homer, Isocrates, Lucian, Plutarch and Synesius, maintaining that

works such as these are useful in 'producing quickness of intellect', despite their

insignificant subjects.[85] The subjects of these paradoxical encomia, mock eulogies and

parodies are indeed paradoxical, and are related to the fictitious subjects treated in the

more serious declamatory exercises called *suasoriae*. We will have more to say about

suasoriae later, but for now, we need only note that they provided the declaimer with

practice in disputation for and against particular ethical positions. These exercises, as

Erasmus is aware, are species of the philosophically serious *thesis*, of which Cicero's

Paradoxa Stoicorum are examples. Erasmus argues that because his *Praise of Marriage*

was conceived to provide the same valuable practice in defending difficult positions, its

light theme should be received as approvingly as Synesius' *Praise of Baldness*. All of

these types of declamation, paradoxical encomium, parody, mock eulogy and

suasoriae, serve this useful yet inconsequential purpose. It is for this reason that

Erasmus criticizes the pedantry of Clichtove's objection that his *Praise of Marriage* is

actually an exercise in deliberative rhetoric (*suasoria*), and therefore, should be called a

'commendation' or 'exhortation'.[86] Erasmus' asks in response to Clichtove's

objection, 'Do not exhortations and eulogies fall into the category of rhetorical

exercises?'[87] He then observes that encomia may also be employed in the declamation

of *suasoria*, of which he maintains, *The Praise of Marriage* is an example despite its

title.[88] Hence, when Erasmus claims that his paradoxical encomia follow in the tradition of Synesius, he is merely acknowledging that they have been devised to provide practice in defending difficult positions by treating a trivial theme to some serious end. He does not claim that their methods are the same, nor indeed, that they should follow the rhetorical prescriptions indicated in their titles.[89] Had Cicero's *Paradoxa Stoicorum* been a set of declamatory exercises upon trivial subjects, Erasmus might have included them in his list of precedents.

In his 1579 translation of the *Laus Calvitii*, Abraham Fleming appears to have been aware that Synesius' dialectical method distinguished it as a work which did, in fact, follow in the philosophical tradition of the paradoxical *thesis*, and the tradition of the *Paradoxa Stoicorum*. The subtitle which he gives under *Laus Calvitii* is *A Paradoxe proving by reason and example that Baldnesse is much better than bushie haire*. And Nashe after him, must also have been aware of this feature of Synesius' method because, as we have seen above, baldness is grouped with the paradoxes of Nashe's 'sneaking...Phylosophers'. As we will see when we examine the logical procedure of these sixteenth-century paradoxes with respect to the tradition of disputation to which they refer, the paradox was a philosophical enterprise which addressed itself specifically to dialectical problems. As Donne had explained in his ninth paradox, the paradox represented a species of formal disputation by which we 'are acertaind of all disputable doubts,...by arguing, and differing in opinion'.[90] And as Aristotle and Isocrates had observed, the exposure of doubt through the defense of a paradoxical belief (*thesis*) was the particular objective of the sceptical dialectician. As we will see later in this study, Erasmus' *Praise of Folly*, though explicitly concerned with the contentions of the scholastic philosophers, does not attempt to participate in their disputes; nor does it value the doubtful Aristotelian dialectic according to which they argue. Erasmus was not interested in writing paradoxes because they utilize dialectic in order to highlight the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of using logic to prove a *thesis* with certainty, a point which the sceptical Cicero was happy to highlight in his *Paradoxa Stoicorum*.

5
Sceptical Dissent and the Proof of Paradoxes

In the *Topics*, Aristotle had restricted the use of dialectic to matters of opinion, matters such as those treated in the *theses* of the 'eminent philosophers', which could never be demonstrated to be true or false beyond all doubt.[91] In the *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, Cicero's attempt to render the ethical *theses* of the Stoics amenable to the common opinion represents his objection to their dismissal of doubt in the dialectical exposition of their apparent paradoxes. The source of his objection is his adherence to the scepticism of Carneades' (c. 214-129 B.C.) New Academy, a philosophical allegiance which, we will see, determined his views on the role of rhetoric in the investigation of matters of philosophy. The history of scepticism and its influence on the thought of the sixteenth century is a vast subject which cannot be examined in great detail here. However, if we are to understand the epistemological issues to which Cicero was addressing his rhetorical exposition of the Stoic *paradoxa* (an exposition, it will be remembered, which constitutes the origin of the paradox as a distinct prose form), we must briefly summarize the principles of the two main forms of scepticism, the Academic and the Pyrrhonist. The principles of Academic scepticism are detailed most fully in Cicero's *Academica*. The dogmatic dialectic of the Stoics, to which Academic methods of dissent were principally applied, is also discussed in the *Academica* as well as in *De Finibus*, *Tusculan Disputations* and the *Paradoxa Stoicorum*. In addition to the information provided by Cicero, the dialectical principles of both the Academics and the Stoics are described by Diogenes Laertius in his *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*. Until Henri Estienne's Latin translation of Sextus Empiricus' *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* appeared in 1562, the principles of Pyrrhonist scepticism were unknown to those who could not read Greek.[92] In 1569, Gentian Hervet, produced a Latin edition of both the *Outlines* and Sextus' other work, *Against the Mathematicians*, and with it, the standard classical texts to which the late sixteenth-

century student would refer for an account of both Academic and Pyrrhonist scepticism were finally widely available.[93]

While the *Academica*, *De Finibus* and *Tusculan Dipsutations* attack Stoic logic for its claim to achieve certainty, the *Paradoxa* represents Cicero's attempt to illustrate how the bare syllogisms by which the Stoics defend their positions may be made to appear probable by Cicero's own 'oratorical style of discourse'.[94] Though Cicero's scepticism was incompatible with Stoic logic, he accepted the tenets of Stoic ethics which he defended in the *Paradoxa* because they agreed with his own Academic ethics. He explains in the *Academica* that 'the Stoic theory should be deemed a correction of the Old Academy rather than actually a new system', because its founder, Zeno, held that 'happiness lies in virtue alone' in agreement with 'the whole of the great philosophy of antiquity' including proto-Academics such as Socrates, Aristotle and the Peripatetics, as well as members of the Old Academy such as Plato and Polemo, Zeno's teacher.[95] Under Polemo (315-273 B.C.), Zeno studied the ethical tenets of the Old Academy and began to devise a dialectic which could be used to prove them beyond the doubt traditionally held necessarily to accompany their positive assertion. What resulted was an ethical doctrine which Cicero would recognize to be both dogmatic and paradoxical, dogmatic because it maintained its own absolute certainty, and paradoxical because the universality of its tenets could not be deemed acceptable to the common opinion.[96] Arcesilaus (316-242 B.C.), a fellow pupil of Zeno under Polemo and founder of the Middle Academy, extended the method of doubt initiated by Socrates and Plato by focusing his polemic on the dialectical innovations of Zeno.[97] Though Arcesilaus left no significant philosophical writings, his attack on Zeno's dialectic began a tradition in Academic logic which would bind it tightly to Stoicism as a foil. This tradition was expanded when Carneades (214-129 B.C.), the founder of the New Academy to which Cicero claimed allegiance, attacked the sophistications of Stoic dialectic introduced by Chryssipus (280-207 B.C.), the third head of the Stoa. As Cicero explains in his defense of Carneades in the *Academica*, Chryssipus' innovations were of a piece with those of his forerunner, Zeno; they both attempt to defend the ethics of the Old Academy within the seemingly irrefutable logical structure of the syllogism.

The objective for both Zeno and Chryssipus in employing the syllogism was to combat the uncertainty which their respective Academic masters, Polemo and Arcesilaus, had insisted necessarily accompanies their ethical doctrine.[98] As Aristotle had formulated it in the *Prior Analytics*, a syllogism is an argument which reaches a conclusion which follows necessarily from an acceptance of its premises.[99] According to Aristotle, a valid syllogism must have at least one universal premise and at least one affirmative premise.[100] If a syllogism must make both a universal statement such as 'every A is B' or 'no A is B' and an affirmative statement such as 'some A is B' or 'every A is B', however, it should not be difficult to see why the sceptic, who doubts the affirmability of any statement, would deny the certainty and necessity of syllogistic demonstrations.[101] It is considerably more difficult, however, to appreciate comprehensively the various grounds upon which the sceptic would maintain a position of uncertainty (*akatalepsia*) and consequently insist upon a suspension of judgement (*epoche*).[102] These various grounds would eventually be systematized by the most extreme sceptics, the Pyrrhonists, into sets of modes of argumentation to which the sceptic could refer to undermine specific classes of dogmatic assertion. These sets, however, are hardly less various than the grounds of which they are meant to be collections. Aenesidemus (early 1st century B.C.), the resurrector of Pyrrhonism from the dogmatism of Antiochus' (130-68 B.C.) Fourth Academy, reputedly devised ten general modes of sceptical dissent as well as eight specific modes devoted to undermining aetiological claims alone.[103] Agrippa (end of 1st century B.C.), his follower, is said to have distilled Aenesidemus' ten modes to five modes. Finally Sextus himself offered his own distillation of Agrippa's five modes to two.[104]

Like Cicero, Sextus did not doubt that the dogmatic tenets of the Stoics could achieve a degree of plausibility, but he went further than Cicero in insisting that no position could be demonstrated to be any more plausible than any other; Sextus' method of sceptical dissent entailed an absolute relativism which Cicero's notion of moral and civic responsibility could not have tolerated. In the *Outlines*, he says of Plato's much disputed lapse from true scepticism into a form of dogmatism, that 'if he commits to them [assertions about the Forms, the existence of Providence or the virtuous life being preferable to vice] as being more plausible, he has abandoned the

distinctive character of Scepticism, since he is giving something preference in point of convincingness and lack of convincingness'.[105] In his third paradox, Cicero's dissimilarity to Sextus on this point is evident when he asks, 'On matters of moral good ought we to inquire what is the opinion of the porters and labourers, or of persons of the highest learning? especially as this opinion is not only the truest [*verior*] that can be discovered but even the most serviceable for the conduct of life.'[106] Though Sextus would certainly have objected to Cicero's comment because of its deference to authority for the verification of even probable claims, the most conspicuous difference is revealed in Cicero's use of *verior* or truest; to Sextus, the truest, or most probable, position could never be ascertained by proof, from principles, examples or authority. As we will see, Donne will parody the efforts of scholastic philosophers such as Raymond Lull and Raymond Sebond, to escape the problems of probabilism (and its cognate doctrine of relativism) by restricting the denotation of superlatives. This restriction, Donne will show, produces syllogisms which appear to have distributed middle terms, but which still fail to demonstrate the univocity of those terms. Donne's implicit rejection of this solution to probabilism is reflected later in his serious advocacy of a limited probabilism in *Biathanatos*, an advocacy which will be contrasted to the Pyrrhonist scepticism of sixteenth-century fideists such as Erasmus, Cornelius Agrippa, Ortensio Lando and Montaigne. To the fideist devoted to undermining the independent power of rational discourse to reveal truth, Sextus' Pyrrhonist scepticism will succeed where Cicero's Academic probabilism failed, for as Augustine knew, probabilism enables its adherents to claim a vague awareness of 'resemblance to truth' (*aliquid veri simile*), while permitting the possibility of error because of the unreliability of the senses.[107] To the dogmatist (such as Augustine was to become after his refutation of scepticism in *Against the Academicians*), probabilism is ethically problematic because it forgives sin through an unjustified appeal to human ignorance, but to the Pyrrhonist, it presents a logical problem precisely because such an appeal to ignorance is justified. As we will see when we examine the attack of sixteenth-century advocates of ignorance such as Erasmus, Agrippa and Lando, on the vain attempts of the schoolmen to demonstrate the certainty of Christian moral principles using Aristotelian syllogistic, appeals to faith as the sole means by which the

mind may apprehend the paradoxes of Christian doctrine derive ultimately from a sceptical recognition of the insoluble contentiousness of all doctrine. The Stoics claimed that their ethics were demonstrable by syllogism; the Academics, suspicious of the capacity of the senses to perceive and the intellect to comprehend truly, could offer no more than a doctrine of probability to lend rational support to Stoic ethics; and the Pyrrhonists asserted most boldly that such a doctrine of probability relies on an ability to recognize resemblances to truth which human beings do not have. In response to the doubt raised by scepticism concerning the knowability of moral principles, Augustine adopted Plato's theory of recollection in order to support a doctrine of illumination which could confirm the certainty of the principles he found stated so axiomatically (yet ambiguously) in scripture. But far from offering a cognitive theory that could secure reliability for the senses and the principles derived inductively from them, Augustine's theory of knowledge relied upon an initial motion of faith in the possibility of certain knowledge, a motion which requires the doubting Christian to assert the suspiciously paradoxical *credo ut intelligam*.

6
The Pyrrhonist Use of Paradox

In 1520, the *Examen Vanitatis Doctrinae Gentium* of the Italian humanist Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola was published. In it, Pico follows the principles outlined in the Greek version of Sextus' *Outlines* and *Against the Mathematicians* to attack the power of Aristotelian logic to yield necessary conclusions.[108] The *Examen Vanitatis* is the first work to employ Sextus' sceptical writings in an attempt to undermine the foundations of Aristotelian logic, and will be followed, we will see, by a number of works which utilize Hervet's Latin Sextus for similarly destructive reasons.[109] With respect to the validity of the logical backbone of Aristotelian metaphysics, the demonstration *per causam*, Pico employs a method clearly derived from Sextus:

> If you say that you have come to recognize the one through the other [i.e. cause through effect], and this in different ways and confusedly at first and then distinctly, you go around in a circle. For, if you say that he first uses sense and then, intellect, how will what he stated be true, that the demonstration *per causam* is more certain than demonstration *per effectum*, since to prove this he uses no other foundation than that of sense? But surely you will say that sense is the prior way, intellect the surer and more proper. But you cannot deny that it is credited to sense. Therefore, all certitude will depend on sense, which perceives the effect through which the cause is known.[110]

As we have seen, Sextus explains in the *Outlines* that all of the modes of sceptical dissent may be reduced to two, the reciprocal and the infinite. Both modes insist on an acceptable standard of judgement to be established before an inference can be drawn. The reciprocal mode results in the question-begging circularity condemned by Pico above by maintaining that a standard by which judgements can be made must be confirmable as such by another standard, but that these two standards cannot confirm each other.[111] Hence, because the senses, which perceive effects, are not reliable, they cannot be trusted to provide a standard by which to judge the conclusions of the intellect concerning the causes of those effects; but because the intellect derives its information about the phenomenal world from the unreliable senses, its standards of judgement cannot be trusted to lead to certain conclusions about the causes which explain the effects initially perceived by the senses. The infinite mode is an anticipation of the dogmatist's attempt to avoid the circularity of mutual confirmation by positing a distinct proximate standard of judgement for every conclusion. According to this mode, both Sextus and Pico would argue that the standard by which effects are judged *per causam* is derived ultimately from the senses, and consequently, requires another standard for its confirmation.[112] To avoid the reciprocal mode, the dogmatist will offer another standard derived from the senses to confirm his initial standard, which in turn will require yet another standard and so on *ad infinitum*. Under the heading 'What are the Two Modes,' therefore, Sextus concludes, 'If that by means of which something is apprehended will itself always need to be apprehended by means of something else, they [the sceptics] throw you into the reciprocal or infinite mode.'[113] Later in the *Outlines*, Sextus will extend his attack on standards of judgement to their conjunction in syllogistic arguments. He says of the formal validity of such an

argument that 'we shall not recognize whether the argument is probative if we do not possess an undisputed judgement on conditionals by which to judge whether the conclusion follows the conjunction of the assumptions of the argument.'[114] Sextus' attack does not stop with the indemonstrability of conditionals, however, for the ground upon which his two fundamental modes of dissent is based is the denial of any end to the infinite regression or reciprocation in proofs which claim unequivocal signification. If such an end were found, the dogmatist would have a first principle from which to begin to deduce conclusions with certainty from which he could, in turn, deduce other conclusions with certainty and so on towards a system of knowledge which could claim a foundation in truth.[115] To complete his critique, Sextus must attack the fundamental elements of meaning, the irreducible constituents of intelligibility, signs.

Under the heading 'Are there any indicative signs?' Sextus presents the Pyrrhonist refutation of the Stoic theory of the 'sayable' or *lekton*.[116] After acknowledging the Stoics as the only dogmatic school that has 'treated the matter [of the sign] accurately', he provides their definition of the *lekton* and their understanding of its relation to the conditional statements which comprise their syllogistic proofs.

> A sign is a pre-antecedent statement in a sound conditional, revelatory of the consequent. They say that a statement is a self-contained sayable [*lekton*] which is assertoric so far as it itself goes and that a sound conditional is one which does not begin from a truth and end with a falsity...They call pre-antecedent the antecedent in a conditional which begins from a truth and ends in truth. It is revelatory of the consequent since 'This woman is lactating' is thought to make clear 'This woman has conceived' in the conditional 'If this woman is lactating, this woman has conceived.'[117]

Though Sextus would dispute the certitude of this conditional, for the sake of representing the Stoic concept of the *lekton*, he provides an example in which it appears clear that a consequent (i.e. 'this woman has conceived') is implicit in its antecedent (i.e. 'this woman is lactating'). Proofs, which Sextus calls kinds of signs, can be constructed to demonstrate the self-evidency of *lekta*.[118] These proofs will take the form of any of the five unprovables which Sextus claims ground the whole of Stoic dialectic; 'if they are rejected,' he says, 'the whole of dialectic is overthrown.'[119] Sextus goes on to argue that if the Stoics maintain that the truth of 'self-contained

sayables' (*lekta*) can be demonstrated by proofs, they attempt to prove the uncertain (the reality of *lekta*) by a conjunction of these same uncertainties (i.e. a conditional syllogism whose major premise contains a *lekton* in the antecedent position).[120] For instance, the above example rendered in the form of the first unprovable given by Sextus would read:

> If this woman is lactating, she has conceived.
> But she is lactating.
> Therefore, she has conceived.[121]

In light of Sextus' critique, this syllogism may be refuted by the reciprocal mode of dissent because it is never certain that the woman is, in fact, lactating. The syllogistic demonstration of the conjunction of these premises (both of which contain the *lekton* in dispute) cannot conclude necessarily because the evidence expressed in the whole of the minor premise and in the antecedent of the major is considered unclear.[122] We will examine the sceptical reasons for doubting the clarity of this evidence in our discussion of the Stoic theory of *phantasia*, but suffice it for now to say that Sextus believed that the five unprovables of the Stoics were unable to demonstrate the correspondence of *lekta* with reality.

The five unprovables provide the laws of inference which underpin the whole of Stoic dialectic. Like Aristotle's four 'perfect' syllogisms of the first figure, the unprovable arguments of the Stoics needed no proof themselves 'since', as Sextus describes them, 'their validity is immediately clear'.[123] In the *Prior Analytics*, Aristotle says of syllogisms of the first figure that they '[need] nothing other than what has been stated to make the necessity evident' and 'that all the imperfect deductions are made perfect by means of the first figure.'[124] The importance to Stoic and Peripatetic logic of the five unprovables and the four perfect moods of syllogism cannot be underestimated, for it was from the self-evident necessity of arguments of these forms that arguments derived from them obtained their claim to demonstrability. Cicero recognized the importance of the unprovables as a foundation for the dialectic of the Stoics observing that they generated 'innumerable conclusions' from which 'almost the whole of [dialectic]' is derived.[125] Even more fundamental than the unprovables, however, are

sayables (*lekta*), for it is their accurate representation of reality which permits the unprovables to demonstrate something which also accurately reflects reality. Similarly, for Aristotle's syllogisms of the first figure to obtain categorically rather than merely hypothetically, the predicates which are said to belong to subjects in categorical propositions must belong to them independent of their definition as such.[126] When we examine Peter Ramus' rejection of Aristotle's distinction between definitions which are neither certain nor demonstrable, and axioms which are certain though indemonstrable, we will see that Aristotle recognized that these definitions could not claim the correspondence with external reality necessary to establish their unerring reliability as first principles. Significantly, Aristotle called these definitions *theses*, and by so doing, confirmed that the paradoxical doctrines (*theses*) argued by the philosophers could not escape the uncertainty which necessarily attended their dialectical exposition. Thus, these definitions remained bound to the realm of opinion (*doxa*) and disputation, unlike the self-evident axioms from which Ramus would claim all human knowledge was derived. Though Ramus' reformulated Aristotelian dialectic would not allow an inductive source for our knowledge of universals, Aristotle's empiricism permitted him to acknowledge that 'it is clear that it is necessary for us to become familiar with the primitives [fundamental universals such as "animal"] by induction; for perception too instils the universal in this way.'[127] The certainty of Aristotle's categorical demonstrations, therefore, was ultimately derived from a belief in the accuracy of the universal principles which we derive from our observation of particular external objects. Some principles, such as the law of non-contradiction, though apprehended by means of the senses, are recognized to be self-evident; these conclusions are called axioms. Others, however, such as the disputed definitions (*theses*) of the philosophers, never obtain this self-evidency, and remain bound to the fallible perceptions and questionable inferences from which they were derived.

According to Cicero and Diogenes Laertius, the Stoic definition of the *lekton* verified its correspondence to reality in much the same way as Aristotle's explanation of the role of perception in the establishment of universals had verified our natural capacity to differentiate particulars, retain these differentiations in memory, and abstract universals from them.[128] The underlying assumption is that our perceptions are

reliable enough to yield by induction accurate abstractions of universals.[129] The

mechanism which insures the accurate correspondence of the *lekton* with its object in

Stoic epistemology is *phantasia*. As Cicero explains in Lucullus' defense of Stoic

dialectic, to avoid the condition of uncertainty (*akatalepton*), we must assume that the

perceptions which we receive through our senses are accurate, and therefore, are

capable of producing an accurate presentation (*phantasia*). The Stoic definition of

phantasia, as Cicero and Diogenes render it, resembles Aristotle's definition of

perception in *De Anima*.[130] According to Cicero, Zeno's definition of *phantasia* is 'a

presentation impressed and moulded from the object from which it came in a form such

as it could not have if it came from an object that was not the one that it actually did

come from'.[131] Diogenes gives the Stoic definition as 'an imprint on the soul: the name

having been appropriately borrowed from the imprint made by the seal upon the

wax.'[132] Diogenes continues by distinguishing presentations which reflect reality and

those which do not, but indicates later, when summarizing the view of Chrysippus, that

the proper Stoic definition of *phantasia* is 'that which comes from a real object, agrees

with that object, and has been stamped, imprinted and pressed seal-fashion on the soul,

as would not be the case if it came from an unreal object'.[133] As we will see when we

examine his discussion of Aristotle's theory of perception in relation to the discovery

of the first principles of ethics, Aquinas' epistemology could not accept that the human

mind was incapable of certain knowledge of universal principles because of their

apparent derivation from the senses. Because of his mistrust of the senses, however,

Sextus could not approve the correspondence between our perceptions and external

objects, and therefore, rejected the capacity of the *lekton* to provide the objective

confirmation of the propositions which comprised the Stoic unprovables.[134] Without

this capacity, his two modes of sceptical dissent, reciprocity and infinite regress, cannot

be refuted; the result, we recall, is that 'the whole of dialectic is overthrown'.[135] If

dialectic is the art of disputing well, the surest way to overthrow it is to show that no

single line of reasoning is more convincing than any other; and the way to demonstrate

this equipollence is to be able to argue convincingly on either side of a given question.

Cicero had celebrated this ability in his praise of the sceptic's use of dialectic in the

Academica, but his insistence on our ability to perceive likenesses to truth (*aliquid*

verisimile) allowed him to maintain that dialectic, though unable to prove one position to be true and another false, was still capable of helping its practitioner to discern the universal issues underlying particular circumstances and to determine which of many options was most likely to be correct. It is for this reason, we will see, that he considers dialectic to be *ars omnium artium maxima*.[136]

7
The Scepticism of Gorgianic Rhetoric

Gorgias boasted of his ability to speak persuasively on any subject, not in order to exhibit the virtue of dialectic but to illustrate its impotency with respect to the power of his sophistical rhetoric.[137] Though Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen* does not explicitly attack the dialectical procedure which he and his followers had found so deceptive in Plato's *Gorgias*, it does assert that the mind may easily fall prey to the deception of appearances. As a preface to his defense of Helen's submission to her physical desire, he states that 'things that we see do not have the nature which we wish them to have but the nature which each of them actually has; and by seeing them the mind is moulded in its character too.'[138] Gorgias is not expressing the realist view that our perceptions correspond accurately with external objects here, for he makes clear that he believes that the nature of the 'things that we see' is bestowed upon them by whomever or whatever is creating the image. Hence, he goes on to instance how the mere vision of an army fully prepared for battle may instill a fear which causes 'people [to] flee in panic when some danger is imminent as if it were present.'[139] He says that these mistaken impressions 'moulded' on the mind are so powerful that they have driven many 'into groundless distress and terrible illness and incurable madness; so deeply does sight engrave on the mind images of actions that are seen.'[140] The love which compelled Helen's infidelity, he likens to the fear which has driven so many to commit mad deeds, but more importantly to our discussion, he maintains that the skillful orator may also 'mould...the mind in the way it wishes' and cause emotions like those by which the fearful and the love-struck are persuaded to action.[141] Furthermore, such skillful (and deceitful) orators are not to be found speaking only in rhetorical 'contests

conducted by means of speeches' where persuasion irrespective of truth is to be expected, but they will also be found speaking with equal disregard for the truth in debates on topics of astronomy and philosophy.[142] Like the paradoxes of Melissus or Zeno cited by Aristotle and Isocrates, and those of the Stoics, which Cicero will examine in his philosophical works, the doctrines of the astronomers succeed in '[making] the incredible and obscure become clear' by 'demolishing...and establishing' beliefs, while those of the philosophers prove equally unstable by relying on their 'quick-wittedness'.[143] Though Gorgias explains that none of these doctrines constitute anything more than an opinion which may be manipulated to appear more or less credible depending on the agenda of the speaker, he never identifies who he thinks speaks truth or how that truth might be spoken.

In the now lost *On What is Not*, Gorgias might have revealed why he was reluctant to make such an identification. According to the pseudo-Aristotelian *Melissus, Xenophanes, and Gorgias*, in *On What is Not*, Gorgias argued that 'nothing exists; and even if anything were to exist, nothing is knowable; and even if anything were knowable, no one could indicate to another; firstly because things are not words, and secondly because no one can have in his mind the same thing as someone else.'[144] According to this account of Gorgias' treatise, the arguments 'are concerned with difficulties raised by earlier philosophers, so that in examining their views these questions have to be discussed.'[145] In *Against the Mathematicians*, Sextus also discusses the arguments of *On What is Not*. His account of the arguments themselves is essentially the same as that reported in *Melissus, Xenophanes, and Gorgias*, but his conclusion regarding the ramifications of the arguments reveal the radically sceptical ends toward which he believes Gorgias may have been working. In keeping with Aristotle's description of the paradoxical beliefs of the philosophers, the account of the *Melissus, Xenophanes, and Gorgias* maintains only that Gorgias' arguments in *On What is Not* were intended to indicate specific incompatibilities within the body of controversial philosophy, and therefore, were not attempting a demonstration of the groundlessness of all truth claims. Sextus, however, concludes that 'if we go by them [the difficulties raised by Gorgias] the criterion of truth is swept away; for there can be no criterion of that which neither exists nor can be known nor is naturally capable of

being explained to another person.'[146] As we have seen, Sextus' attack on the existence of external criteria focuses primarily on the inability of dialectic, such as that which underpins the dogmatic ethics of the Stoics, to correspond with reality, ultimately with an eye toward demonstrating the Pyrrhonist ethical principle of suspension of belief (*epoche*).[147] Hence, if Gorgias' philosophical treatise did indeed radically undermine Stoic ethics with a sceptical critique amenable to Sextus' Pyrrhonism, the difference between the Gorgianic paradox and the Stoic paradoxes defended by Cicero becomes clear; for Cicero's more moderate Academic scepticism permitted him to defend the probability (*aliquid veri simile*) of the Stoic *paradoxa* without committing him to an acceptance of their certainty, a certainty which the Stoics believed the logical necessity of their dialectical demonstrations secured.[148]

By the time Donne was writing his *Paradoxes*, the distinct ends to which Academic and Pyrrhonist scepticism could be applied had been clearly delineated.[149] The probabilism advocated by Cicero's Academic scepticism remained the underlying epistemology of ecclesiastics and lawyers alike arguing for and against the controverted points of both civil law and case divinity. This underlying distrust of human reason's ability infallibly to apply general laws to particular circumstances derived support in the realm of civil law from the model of the scrupulous republican lawyer, Cicero, and in the realm of case divinity, from the Aristotelian ethics of Aquinas. The authority of Cicero, Aquinas and Aristotle could be invoked to promote a program of prudence based on rationally discoverable probabilities, which answered sceptical attacks on certain moral knowledge, but only if it was conceded that some notion of moral truth was within the grasp of human reason. As we will show, though Donne rejected the universal applicability of the law prohibiting suicide in *Biathanatos*, he does so in order to demonstrate how some particular deductions from divinely instituted moral laws, which are discerned in the clear light of nature, and therefore known with certainty, may contravene human laws, derived solely from custom. The closer the deductive proximity of human laws to their source in the first principles of God and nature, Donne argues, the greater the degree of probability they may claim.

Implicit in this argument is a confidence in the self-evidency of certain fundamental principles and the likelihood of conclusions deduced from them which

neither Donne's nor Cicero's ethics will ever question; what their sceptical misgivings will question, however, is the means by which such fundamental principles can be established as certain and the extent to which dialectic can reliably be utilized to deduce solutions to particular moral problems. As we will see, Cicero follows Carneades in his rejection of the certainty of all truth claims, and on this point, Donne, not surprisingly, will have to stray from Cicero. However, Cicero also followed Carneades in his acceptance of the probability of some truth claims, and on this point, Donne could, both as lawyer and divine, also follow. Contrastly, the Pyrrhonist position outlined by Sextus, could not admit assertions of probability because such assertions implicitly rely on an unattainable knowledge of the criteria of truth. As we will see, sixteenth-century sceptics who employ the destructive dialectical techniques of Pyrrhonism to attack Aristotelian logic do so at the peril of rationally derived human knowledge, and consequently, will be forced to seek another source of knowledge to insure the possibility of right moral action. These issues will be examined at length below and are briefly mentioned here to emphasize the gravity of the threat posed by Gorgias' scepticism to ethical systems which defend their principles dialectically. As this study proceeds it will become increasingly clear that the gulf which divided Gorgias' sophistical rhetoric and Socrates' analytical dialectic continued to separate Academics and Pyrrhonists throughout the sixteenth century, and will ultimately find expression in Donne's choice in *Biathanatos* of an ethical program informed by Thomist rather than Augustinian epistemological principles.

8
Gorgianic Rhetoric and Socratic Dialectic

In Plato's *Gorgias*, Socrates' critique of the capacity of Gorgias' rhetoric to lead his pupils to a discovery of virtue exposes the insufficiency of rhetoric as a reliable guide to truth and establishes dialectic as the means to demonstrating that insufficiency. In the process of his inquiry into the real end of rhetoric, which all agree is to persuade regardless of philosophical concerns about ethics, Socrates announces that the mode of

discourse which he practices is above all concerned with the elimination of falsehood through instruction. He says that he is:

> One of those who would gladly be refuted if anything I say is not true, and would gladly refute another who says what is not true, but would be no less happy to be refuted myself than to refute, for I consider that a greater benefit, inasmuch as it is a greater boon to be delivered from the worst of evils oneself than to deliver another.[150]

The worst of evils, Socrates goes on to explain, is a 'false opinion' on the subject of ethics, the science of good and bad. It is this commitment to truth, irrespective of the rhetorical goal of persuasion typical of forensic oratory, which most clearly marks the distinction between Socratic dialectic and Gorgianic rhetoric. According to Socrates, it is a characteristic ability of forensic oratory (the class of rhetoric most consistently attacked in the *Gorgias*) to defend the evil-doer in such a way as to prevent him from being justly punished.[151] Gorgias' irritable pupil, Callicles, retorts by asserting that despite its disregard for the truth of the matter, only rhetoric can provide the good and the evil man alike protection from punishment, and emphasizes his point by claiming that the brevity of Socrates' method of dialectical questioning will leave him '[reeling] to and fro and [gaping] openmouthed, without a word to say...if anyone should...drag [him] off to prison, claiming [he] is guilty when [he] is not'.[152] It is this opposition between the truth-seeking method of Socratic dialectic and Gorgias' forensic rhetorician's ability to argue persuasively for or against any position which moves Cicero to complain in *De Oratore* that rhetoricians have been left nothing more than the convoluted legal problems of the forensic *causae* (*controversiae*) to occupy them.[153] The general philosophical issues underlying these particular legal cases are to be analyzed in the form of *theses* by dialecticians, such as the Stoics, who have little regard for positions argued oratorically. We will say more about the difference between *controversiae* and *theses* when we discuss the effort to reconcile the interests of rhetoric and dialectic initiated by Cicero and Quintilian.

What we must observe at the moment is that the Gorgianic rhetorician judges the dialectic of Socrates to be inadequate for the same two reasons for which Cicero will condemn the dialectic of the Stoics in his preface to the *Paradoxa Stoicorum*. The

first and most conspicuous reason is that it lacks rhetorical elaboration, and thus, will fail to arouse the emotions necessary to move its hearers to a sympathetic position; a purely dialectical exposition consists solely of a series of brief questions (*interrogatiunculae, quaestiunculae*) and answers (*conclusiunculae*) designed to test the truth and validity of the assertions comprising the premises and conclusions of specific arguments. In the *Gorgias*, Socrates conspicuously juxtaposes his dialectical procedure to the elaborate rhetorical procedure of his interlocutors by requesting that they 'continue [their] present method of conversing by question and answer, postponing to some other occasion lengthy discourses of the type begun by Polus [Gorgias' pupil]'.[154] After Gorgias complies with Socrates' wishes, Socrates responds delighted, 'By Hera, Gorgias, I marvel at your answers; they could not be briefer.'[155] Though we will certainly want to acknowledge a touch of sarcasm here, the brevity of the dialectical method was one of the similarities which Cicero noticed when, in the preface to the *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, he claimed the Stoic *paradoxa* 'to be in the highest degree Socratic'.[156] There he complained, as Callicles had in the *Gorgias*, that Cato's method of demonstrating his case 'by means of tiny little interrogatory pin-pricks [*minutis interrogatiunculis quasi punctis*]', was, at least potentially, ineffective in the law-courts or assembly.[157]

The second reason that Cicero condemns the dialectical exposition of the Stoic virtues is that such an exposition, stripped of the rhetorically elaborated explanations of the senses in which their various terms are being deployed, results in the appearance of a paradox. For Polus, a faithful adherent to Gorgias' principle that the majority view constitutes the standard of truth, the paradoxicality of Socrates' ethical assertions is sufficient for their refutation. He asks, 'Do you not consider yourself already refuted, Socrates, when you put forward views that nobody would accept?'[158] Callicles similarly attacks the divergence of Socrates' positions from the common opinion when he says, 'If you are serious and what you say is true, then surely the life of us mortals must be turned upside down and apparently we are everywhere doing the opposite of what we should.'[159] Yet Socrates remains unperturbed, constantly insisting that the opinion of the majority cannot falsify the conclusions which he has reached through the rigor of his dialectical process.[160] As we have seen, Cicero noticed that these startling

conclusions did not merely resemble the Stoic ethical tenets in their paradoxicality; they are, in fact, exactly the same tenets in substance.[161] Over the course of his debate in the *Gorgias*, Socrates asserts the Stoic ethical principles that knowledge is sufficient for virtue (460b), and its contrary, that ignorance is the cause of vice (488a), that virtue is sufficient for happiness (470e, 507c), that order insures goodness and disorder, evil (506c-507a, 508a), and that those who do evil are mad (507a-b).[162] Like the Stoic *paradoxa*, Socrates' paradoxes follow as a consequence of his dialectical exposition; they are, to use his words, 'buckled fast and clamped together...by arguments of steel and adamant'.[163] We should see by now that the Gorgianic paradox described by Aristotle, Isocrates and Sextus, which at worst denied the possibility of verifiable external truth and at best called such truth into question, differed fundamentally from the Socratic paradox, which asserted a conclusion contrary to the common opinion but which followed necessarily from its premises.[164] The former, as we have already indicated, exploits any and all rhetorical resources to elicit the necessary emotional response to persuade its listeners in order to illustrate that we, like Helen, are unable accurately to perceive the truth through the impressions which our deceptive senses or a deceptive speaker has moulded on our mind. The Gorgianic paradox, as Sextus suspected, belies an underlying Pyrrhonism. The Socratic paradox, which as we have seen and will see further, is fundamentally the same as the Stoic *paradoxa* expounded by Cicero, and therefore, relies on a dialectical exposition denuded of any rhetorical elaboration which extends beyond the clarification of potentially ambiguous critical terms.[165] Its confidence in the power of dialectic to justify its paradoxicality indicates its reliance on an external standard of truth to which reason must submit in spite of the opposition of the common opinion. The Socratic paradox, as both Cicero and the Stoics recognized, pointed to a truth which Pyrrhonism could not acknowledge.[166]

9

Truth and the Confidence of Socratic Paradox

We have already observed that Cicero's *Paradoxa Stoicorum* must have been intentionally omitted by Erasmus from his list of precedents justifying the levity of the

Praise of Folly because of the underlying dialectical procedure upon which it was attempting to expand. This is not to say that Erasmus' *Praise* has nothing to say about the presumptions of logicians who have attempted to manipulate the various senses of terms to fit a dialectical demonstration which is supposed to prove a certain moral principle. For Erasmus, any attempt to manipulate terms for the sake of rhetorical persuasion or dialectical demonstration may result in a false and sophistical claim to moral knowledge, which Folly, no longer speaking ironically, roundly condemns. Solemnly rehearsing the Christian fideist's deprecation of knowledge, Erasmus says:

> To the same effect is the prohibition of God, the architect of the world, that they should not eat any fruit from the tree of knowledge, as if knowledge would poison their happiness. For that matter, Paul openly condemns knowledge as dangerous because it puffs men up. St. Bernard, I imagine, was following Paul when he interpreted the mountain on which Lucifer established his throne as the mountain of knowledge.[167]

It is hard to imagine a statement more contrary to the Socratic and Stoic paradoxes defended by Cicero in the *Paradoxa Stoicorum*; if Cicero was genuinely defending the views that knowledge is sufficient for virtue and that virtue is sufficient for happiness, it is no wonder that Erasmus neglected to include Cicero in his list of models. Erasmus was defending another sort of paradox, however, one that would invert the rationalist ethics of the Stoics by justifying assertions such as 'only the ignorant are wise' and 'the wise man is mad'. As ever, Erasmus is careful to explain that the madness and ignorance of the wise man enlightened by the wisdom of God are not to be equated with the insanity and anti-rational sensuality of Socrates' fool. On the contrary, he says, 'Christians essentially agree with Platonists that the mind is buried and bound in bodily chains and that it is prevented by the body's grossness from contemplating and enjoying things as they truly are.'[168] Here we begin to detect a trace of that pious scepticism, which, when combined with the neoplatonic contempt of the body, will allow Erasmus to declare so confidently that the 'happiness which Christians strive for with such great effort is no more than a certain kind of madness and folly'.[169] When we come to our examination of other sceptical sixteenth-century neoplatonists such as Agrippa and Lando, we will discover on what points Donne's scepticism differed from

theirs and why its expression in dialectical disputations would have appeared to them to be a threat to faith.

Erasmus' familiarity with the paradoxes of Socrates and of the Stoics would have been derived from his knowledge of the various classical authors who recorded them, writers, such as Cicero, Isocrates, Plato, Aristotle and Diogenes Laertius, whose work comprised the staple diet of students of the sixteenth century. That Donne was familiar with these writers needs no argument; nor, therefore, does the claim that he was familiar with Gorgias' reputation for maintaining paradoxes which disregarded truth in their sophistical rhetoric and Socrates' for maintaining paradoxes which exalted the pursuit of truth.[170] Stephen Gosson's comment in *The Ephemerides of Phialo* (1579) reveals a knowledge of the sophist Gorgias, which Donne must certainly have shared.[171] When challenged by Philotimo to dispute with the Gorgianically subtle Signiora Polyphile, Phialo responds, 'I was neuer Leontinus Gorgias scholer too dispute any question on the sodaine, yet if I may haue the trueth on my side, little studie shall serue me to wrastle with women.'[172] The key to Phialo's victory, as both Socrates and Sextus knew, is the firm conviction that there is an objective truth to which all arguments must correspond. It is only when we recall Gorgias' comments in his *Encomium of Helen* on the power of sight to overcome the perception of this objective truth, that Donne's quibble on 'love' in his sixth paradox 'That the guifts of the body are better than those of the mind or of Fortune' reveals its reference to the Pyrrhonist scepticism attacked by Socrates in the *Gorgias*. There Donne says, 'For nourishing of Civil Societies and mutual Love amongst men, which is one chiefe end why we are men, I say the beauty, proportion, and presence of the body hath a more masculine force in begetting this Love than the vertues of the mind.' 'For', he continues, 'it strikes us sodainly, and possesseth us immediately'.[173] According to Gorgias, Helen deserves to be acquitted of her crime precisely because her love was begotten by the masculine force of the beauty, proportion and presence of Alexander's body.[174] The Gorgianic principle, which underpins Donne's statement about the persuasive force of the body, is given a few lines later. 'For it is the same to be and to seeme vertuous.'[175] In view of the orthodox sixteenth-century assumption that truth, no matter how degraded or confused it may appear to the human mind, must be sought

with a conviction of its unity, objectivity and universality (as Socrates advised), Gosson's reference to Gorgias in *The Ephemerides of Phialo* reveals the common opinion against which Donne's mock Gorgianism must be contrasted to appear paradoxical.[176] Donne himself facetiously dismisses this common opinion when he criticizes the ability of even 'sound judgement' to discern a true understanding of the virtues of chastity, temperance and fortitude without resorting to 'fayth and beleefe...to assure our selves that these vertues are not counterfayted'.[177]

In his consideration of the education of the young in the second part of his *Euphues* (1578), 'Euphues and his Euphoebus', John Lyly, following Plutarch's 'Education of Children', praises the Socratic/Stoic paradoxes.[178] 'It is vertue', he says, 'yea, vertue, gentlemen, yt maketh gentlemen, yt maketh poore rich, ye base borne noble, the subiect a soueraigne, the deformed beautiful, the sicke whole, the weak strong, the most myserable most happy.'[179] To illustrate these paradoxes he cites Socrates' response to Gorgias' unparadoxical claim that the mighty king of Persia must surely be happy in his riches.

> Unto ye like sence may the answere of Socrates be applyed when Gorgias asked him whether he deemed the Persian kinge happy or not, I knowe not sayd he how much vertue or discipline he hath, for happiness doth not consist in ye gifts of fortune, but in the grace of vertue.[180]

The title of Donne's sixth paradox alone, 'That the guifts of the body are better than those of the mind or of Fortune,' should suffice to illustrate that this paradox is simply an inversion of this Socratic/Stoic paradox, which had always been and continued to be orthodox in Christian ethics. But if there remains any doubt, we may read to the end, where Donne explicitly inverts the popularly accepted Socratic/Stoic view. 'So that vertue which must be lovd for her selfe and respects no further end, is indeede nothing'.[181] There are many such comparisons to be made between *Euphues* and Donne's *Paradoxes*; so many that their common topics and opposing treatments of them must be understood not as evidence of Lyly's influence on Donne but of a general interest in the Socratic/Stoic ethical doctrines of antiquity and the methods of sceptical critique which developed in opposition to them.[182] Although Lyly's *Euphues* was

valued in the late sixteenth century principally for its introduction into English of the Gorgianic (and Attic) rhetorical techniques of antithesis and balance, it also represents a shift away from the piously didactic interest of humanists (such as Erasmus and Melanchthon) in putting Greek and Roman wisdom to use in the education of the young Christian, and toward a courtly educational interest (exemplified in Lyly and Donne) in exploiting the various (and often contradictory) philosophical and ethical commonplaces of antiquity, not chiefly as conduits to truth, but as material for the exhibition of wit and learning.

10
The Clarification of Contraries

Like Erasmus, however, both Lyly and Donne still maintain a morally edifying, instructive purpose for their works.[183] In the 'Epistle Dedicatory' of *Euphues*, Lyly maintains that his antithetical style will 'nothing delight the dayntie eare', but that it is all the more valuable for its 'harshnes'.[184] Significantly, this harshness arises from an antithetical style, which Lyly says, is best suited to convey plain truth. This ability, like the ability of the inversions of Donne's *Paradoxes* to serve as an 'alarum to truth', consists in the juxtaposition of contraries.[185] Lyly describes the power of his antithetical style to convey plain truth by rehearsing aphorisms whose content defends it and whose style illustrates it. 'Thinges of greatest profit are sette foorth with least price. Where the Wyne is neete there needeth no Iuie-bush. The right Coral needeth no colouring. Where the matter it selfe bringeth credit, the man with his glose winneth smal commendation.'[186] Though he was not writing a paradox, Lyly's awareness that truth is most clearly displayed by the contrast of contraries, and that 'neyther is ther any thing, but yt hath his contraries', led him to treat subjects such as constancy, perfection, the body and the mind, and genuine and apparent virtue, with a sceptical consciousness, which implicitly questioned the authority of aphorisms to express more than a relative truth.[187] The inexperienced Euphues finds himself caught between the extremes of the (true) aphorism spoken by the inconstant Lucilla, 'that she that hath bene faythlesse to one will neuer be faythfull to any', and simultaneously encourages her faith (to him)

and her faithlessness (to Philautus).[188] Euphues, having succeeded in instigating Lucilla's inconstancy, foolishly ignores this 'tryall of hir lyghtenesse', and concludes that 'no mortall creature can exceede [her] in constancie'.[189] Upon this conclusion he declares aphoristically, 'I finde it nowe for a setled truth, which earst I accompted for a vaine talk, that the Purple dye will neuer stain, that the pure Cyuet will neuer loose his sauour, that the greene Laurell will neuer chaunge his coulour, that beautie can neuer bee blotted with discourtesie'.[190] The truth of these aphorisms as they relate to Lucilla is not just contradicted by the fact of her betrayal of Euphues; they have their own contrary aphorisms, which Lucilla, certain of the fact of her inconstancy, recognizes must truly and finally contradict Euphues. 'As for feruent loue', she says, 'you knowe there is no fire so hotte but it is quenched with water, neyther affection so strong but is weakened with reason'.[191]

Lucilla's conclusion that her inconstancy was precipitated by reason is precisely the argument of Donne's eleventh paradox, 'A Defense of Womens Inconstancy'. There, Donne argues that because those who change most, have most reason, the inconstancy of women can be defended on grounds of rationality. Neither Donne nor Lyly seriously believe that the inconstancy of women is due to their rationality; such a conclusion, to the sixteenth-century mind, is a paradox which can only be validly defended if the terms, rationality and inconstancy, are unambiguously defined in senses which do not contradict each other. Both Socrates and Cicero defend their paradoxes by such manipulation of senses, as do Gorgias and the rest of the eristical sophists whom Isocrates in his *Helen* faulted for 'verbal quibbling'. The difference between Socrates' and Cicero's defenses and those of the sophists consists in the former's elimination of ambiguity in the interest of truth and the latter's exploitation of ambiguity in the interest of novelty. Hence, as Donne advises in his letter to Wotton, we must 'resist' paradoxes when we encounter them just as Socrates had when he refuted Gorgias and his pupils, and as Cicero had when he defended the Socratic *paradoxa* of the Stoics, by eliminating the ambiguity of the critical terms of their arguments. Despite their exhibitions of verbal dexterity, both Lyly and Donne intend to eliminate the ambiguity that results in the appearances of paradox by the juxtaposition of contraries.[192] Lyly presents his contraries clearly distinguished so that

the reader may easily recognize that they do not in fact coexist, and therefore, do not result in paradox. Lucilla simply never was constant, and so the aphorisms which Euphues used to extol her undying faith were not contradicted by Lucilla's aphorisms; they were simply not true of Lucilla, and consequently do not appear to coexist with their contraries. Donne leaves to the reader what we will find to be the rather easy task of distinguishing his intentionally and obviously combined contraries.[193]

In his ninth paradox, 'That by Discord things increase', he defers to the clarification achieved by Aristotle's juxtaposition of the contraries of generation and corruption to argue the relativist position that it is the discordant tension between contraries that informs our knowledge of them, that, for example, we only know black in contrast to its contrary, white. He asks:

> yf this unity and peace can give increase to things, how mightily is Discord and warr to this purpose, which are indeed the only ordinary parents of peace. Discord is never so barren that it affords no fruit, for the fall of one State is the increase of another; because it is impossible to find a discommodity without any advantage as corruption without generation.[194]

Hence, Donne gives his reader a clue to how to resist the conflated contraries of his paradoxes; simply identify in what sense one term is contrary to another, and then discriminate it from other senses which are not discordant with its contrary term.[195] In his *Panathenaicus*, Isocrates presented a similar paradox of concord. In order to reconcile the truth of the principle that 'things which are in themselves always the same and never different are to some helpful and to others harmful' with that of the law of non-contradiction, that 'it is not conceivable that each thing should have a nature which itself is contrary to itself and not the same', Isocrates declares that he will have to run the 'risk of appearing to some to say what is quite contrary to the general opinion [*paradoxa*].'[196] Isocrates, devoted as he is to speaking truly, makes his listeners aware that it is the apparent conflation of contraries that is responsible for any perceived paradoxicality. If we recall his complaint about the sophistical arguments of eristics such as Melissus and Gorgias, it is small wonder that Isocrates has been so careful to warn his listeners not to be fooled by the appearance of a paradox. This warning is against an acceptance of the type of absurdity in which the paradoxes of the sophists

result, and is clearly echoed in Donne's warning in his letter to Wotton to 'take heed of allowing any of them [his paradoxes] least you make another.'

As Isocrates' speech proceeds, it becomes clear that he is using the term 'concord' in two senses, one to denote the single-minded commitment of war-mongers, such as the Spartans and the Triballians, to the destruction of their enemies, and another to denote the contrary of discord. Hence, in so far as the destruction of their enemies constitutes discord, Isocrates shows that the concord of the Spartans is the discord of their enemies. We should have little difficulty recognizing Isocrates' example of the combination of contraries of discord and concord in the passage quoted above from Donne's paradox on discord. Isocrates says of the Spartans:

> For by being of one mind amongst themselves regarding the outside world they have always striven to set the Hellenes at variance with each other, reducing this practice, as it were, to a fine art; and they have always looked upon the cruellest of evils which befel the other states as the greatest of boons to themselves; for when the states were in such stress, they found it possible to manage them as they pleased.[197]

In the end, even Isocrates is not sure whether he has sufficiently dispelled the seeming paradox to make the truth of the matter clear to his listeners. To help him to assess exactly what position he was arguing, he asks one of his pupils to read his speech. It is from the student that ambiguities embedded in paradoxes such as Isocrates' of concord are praised for their ability to encourage a philosophical analysis of terms and the concepts which they are intended to signify. He says that Isocrates has presented:

> arguments of double meaning, which lend themselves no more to the purpose of those who praise than of those who blame, but are capable of being turned both ways and leave room for much disputation-arguments the employment of which, when one contends in court over contracts for his own advantage, is shameful and no slight token of depravity but, when one discourses on the nature of man and of things, is honourable and bespeaks a cultivated mind.[198]

Upon theoretical questions, therefore, where clarification is the objective, the presentation of paradoxes which appear to collapse the space separating contraries may prove to be a useful exercise in the analysis of ambiguous argument. For Isocrates, as

well as for Donne and Lyly, once this task of discriminating complex contexts and ambiguous expressions is complete, the true natures of the various relevant contraries must appear much more clearly.

11
The Conflation of Contraries

However, neither Donne nor Lyly will venture any conclusion regarding these true natures which is any more certain than that they are not what is contrary to them; this reluctance, as we will see, is the hallmark of Ciceronian sceptic, who, recognizing that natures are unknowable in themselves, seeks first, to clarify the senses of potentially ambiguous terms through an analysis of context, and then, to deduce conclusions which achieve, not certainty, but a degree of probability. Lyly himself makes this distinction between probabilities and certain proofs operative in the confounded situations of *Euphues*, reminding the reader that the issues treated there do not admit of proof but only of the sceptic's uncertain probabilities.[199] It should not surprise us, therefore, that we find many of the same issues treated in Donne's *Paradoxes*, and that these issues all bear an essential resemblance to those Socratic/Stoic paradoxes defended by Cicero in the *Paradoxa Stoicorum* in their resistance to certain proof and their potential to appear paradoxical through the manipulation of ambiguous terms.[200] In his first paradox, 'That all things kill themselves', Donne manipulates the Aristotelian idea that after the perfection of a particular nature, it ineluctably begins its progress toward death.[201] He argues that the progress of anything beyond its perfection 'changes the natures and the names', and that because 'the best things kill themselves soonest (for no perfection indures) and all things labor to this perfection, all travaile to their owne Death'.[202] When Lyly writes that the 'pestilence doth most ryfest infect the cleerest complection, and the Caterpiller cleaueth vnto the ripest fruit' or 'when the prayses of women are at the best, if you leaue not, they wyll beginne to fayle', he makes a similar use of Aristotle's idea, as does Shakespeare when he writes in his sixth sonnet 'Then let not winter's ragged hand deface / In thee thy summer ere thou be distilled. / Make sweet some vial; treasure thou

some place / With beauty's treasure ere it be self-killed.'[203] As we will see later in this study, the proposition that death follows perfection is true only given a particular understanding of the terms 'death' and 'perfection' just as the Socratic/Stoic paradox that virtue is sufficient for happiness is only true when the senses in which 'virtue' and 'happiness' are being deployed are clarified, as Cicero had in the *Paradoxa Stoicorum*.[204]

When arguing in his sixth paradox 'That the guifts of the body are better than those of the mind or of Fortune', Donne asserts the typically sceptical view that 'the body which thou lovst and esteemst fayre is fayre certainly, and yf it be not fayre in perfection, yet it is fayre in the same degree that thy judgement is good.'[205] Here Donne is urging precisely the same credulity with respect to the appearances of things as he did when he insisted in his second paradox that '[the] Starrs, the Sun, the Skye...are faire because they seeme color'd'.[206] From these mock principles of gullibility, Donne concludes that:

> in a faire body I do seldome suspect a disproportiond mind, or expect a good in a deformed. As when I see a goodly house I assure myself of a worthy possessor, and from a ruinous wytherd building I turne away, because it seemes eyther stuffd with varlets as a prison, or handled by an unworthy negligent tenant...[207]

Lyly's Euphues, arguing more conventionally, asks whether outward beauty or inward virtue move women to love. He answers, inverting Donne's paradox:

> Certes by how much more the mynde is to be preferred before the body, by so much the more the graces of the one are to be preferred before the gifts of the other, which if it be so, that the contemplation of the inwarde qualitie ought to be respected more, then the view of the outward beautie, then doubtlesse women eyther doe or should loue those best whose virtue is best, not measuring the deformed man with the reformed mynde.[208]

To serve the ends of his scheme to win Lucilla from Philautus, Euphues promptly refutes his own conclusion, albeit facetiously, when he infers the virtue of his pawn, Livia, from her physical beauty. 'True it is that the disposition of the minde, followeth the composition of ye body: how then can she be in minde any way imperfect, who in

body is perfect in euery way?'[209] Though with some trepidation, the conventional Christian conclusion is affirmed in the end, that the beauty of the mind is not necessarily reflected in the beauty of the body.

In *Pandosto* (1588), Lyly's disciple, Robert Greene, also examines the uncertain space between visible and invisible beauty, but his inquiry focuses on the politically more sensitive issue of the physical manifestation of noble lineage. As a result, his conclusion that so 'exquisite' was Fawnia's 'perfection, both of body and mind, ...[that] her natural disposition did bewray that she was born of some high parentage', must be understood with respect to the courtly romantics it was intended to please.[210] As Shakespeare's Perdita (who was modelled on Greene's Fawnia), as well as his Miranda and Caliban, were created to illustrate, neither physical deformity nor physical beauty should be understood to indicate a base or a noble mind respectively. But while a humble Christian could confidently defend the Socratic/Stoic virtue which exalts beauty of mind above all else by citing examples of great ugly, but noble, men such as Socrates and the Stoic Zeno, there is no reason why the coincidence of inward and outward beauty ought not to be praised for its decorous concordance of complementary qualities, or at least, so authors of romances such as Shakespeare and Greene thought. It is with these romantic considerations in mind that we must understand Dorastus' amazement at the 'modest reverence and sharpness of wit' of the apparently low-born, Fawnia. 'Dorastus thought her outward beauty was but a counterfeit to darken her inward qualities, wondering how so courtly behaviour could be found in so simple a cottage, and cursing fortune that had shadowed wit and beauty with such hard fortune.'[211] It should need no argument to conclude that Donne's claim in his sixth paradox, that a 'goodly house' betokens a 'worthy possessor' while a 'ruinous wytherd building' betokens a 'varlet' or 'negligent tenant', was intended to assert the moral, unromantic view defended in the *Paradoxa Stoicorum* and the *Gorgias*, by inverting Cicero's adage from *De Officiis*, 'the owner should bring honour to his house, not the house to its owner.'[212] What must be made explicit, however, is that the analysis of the difference between true and seeming reality is fundamental to the procedure of the paradox; it is what makes it, as Erasmus and Nashe recognized, a fundamentally philosophical enterprise, and one which will, like the paradoxes

defended by Socrates and Cicero, involve the careful application of the philosopher's instrument, dialectic.[213]

Such a careful application of dialectic could be employed to judge the truth or falsity of propositions by clarifying the senses of their terms (as with Socrates, Isocrates and Cicero) or to obfuscate the line separating truth from falsity by exploiting verbal ambiguities and specialized terminologies (as with sophists such as Gorgias and dogmatists such as the Stoics). As a dialectician, therefore, the paradoxist seeks to defend a *thesis* with a full acknowledgement of the contentiousness ascribed to it by Aristotle, a contentiousness which he may choose either to exacerbate, by affirming the paradoxicality of his *thesis* in the manner of Gorgias or the Stoics, or to alleviate by dispelling the apparent paradox and explicating the validity of the argument's inference from its premises in the manner of Socrates and Cicero.[214] As we will see, much of the ability of dialectic to clarify or obfuscate relies on its ability to manipulate ambiguous terminology, and in this respect, we are not at all surprised to find champions of wit of the late sixteenth century, such as Lyly and Donne, occasionally subordinating dialectic's function of clarification to the less edifying but more entertaining delights of equivocation.[215] Lucilla vows that, because Philautus had prematurely claimed her as his wife based simply upon her courteousness to him, she will thenceforth 'frame [herself] to be coy'. She fears, she says, that 'if euery gentleman be made of the metall that *Philautus* is...[that she]...shall be challenged of as many as I haue vsed to company with, and bee a common wife to all those that haue commonly resorted hether.'[216] Lucilla's admission of her promiscuity is barely half veiled even from her father, for though the primary sense of 'common' refers specifically to Philautus' premature claim, and thus may be rendered 'communal', it is impossible to ignore the sense which indicates her proven willingness to share her favors and courtesies in common with many men. In this second sense, she is very aptly called a 'common wife'. Her ambiguous use of the term 'used' confirms our suspicions of her commonality. She has not merely been accustomed to keeping the company of the likes of Philautus and Euphues; she has, in a quite sexually suggestive sense, used them as entertaining company.[217] In his eighth paradox, 'That good is more common then evill', Donne

extends Lucilla's equivocal identification to encompass the term 'good' as well as 'common' and 'use'.

> So good doth not only prostitute her owne amiableness to all, but refuseth no ayd, no, not of her utter contrary evill, that she may be more common to us...For the fashions of habits, for our movings in gestures, for phrases in our speech, we say they weare good as long they weare usd, that is as long as they weare common...[218]

Donne ends his paradox with the expected quibble on 'common' and 'promiscuous' reminding us of Lucilla's concern that the more 'courteous' she is, the more 'common' she will be considered to be. 'But I remember nothing that is therfore ill because it is common but women; of whom allso they which are most common are the best of that occupation they profes.'[219] Cicero's first paradox, 'That only what is morally good is noble', is a serious investigation into the nature of the 'good' (*bonum*), which discriminates, rather than conflates, the various senses of the term.[220] He has undertaken this task to correct the regrettable errors of those most prudent wise men of the past 'who thought that...unreliable and transitory [*commutabilia*] things deserved the nominal title of "goods" [*bona*]'.[221] These 'unreliable and transitory things' are material goods, things which, as the term *commutabilia* suggests, are common in their moral indifference. It is this moral indifference, Cicero argues, that must distinguish these material goods from 'the good'. 'Can a thing that is a good be for anybody an evil? or can anybody amidst an abundance of goods be himself not good? Yet all that list of things we see to be of such a nature that even wicked men possess them and virtuous men derive harm from them.'[222]

This characterization stands in conspicuous contrast to Donne's quoted above, which maintained the cooperation of the contraries, good and evil, and which ultimately could assert that 'in subjects poysond with evill, she [good] can humbly stoope to accompany the evill.'[223] Cicero acknowledges that amidst all the confusion caused by the opinion of common people (*opinio vulgi*), 'true reason' (*vera ratio*) must determine precisely what is the good. He concludes, as Socrates had in his rejection of Callicles' identification of luxury, intemperance and license with virtue and happiness, that the good is 'what is right and honourable and virtuous.'[224] Both Callicles and

Socrates had accused each other of defining words to suit the ends of their respective arguments.[225] Cicero, conscious of his promise to elaborate the barren syllogistic demonstrations of the Stoic *paradoxa* in order to avoid the terminological dispute into which Socrates and Callicles fell, concedes that 'wordy discussion of them [the views that support Cicero's definition of the good] seems to be excessive subtlety.'[226] Donne, mocking Socrates, Callicles, Aristotle and Cicero, provides his own definition of the good, one which the false reasoning of his own rhetorical elaboration could hardly support. 'All faire, all proffitable, all vertuous is good.'[227] This definition makes the most of the 'excessive subtlety', which Cicero and Socrates sought to avoid by discriminating ambiguous senses of the term 'good', by conflating the three classes of goods observed by Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics* and Cicero in *De Partitione Oratoria*.[228] These three classes, external goods, goods of the mind and goods of the body, correspond to profitable, virtuous and fair respectively in Donne's equivocal definition of the good. Again, Donne has taken both the matter and the form of his *Paradoxes* from the tradition of the disputed *thesis*, a tradition the propriety of which Cicero would recognize was itself disputed between the destructive, sceptical objectives of sophistical rhetoricians and the positive, truth-seeking objectives of the dialecticians.

Notes to Chapter I

[1] T. W. Baldwin has shown that the *Paradoxa Stoicorum* formed a fundamental part of the sixteenth and seventeenth-century grammar school curriculum. The *Paradoxa* appear in the directions of the master of the New College of the Winchester School, Christopher Johnson, in 1530. They also appear on a list of grammar school texts, which Baldwin believes was compiled by Gabriel Harvey in 1581. They were included in John Brinsley's *Ludus Literarius* (1612), and owned by James I (VI). See Baldwin, 1944, v. 1, pp. 325, 436, 555; v. 2, p. 299.

[2] According to S. F. Bonner, Aristotle's is the earliest definition of the *thesis*. He goes on to say that the 'paradoxical element [derived from Aristotle's definition of the *thesis* in *Topics* 104b19-105a1] survives in the essays of Cicero entitled *Paradoxa Stoicorum*...These essays are, in fact, philosophical theses rhetorically developed, and it is noteworthy that in his preface to them (§5) Cicero says: "degustibus genus exercitationum earum quibus uti consuevi, cum ea quae dicuntur in scholis θετικῶς ad nostrum hoc oratorium transfero dicendi genus".' See Bonner, 1949, p. 2.

[3] *Paradoxa* 2, 4

[4] See *Liddell and Scott*, 1980, p. 521.

[5] *De Finibus* IV, 74

[6] In her attempt to emphasize Donne's sceptical use of paradox as a means to demonstrate the futility of the rational attempt to acquire knowledge, Rosalie Colie fails to observe that Puttenham was translating from Cicero's *admirabilia* when he called paradox 'the wondrer'. See Colie, 1966, pp. 134-135. For

similar reasons, T. G. Bishop fails to acknowledge Puttenham's debt to Cicero in his discussion of Shakespeare's use of paradox. See Bishop, 1996, pp. 91-92.

[7] Puttenham, 1589, p. 189

[8] Peacham, 1577. It should be noted that *paradoxon* in both Puttenham and Peacham expresses the Greek singular, nominative. In his discussion of Peacham's and Puttenham's comments on wonder, it is surprising that James Biester fails to notice their definitions of paradox. This failure, however, is characteristic of his study's neglect of the influence Cicero's *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, and its translation of the Greek *paradoxa*. See Biester, 1997, pp. 58-66.

[9] The contrary, and therefore, potentially paradoxical, relationship between fire and water was a commonplace example of *paradoxon*. See for instance Donne's 'A Burnt Ship', ll. 1-5: 'Out of a fired ship, which, by no way / But drowning could be rescued from the flame...So all were lost, which in the ship were found, / They in the sea being burnt, they in the burnt ship drown'd'; and 'Hero and Leander': 'Both rob'd of aire, we both lye in one ground, / Both whom one fire had burnt, one water drownd'.

[10] Lewis and Short note that *paradoxa* referred specifically to 'the apparently contradictory doctrines of the Stoics' and quote only Cicero's uses of the term in the *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, *De Finibus* and the *Academica* for illustration, though Cicero also gives a Greek form of *paradoxa* in *Tusculan Disputations*, IV, 16. See *Lewis and Short*, 1995, p. 1301.

[11] Cooper, 1565, sig. TTtt. It should be noted that Cooper's *paradoxus* is entered as a masculine adjective and not as a masculine noun in the nominative case. In this form it corresponds to the adjective *admirabilis* which he gives in his definition. The plural, neuter *paradoxa* that follows, however, is a neuter noun in the nominative case and refers to the Stoic ethical doctrines described by Cicero as *admirabilia*. In Thomas Thomas' *Dictionarium Linguae Latinae et Anglicanae* (London, 1587), *admirabilis* is defined as: 'adiect. Marvelous, wonderfull, to be wondered at', and '*Paradoxum, xi* n.g' as 'A marvelous, wonderful, and straunge thing to heare, and is contrarie to the common opinion: an olde opinion maintained by some one man or some fewe sectaries'. See Thomas, 1587, sig. Bii, Ssiii. Though it is impossible to say for certain to whom Thomas intends to attribute this 'olde opinion', it does not seem unlikely that he means Zeno and his adherents, those 'fewe' Stoics who Cicero had claimed were opposed to the common opinion.

[12] Elyot, 1538, sig. Qiii, Niii. Elyot seems not to have noticed that while he gives '*paradoxa*' in the plural, he renders its equivalent, 'a sentence', in the singular.

[13] As Thomas' *Dictionarium* illustrates, the term *admirabilis* (defined by Thomas as 'marvelous, wonderfull'), could be used interchangeably with *mirabilis*. See Thomas, 1587, sig. Bii. In the *Academica*, Cicero himself uses the term *mirabilia* as he had *admirabilia* in the preface to the *Paradoxa Stoicorum*. He says of the Stoic *paradoxa*, '*sunt enim Socratica pleraque mirabilia Stoicorum*'. See *Academica* II, 136.

[14] Cicero, 1569, sig. Aii. Newton's edition of Seneca was entitled *Seneca his Tenne Tragedies* (London, 1581).

[15] Cicero, 1569, sig. Aii.

[16] See Baldwin, 1944, v. 1, pp. 325, 436, 555; v. 2, p. 299. In the *Summale Logicales*, of the thirteenth-century logician and later Pope John XXI, Peter of Spain, a work which continued to be used as an introduction to logic throughout the seventeenth century, inopinable is defined in keeping with Cicero's use of the term. '*Inopinabile est quod contra opinionem omnium aut plurium aut sapientium.*' See Peter of Spain, *Summale Logicales*, VII, 16.

[17] *Paradoxa* 35

[18] Cicero, 1569, sig. Ciiii

[19] 'Inopinatum, Paradoxum, παραδοξομ,...*Est cum negamus nos potuisse vel supicari, vel opinari...Eiusmodi sunt, in quibus mirandi verbis utimur. Libenter autem, ut a reliquis adfectuum verbis, ita a paradoxo seu dubitatione ordimur*'. See Susenbrotus, 1562, p. 64. In his examination of Shakespeare's use of the term 'paradox' in *Hamlet* (III, I, 109-116), T. W. Baldwin has noted the difference between Susenbrotus' definition of the rhetorical paradox and Cooper's definition of the dialectical paradox, which he derived from the *Paradoxa Stoicorum*. He does not, however, notice that both the rhetorical and dialectical paradox achieve their wondrous effects through the apparent violation of the law of non-contradiction. See Baldwin, 1944, v. 2, pp. 598-599. For an overview of the directions of Susenbrotus' *Epitome*, see Baldwin, 1944, v. 2, pp. 138-175.

[20] Barbara C. Bowen has shown that paradoxes were not the only things described as admirable and inopinable by Renaissance rhetoricians. See Bowen, 1998, pp. 409-429, esp. pp. 412, 415. In his 1542 translation of Erasmus' *Apophthegmata* (London), Nicholas Udall recognized that the paradoxical encomiast, as well as the defender of uncommon opinion, could speculate on 'matiers inopinable'. As we will see when we examine Nashe's comments on paradoxical encomia in his *Lenten Stuffe*, however, Udall also recognizes that the approach for the paradoxical encomiast is rhetorical. He says, 'Rhetoricians are woont for exercise to take feigned arguments of matiers inopinable, and suche are properly called declamacions and not oracions...So did Homere write the battaill betweene the fogges & the myce, Erasmus wrote the praise of foolyshnesse, an other the praise of baldnesse, an other of drounkenshippe'. Quoted in Vickers, 1968, p. 307. In her consideration of Udall's and Nashe's comments on paradoxical encomium, M. T. Jones-Davies does not acknowledge the restriction of paradoxical encomia to rhetorical treatment and consequently does not distinguish it from the 'débat *pro et contra*' of the disputed paradox or *thesis* (p. 108). See Jones-Davies, 1982, pp. 105-123.

[21] Dickenson, 1589, sig. G3

[22] *Theaetetus* 170c. See also Aristotle, *Categories* 4a10-25. M. T. Jones-Davies has noted Vives' observation of how wonder may be produced by an ambiguously deployed middle term. See Jones-Davies, 1982, pp. 105-123, esp. 112. Joel B. Altman has noted that 'the paradox that witless is better than witty' in John Heywood's *Witty and Witless* issues from 'the third term, which unites apparent opposites'. Despite his announcement that his book 'is about the exercise of wonder', Altman never discusses the relation of paradoxes, such as he observed in Heywood's play, to the dialectical procedure of arguments *pro* or *contra theses*. Although he discusses Aristotle's description of wonder in the *Metaphysics* (982b12-18), the *Rhetoric* (1371a31-35) and the *Poetics* (1448b15-18), he does not observe that, in the sixteenth century, the term 'wonder' was understood in terms of Cicero's translation of the Greek *paradoxa*. Because Aristotle's Greek term for wonder is *thaumaston*, Altman never notices the fundamental relation between the paradox and the wonderful. See Altman, 1978, pp. 1-2, 112, 349. For a discussion of *thaumaston* and wonder-making, see Bishop, 1996, pp. 21-32; and Biester, 1997, pp. 6-7, 18, 24-25, 43, 130-133. Though Dennis Quinn does recognize that Cicero translated the Greek term *paradoxa* with *admirabilia*, he does not acknowledge any more than a rhetorical purpose for the paradox. See Quinn, 1969, pp. 626-647.

[23] See *De Interpretatione* 18a28-20b11, *Metaphysics* 1011b23-1012a28; Isocrates, *Panathenaicus* 224ff; and Donne's ninth paradox, 'That by Discord things increase'. In his discussion of the varieties of logical paradox, W. V. Quine observes that the appearance of paradox depends on the apparent coexistence of contradictory or contrary propositions. He goes on to show that many arguments that appear self-contradictory (and therefore, paradoxical), have commited some fallacy or other, and thus, retain the wondrous appearance of paradox only so long as their fallacy remains undetected. Paradoxes in which no fallacy is detected, such as his distillation of Epimenides' Liar paradox, Quine calls 'antinomies'. See Quine, 1966, pp. 1-18. Paul Stevens has noted that, in her massive study of Renaissance paradox, *Paradoxia Epidemica*, Rosalie Colie is unable to conceive of the paradox as anything other than an antinomy, and as a result, she tends 'to see impasses and aporias where there are none' (p. 211). As we will see, such a restrictive understanding of the Renaissance notion of the paradox has caused scholars and critics to neglect the important variety of paradox which is investigated in this study, the philosophical *thesis*. Despite his observation of Colie's misunderstanding both of Quine and of the Renaissance paradox, Stevens himself does not recognize the serious function of paradox in the defense of *theses*, and claims that the 'penchant [of Renaissance writers] for paradox often suggests not so much a rigorous skeptical intelligence as a desire for mystification-at its least harmful, wonderment, and its most doubtful, equivocation' (p. 211). Stevens' account fails to recognize, as we will shortly, that the argumentation of Cicero's *Paradoxa Stoicorum* was intended to dispel the wonder aroused by the bare syllogistic demonstrations of the Stoic ethical *theses*. As a model for Renaissance paradoxists, therefore, the *Paradoxa* teach the method of eliminating wonder by avoiding or exposing equivocations. See Stevens, 1996, pp. 203-224.

[24] Marbeck, 1581, p. 343. Marbeck's translation reads 'Upon the Seas he hath founded the whole earth, and upon the floudes he hath stabilised it.'

[25] Ibid., p. 344. The orthodox opinion regarding the natures of the four elements and their arrangement by God to which Marbeck contrasts the apparent paradox from Psalm 24 (23) was detailed by Cicero in *Tusculan Disputations* I, 40. Marbeck might also have referred to Job xxvi, 7 as more evidence of God's

marvelous power to establish truths contrary to natural reason. 'He it is who stretched out Zaphon [heaven] over chaos, / Who suspended earth over emptiness'.

[26] *Topics* (Aristotle) 104b19-105a1

[27] We recall that Donne called his *Paradoxes* 'alarums to truth' and that he claimed that the role of *Biathanatos* was 'to find the truth' by debating and vexing it. Although he recognizes that Renaissance writers followed Aristotle's opinion on the role of wonder as a catalyst for investigation, James Biester does not notice the role of the paradox as a dialectical defense of a *thesis* which seeks to provide probable arguments in its favor. As a result, Biester's discussion of wonder in Donne focuses on either his equivocal wit or his advocacy of mystical interpretations of sacred mysteries in his religious writing. The reason that Biester has overlooked the importance of the disputed *thesis* in Renaissance notions of paradox is his failure to recognize the influence of Cicero's translation of the Greek *paradoxa* as *admirabilia*. See Biester, 1997, pp. 83-93, 118-150.

[28] *Paradoxa* 4-5

[29] *Paradoxa* 4; Donne, 1980, p. 19, ll. 7-8

[30] See *Academica* II, 19-45.

[31] Donne, 1980, p. 3, ll. 21-25

[32] See *De Officiis* I, 139 and below p. 57.

[33] Donne, 1980, p. 52, ll. 18-19. Helen Peters doubts that Donne's eleventh paradox is genuinely his because both she and Grierson have determined the sole manuscript which contains the full text to be unreliable. See Donne, 1980, pp. lxvii-lxviii, 129-131. It should be noted, however, that 'A Defence of Women's Inconstancy' appears as the first paradox in 1633 edition of the *Paradoxes and Problems*.

[34] See also Wilson, 1982, pp. 283, 309. 'We shall delite the hearers when thei looke for one answere, and we make theim a cleane contrary' (p. 283). 'But emong all other kyndes of delite there is none that so muche comforteth and gladdeth the hearer, as a thyng spoken contrarie to thexpectation of other' (p. 309). For a discussion of Wilson's *Arte of Rhetorique* and Donne's use of paradox, see Cornelia, 1984, pp. 31-43.

[35] Donne, 1980, p. 52, ll. 19-21

[36] In defense of his choice of the Academic school, Cicero praises the utility of their disputations *in utamque partem* for, at least, the discovery of probabilities. After dismissing the possibility that he chose the Academy for the sake of 'ostentation or combativeness', he explains that he is 'fired with zeal for the discovery of the truth' and that, unlike the sophists, he genuinely 'hold[s] the opinions that...[he is] stating'. See *Academica* II, 65.

[37] *Topics* (Aristotle) 104b19-25

[38] Isocrates, *Helen*, 1

[39] *De Oratore* III 66-68

[40] *Tusculan Disputations* II, 30

[41] *Topics* (Aristotle)114b6-8

[42] On Antisthenes, see *Topics* (Aristotle) 104b21; and Plato, *Republic* I, 351c; *Laws* XII, 963d

[43] Isocrates, *Helen*, 2-4. See also Isocrates, *Antidosis*, 268-269.

[44] Isocrates died in 338 B. C.

[45] See Diogenes, *Lives*, VI, 2. For further references to Antisthenes' doctrine that contradiction is impossible see *Metaphysics* 1024b33-34 and Diogenes, *Lives*, VI, 3. See also Hankinson, 1995, pp. 55-56.

[46] Diogenes, *Lives*, IX, 73. See also *Lives* IX, 7; and Sextus, *Against the Mathematicians* VII, 126-7 (cited in Hankinson, 1995, p. 38).

[47] Diogenes, *Lives*, IX, 6

[48] See Sextus, *Against the Mathematicians* I, 301; and Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* I, 635-639 on Heraclitus' obscurity (cited in Sextus, 1998, p. 332). Donne would likely have been familiar with Diogenes' account of Heraclitus' obscurity and may have been alluding to it in his first *Problem*, 'Why are Courtiers sooner Atheists then men of other Condition?' There he asks, 'Doth a familiarity of greatnesse, and dayly Acquayntance and conversation with it, breede a contempt of all greatnesse?' (p. 23, ll. 6-8). Diogenes writes in *Lives*, IX, 6 that Heraclitus made his treatise *On Nature* 'the more obscure in order than none but adepts should approach it, and lest familiarity should breed contempt'. Neither John L. Klause nor James Biester notice Donne's possible reference to Diogenes' characterization of Heraclitus. See Klause, 1987, p. 53; and Biester, 1997, p. 142.

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[49] *Parmenides*, 134c. According to Plato's account, however, though Parmenides denied knowledge of forms in themselves, he recognized, like Cicero, that a complete denial of the validity of our apparent reality would 'completely destroy the significance of all discourse' (*Parmenides* 135c). See also Diogenes, *Lives*, IX, 21-23.

[50] *Melissus, Xenophanes, and Gorgias* 974b20-23. See also *Topics* (Aristotle) 104b19-25.

[51] Diogenes, *Lives*, IX, 51

[52] *Theaetetus* 152a-e

[53] Diogenes, *Lives* IX 51. See *Academica* I, 46, where Cicero says that Plato's dialogues '*in utramque partem multa disseruntur*'; II, 124 where he refers to the old debates of philosophers '*nam utramque in partem multa dicuntur*'; and II, 7 where he appropriates the credo for the service of the Academy, '...*neque nostrae* [the Academics] *disputationes quidquam aliud agunt nisi ut in utramque partem dicendo eliciat et tamquam exprimant aliquid quod aut verum sit aut ad id quam proxime accedat*'. See also II, 108.

[54] Diogenes, *Lives*, IX 52-3

[55] Isocrates, *Helen*, 6-7. For a brief comment on the unphilosophical procedure of the sophists, see Marrou, 1964, p. 79. For a discussion of *thaumatopoiias* and wonder-making, see Bishop, 1996, pp. 21-32. In his discussion of Isocrates' comments on *paradoxon* and *thaumatopoiias*, James Biester notes the reference to the 'abstruse philosophical questions' of the sophists, but does not pursue the serious tradition of disputation of such questions (*theses*) with which Donne and his contemporaries would have been familiar. See Biester, 1997, p. 56.

[56] In the 1600 letter which accompanied the paradoxes which he sent to Wotton, Donne had said that 'except I receve by your next letter an assurance upon the religion of your friendship that no coppy shalbee taken for any respect of these or any other of my compositions sent to you, I shall sinn against my conscience if I send you any more...I am desirous to hyde them with out any over reconing of them or there maker.' Quoted in Donne, 1980, p. xxv. In a 1619 letter which accompanied the copy of *Biathanatos* which he sent to his friend, Robert Ker, Donne continued to be concerned about how the public might view the unorthodoxy of his paradox, and made explicit his desire to consign it to the period preceding his public life as an Anglican priest and royal chaplain to James I. He tells Ker, 'Keep it, I pray, with the same jealousie; let any that your discretion admits to the sight of it, know the date of it, and that it was a Book written by Jack Donne, and not by D. Donne: Reserve it for me, if I live, and if I die, I only forbid it the Presse and the Fire: Publish it not, but yet burn it not; and between those, do what you will with it.' See Donne, 1977, p. 22.

[57] For discussion of this issue with respect to the *Paradoxes and Problems*, see Price, 1996, pp. 51-81; and Price, 1995, pp. 149-184. For discussion of this issue with respect to *Biathanatos*, see Simpson, 1948, pp. 165-166; Williamson, 1934, pp. 276-291; Donne, 1982, pp. xiv-xviii; and Baumlin, 1991, pp. 230-262.

[58] Diogenes, *Lives*, IX, 29

[59] *Sophistical Refutations* 165b19. William of Sherwood (c. 1200-1210-c. 1266-1271) observed this mode of dissent in his *Introduction to Logic*. It is worth noting that the Latin term which he uses to translate the Greek *paradoxon* is *inopinabile*. For more on William's commentary on Aristotle's *Sophistical Refutations*, see Hamblin, 1970, pp. 116-123.

[60] *Physics* 239b5-240b7

[61] *Problems* 969b4-6. Brian Lawn has explained that the *Problems* ascribed to Aristotle were not composed by him, but were likely to have been derived from his work. Throughout the sixteenth century, however, the three translations of the pseudo-Aristotelian *Problems* (i.e. *Vetustissima*, the translation of Bartholomew of Messina and the *Omnes homines* collection) were thought genuinely to belong to Aristotle. In his *De Augmentis Scientiarum* (1623) for instance, Francis Bacon, praised 'the noble example in the books [of *Problems*] of Aristotle'. Quoted in Lawn, 1963, p. 141, n. 1. For general discussion of the transmission of the pseudo-Aristotelian *Problems*, see Lawn, 1963, pp. 2-3, 92-113, 129-155.

[62] C. L. Hamblin has noted that Sextus Empiricus also viewed contradictions as evidence of fallacy. For Sextus, however, all logical demonstrations were intrinsically fallacious. The exposure of a contradiction in a particular argument, therefore, was symptomatic of the intrinsic inability of dialectic to provide even probable proofs. See Sextus, *Outlines* II, 236-259 (quoted in Hamblin, 1970, pp. 95-97). Later Hamblin discusses Sextus' sceptical position on equivocal terms and examines the consequences of

reaching an apparently insoluable contradiction within a syllogistic argument. He says, 'One reaction might be to label the inference a "paradox" and regard it as a "difficulty" for the logical system within which it is most conveniently analysed, but this would concede the *a posteriori* nature of logical investigation. It is difficult to conceive of any other reasonable reaction apart from simple suspense of judgement' (p. 299). These two reactions correspond to the analytical responses of Aristotle, and the scholastics considering their *sophismata*, and to Sextus' sceptical response which employs dialectic merely to demonstrate its failures, and which leads ultimately to suspension of judgement (*epoche*).

[63] Diogenes, *Lives*, IX, 72

[64] Isocrates, *Helen*, 14-15

[65] See *Rhetoric* 1367b35-1368a7; and Quintilian, *Institutio*, III, vii, 6.

[66] For more on the relation between the *thesis*, equity and the letter of the law, see Trimpi, 1974, pp. 37-40.

[67] Isocrates, *Helen*, 8-9. In his *Laus Calvitii*, Synesius disagrees with Isocrates, maintaining with Favorinus (the second-century author of *The Praise of the Fever Quartaine*, that the commendation of normally despised subjects such as baldness indicates an ability to commend normally preferred subjects. 'If he [Dion] had undertaken to commend baldnesse, as he hath attempted the contrarie, he had (no doubt) gotten him selfe greater credite, and purchased more praise. For, if so be that in a trifling thing, he be so well furnished, what shall a man thinke of him, if he had a weightie matter in handling'. See Synesius, 1579, sig. bii.

[68] Isocrates, *Helen*, 10

[69] Ibid., 14

[70] Ibid., 13

[71] Plato observed in the *Phaedrus* that the sophistical mock encomiasts who praise 'evil as being really good' are far more dangerous than the innocent paradoxical encomiast who praises a 'miserable donkey as being really a horse'. See *Phaedrus* 260c. This distinction between the 'mock' and 'paradoxical' encomiast is the invention of this study, and is not observed in any of the other studies which we have consulted. It is drawn to emphasize that the the term 'paradoxical' could refer to a serious process that was not contrary to reason, while the term 'mock' seems to signify a critique of that process.

[72] Erasmus, 1979, pp. 2-3. Isocrates responded to Polycrates' apology for Busirus with his own apology for Busirus. The *Busirus*, like the *Helen*, sought to use the genuinely virtuous qualities, overlooked by those responsible for Busirus' infamy, as the material upon which he would base his apology. Like his criticism of the impropriety of Gorgias defense ('apology' in Greek), Isocrates claims that Polycrates has failed in deploying the techniques of encomium's sister genre, eulogy, in his defense of Busirus. These techniques, as he illustrates, celebrate the nobility of Busirus' lineage as well as of his city, in an attempt to cast the accused villain in a more favorable light. Though the *Busirus* is unlike the *Helen* in its explicit attempt to make a speech in defense, Isocrates seems to consider the distinguishing feature of a speech in defense merely to be a response to an accusation of a crime (see *Helen* 15). As he says in the *Busirus*, he will 'show out of what elements [Polycrates] ought to have composed the eulogy and the speech in defense ['apology' in Greek]' (*Busirus* 9). What distinguishes Isocrates' speech as an apology is its explicit response to the accusations of those who have defamed Busirus. This response, as he says, may utilize the techniques of eulogy, but is not properly an encomium because its primary objective is the exoneration, and not the praise, of the subject. There is no evidence, however, that Isocrates was anticipating the forensic *controversia* which would be declaimed in the Roman schools of rhetoric, nor that he recognized an underlying philosophical *thesis* to be considered behind the circumstantial details of Busirus' reputed crimes.

[73] In the voice of Folly, Erasmus again mentions his venerable foolish predecessors. See Erasmus, 1979, p. 12.

[74] Ibid., p. 2

[75] Thomas O. Sloane has recognized the confusion that a text which describes itself using terms more often distinguished than united may arouse. See Sloane, 1985, p. 69. Joel B. Altman suggests that Erasmus has combined the *prosopopoeia* and *laus* decribed by Aphthonius in the *Progymnasmata*. His reading is plausible but restricts the rhetorical parameters of the *Praise* artificially and without consideration of Erasmus' explicit confessions of its rhetorical heterogeneity and unorthodoxy. His claim that Erasmus 'is actually posing the speculative *thesis* "What is folly?"' ignores the conspicuous

omission of Cicero's *theses*, the *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, from his list of models. See Altman, 1978, pp. 53-54. On this point, see also H. K. Miller, 1956, p. 155.

[76] In his *Arte or Crafte of Rhetoryke* (1530), Leonard Cox used Erasmus as an example when he urged the necessity of such disclaimers in the prefatory statements of paradoxical encomia. 'Here must we take good hede that yf we take vpon vs to praise any thynge that is no praise worthy that muste we vse insinuacyon and excuse the turpitude either by examples or by argumentes as Erasmus dothe in his epistle prefixed afore his oracyon made to the prayse of folysshnes.' Quoted in H. K. Miller, 1956, p. 153.

[77] See H. M. Adams, 1967, entries 1744, 1746, 1747, 1759, 1776. Editions of Erasmus' *Paradoxa Stoicorum* were published in 1528, 1533, 1538, 1556, 1578 and 1584.

[78] See Erasmus, 1979, pp. 3-4, 142-148.

[79] For a discussion of *Lenten Stuffe* and its function as a paradoxical encomium, see Cuvelier, 1982, pp. 181-194.

[80] Nashe, 1910, v. 3, p. 176. See also Nashe, 1910, v. 3, pp. 388-395 for an explanation of possible sources for Nashe's list. It goes without saying that we are contesting McKerrow's undefended claim that 'we need not...attach much importance to Nashe's calling these authors "philosophers"' (p. 390).

[81] Ibid., v. 3, p. 178. In his fifty-ninth sonnet, Shakespeare also invokes the ancient paradoxical encomiasts as justification for his praise. See *Sonnet* 59, ll. 13-14.

[82] In the *De Partitione Oratoria*, Cicero says that epideictic speeches provide the most abundant opportunities for 'copious' rhetoric. See *De Partitione Oratoria* 20, 69 (quoted in Vickers 1988, p. 57). Vickers' discussion of the classical prescriptions for epideictic oratory usefully emphasize both its serious ethical purpose and its principally rhetorical character. See Vickers 1988, pp. 54-62. For a useful overview of the tradition of paradoxical encomia from Homer to the sixteenth century, see Pease, 1926, pp. 27-42. It should be noted, however, that Pease makes no attempt to distinguish paradoxical encomia from the defense of uncommon opinion, and even goes so far as to suggest that the *Paradoxa Stoicorum* should not be called paradoxical. He describes it as 'philosophic and consolatory' as opposed to the 'sophistic and paradoxical' character of paradoxical encomia (p. 39). Moreover, he twice seems to suggest, though without confidence, that the paradoxical encomium bears some relation to forensic (*controversiae*) and deliberative (*suasoriae*) oratory (pp. 34, 38). Pease's confusion over the generic dictinctions between the paradox and the paradoxical encomium is characteristic of critical assessments of Donne's *Paradoxes* and *Biathanatos*, as well as of his 'paradoxical'poems. H. K. Miller has claimed that Donne's 'argument "That by Discord things increase" [is] really [an] encomi[um] of...discord' (p. 159). He also claims in the same sentence that Donne's 'Defence of Womens Inconstancy' is an encomium. Despite his acknowledgement of Isocrates' insistance on the distinction between the techniques of encomia and defense, Miller continues to discuss paradoxical *theses* as types of paradoxical encomia. Later, however, he states that in the mock defense 'there is some overlapping with the encomium, but in the interests of clarity of definition, the defense should be taken as strategically and rhetorically ordered in a different frame' (p. 167). See H. K. Miller, 1956, pp. 145-178. For similar confusion on this issue, see Roston, 1974, pp. 74-75; and Baumlin, 1991, pp. 254-256, 275-278.

[83] Synesius (c. 370-c. 414) was a philosopher and bishop of Ptolemais.

[84] Erasmus, 1998, p. 117. The term 'declamation' properly indicates an educational exercise to be practiced by an, as yet, unaccomplished orator. The term *declamare* was the Latin term used to translate the Greek *meletai*, which simply means practice or exercise. To declaim, therefore, was a practice particularly valuable to the young, though older orators might make use of such exercise to keep their rhetorical skills sharp, as the elder Seneca, in the preface to his *Controversiae*, says Cicero had. See Seneca, *Controversiae*, I, preface 12. According to S. F. Bonner, the term *declamatio* first appears in the anonymous treatise, *Ad Herennium* (86-82 B.C.), and was used specifically to indicate an exercise in delivery (*pronuntiatio*). He is careful, however, to acknowledge the difficulty in assigning an exact Greek source for *declamare*, and cites other works that argue for different etymylogical derivations. Nevertheless, all of the possible Greek sources denote some type of training. See Bonner, 1949, p. 20-22; Marrou, 1964, p. 277; and Bowen, 1972a, pp. 249-256. As we will see, the themes of the *controversiae* and *suasoriae* practiced in the Roman schools of declamation as exercises in forensic and deliberative oratory respectively were considered by Quintilian to be too trifling to provide much more than entertainment for the students they were supposed to prepare for the law-court and the assembly. Erasmus makes his reference to these disparaging classical appraisals clear by introducing his list of

classical precedents with a reminder and disclaimer that the work to follow is a 'little declamation' (*declamatiuncula*), which approves of the 'levity <and playfulness> of [its] subject matter' (*argumenti*). For more on Erasmus' approval of fun in rhetorical exercises, see Cave, 1979, pp. 21-22. Despite his appreciation of its recreational value, Erasmus took part in the revival of the pedagogical use of declamation. He prepared an edition of Seneca in 1515 and a revision in 1529, both of which included the *Controversiae*. In his introduction, he said of the *Controversiae*, 'Of all the great works of Seneca none, in my opinion, would be more important for scholarship to exist in its entirety than the books of declamations which the Epitome we have declares to have been many. For it would have contributed very considerably both to invention and judgement'. Translated by Neil Rhodes in Rhodes, 2000.

[85] Erasmus, 1998, p. 120. Erasmus uses the term *adoxa* to refer to these insignificant subjects. As Anthony Stanley Pease has noted, *adoxa*, were normally associated with the genre of *laudatio*, but were also valued as sophistic exercises in arguing both sides of a question. In a note, he compares them to the forensic equivalent of *suasoriae*, 'the controversiae of the schools. (p. 31, n. 1). See Pease, 1926, pp. 27-42.

[86] Erasmus also likens the benefits of his trivial treatment of marriage to the 'scholastic dispute that goes by the name *obligatoria*.' These academic exercises, he explains, are also designed to give the student practice in arguing *pro* and *contra*. What unites them with Erasmus' declamation is their insincere treatment of serious subjects. Erasmus says that despite the fact that in *obligatoria* 'examples are sometimes taken from sacred writings', their pedagogical purpose permits 'many false things' and 'even blasphemous' things to be said. See Erasmus, 1998, p. 120. *Obligatoria* were recorded as an academic exercise by William of Sherwood in his *De Obligationibus*. These disputations required a student to provide a valid syllogistic defense for a *thesis* (*positum*) which was generally believed to be false, such as 'Socrates is black'. The student would be required to construct his defense against the objections of an opposing disputant. The serious purpose of the exercise, as Erasmus observed, was to provide training in dialectical argument by requiring the disputants to focus on valid modes of inference and the fallacies which could infect their argumentation. It is significant that the propositions advanced in *obligatoria* were called *theses* because it establishes them as the dialectical equivalent of the rhetorical derivatives of the *thesis*, *controversiae* and *suasoriae*. What distinguishes them from the type of *theses* defended in the *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, however, is the triviality of their subjects. Their method, as with all medieval and sixteenth-century disputations, continues to be syllogistic, but their objective, unlike the *theses* discussed by Aristotle and Cicero, is never genuinely philosophically speculative. For an overview of the scholastic tradition of *obligatoria*, its relation to the ancient tradition of the *thesis* and the mechanics of its methods of argumentation, see Hamblin, 1970, pp. 123-134, 253-282.

[87] Erasmus, 1998, p. 120

[88] Ibid., p. 114

[89] For more on Erasmus' disregard for rhetorical categories, see Cave, 1979, p. 22.

[90] Donne, 1980, p. 20, ll. 31-32

[91] *Topics* (Aristotle) 105b30-31

[92] Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola appeared to have access to a Greek version of the *Outlines* when he published the *Examen Vanitatis Doctrinae Gentium* (1520). See Popkin, 1960, p. 20, and Schmitt, 1964, pp. 105-132, esp. 112-115.

[93] Erasmus' translation of Galen's *Contra Academicos* was also included with Hervet's 1569 edition of Sextus. On Hervet's view that the principles of Pyrrhonsim detailed in Sextus' works demonstrated the primacy of faith over reason, see Popkin, 1960, p. 34. In addition to Hervet's Latin translation, there appears to have been an English translation made in 1590 or 1591 to which Nashe refers. See Popkin, 1960, pp. 19, 253, n. 10; and Nashe, 1910, v. 3, p. 254ff and 332; v. 4, pp. 428-429; and v. 5, pp. 120, 122.

[94] *Paradoxa* 5

[95] *Academica* I, 22; I, 43. See also *De Finibus* IV, 20; IV, 60; V, 74.

[96] Rosalie Colie claims that the unelaborated Stoic paradoxes were actually accepted by the common opinion, and that Cicero was satirizing the vice of his day in the *Paradoxa Stoicorum* by presenting them as if they needed proof. This mistaken view reflects her deeper misunderstanding of the relation between Cicero's Academic scepticism and Stoic dialectic. Cicero showed how the Stoic tenets might be made amenable to the common opinion with his rhetorical elaboration, but in their bare form, they appear as paradoxical as Socrates' equation of knowledge and virtue in the *Gorgias*. See Colie, 1966, pp. 11, 14,

107. In the wake of Erasmus' attack on the rhetorical excesses of imitators of Ciceronian eloquence in *Ciceronianus* (1528), the sixteenth-century Italian humanist, Marcantonius Majoragius, attacked what he perceived to be the rhetorical excesses of the *Paradoxa Stoicorum* in his *Antiparadoxon* (1546). In the letter dedicatory to Erasmus, Majoragius explains that 'most men have venerated [Cicero's *Paradoxa*] as sacrosanct and...particularly in agreement with our religion'. His neoplatonic principles, however, lead him to argue that Cicero has obscured his fallacious logic with ambiguous rhetorical devices, and attributed to reason (with the Stoics themselves) too great a power to discern truth. Needless to say, Majoragius did not think Cicero was being ironic in the *Paradoxa*. Moreover, when he subjects them to dialectical analysis, he claims to expose the fallacies by which the Stoic tenets originally would have appeared paradoxical. For more on Majoragius' *Antiparadoxon* see Breen, 1958, pp. 37-48.

[97] See *Academica* I, 35; II, 16.

[98] Chryssipus studied under Arcesilaus and subsequently abandoned the Academy.

[99] *Prior Analytics* 24b18

[100] For a brief summary of Aristotle's theory of the syllogism, see Kneale and Kneale, 1962, pp. 67-81; and Bochenski, 1951, pp. 25-27.

[101] It should be noted that Aristotle himself considered only syllogisms constructed in any of the four modes of the first figure to be perfect. The modes of his remaining two figures must be proven by deduction from the laws established in the first figure. This deductive procedure functions predominantly according to the methods of conversion detailed in *Prior Analytics* 25a1-b25 and 52b36-53b3. See Bochenski, 1951, pp. 51-54, 62.

[102] Jonathan Barnes has noted that *akatalepton* differed from *epoche* (suspension of belief) in that the former expressed the impossibility of fruitful inquiry, while the latter merely implied an, as yet, unfruitful inquiry. See Barnes, 1990, pp. 8-11.

[103] See Hankinson, 1995, pp. 116ff. See also Sextus, *Outlines* I, 180-185, 235.

[104] For a discussion of Sextus' application of Agrippa's five modes, see Barnes, 1990, esp. pp. 116-120.

[105] Sextus, *Outlines* I, 222

[106] *Paradoxa* 23

[107] For a discussion of the fideist preference for Sextus, see Popkin, 1960, pp, 1-42. See also *Academica* II, 32, 108, 127-128; and Augustine, *Against the Academicians* III, 35.

[108] For a summary of Pico's attack on Aristotle, see Schmitt, 1968. For a discussion of Pico's *Examen Vanitatis* in the context of sixteenth-century scepticism, see Popkin, 1960, pp. 20-21.

[109] Charles B. Schmitt has observed that Pierre Gassendi's *Exercitationes paradoxicae adversus Aristoteleos* (1624) followed the sceptical method of Pico's *Examen Vanitatis*. See Schmitt, 1964, pp. 105-132, esp. 127-130.

[110] Quoted in Schmitt, 1968, pp. 113-114

[111] For a discussion of Sextus' view of the reciprocal mode, see Barnes, 1990, pp. 58-89. For a discussion of Sextus' objections to the question-begging procedure of syllogistic in relation to John Stuart Mill's observation of the inductive/empirical basis of univeral propositions, see Hamblin, 1970, pp. 224-252.

[112] On Pico's sceptical critique of the senses, see Schmitt, 1964, pp. 105-132, esp. 108-113.

[113] Sextus, *Outlines* I, 179

[114] Sextus, *Outlines* II, 153. Sextus is referring here specifically to the issue of 'connectedness' in the formal structure of a syllogistic argument, that is, whether the premises (conditionals) are coherently connected with respect to the possible meanings of their three terms. If they cannot be shown to be coherently connected, which Sextus claims is always the case in conclusive arguments (e.g. *Outlines* II, 145), then their conclusions do not follow. It should be noted that Sextus is attacking specifically the Stoic conditional arguments, which they believed constituted the self-evident underlying structures of valid logical inference. They differ from Aristotle's organization of his syllogistic principles in that they merely seek to establish necessary relations between the unspecified terms of conditional arguments such as the five unprovables. Aristotle's syllogistic focuses on the substantial relation (i.e. *genus* and *species*) between the three terms of his syllogisms, and is, therefore, concerned principally with issues of predication. The Stoics' analysis of conditional statements in the context of their unprovables constitutes a more fundamental logical activity, and one which informs the inferential rules implicit in Aristotle's own logical formulations. For more on the Stoic conditionals and their relation to Aristotle's syllogistic, see Mates, 1961, pp. 54-57; and Kneale and Kneale, 1962, pp. 158-176, esp. 175.

[115] As we will see later in this study, Donne maintains the existence of such first principles in *Biathanatos*, and therefore, claims a foundation in truth for the defense he provides for suicide. Donne's position avoids the dogmatism attacked by Sextus, however, by persistently qualifying itself in acknowledgement of sceptical misgivings concerning the certainty of conclusions derived by 'our discourse' from first principles. It is also worth noting that Jonathan Barnes has provided responses to Sextus'appeal to infinite regress as a refutation of the proofs of the dogmatists. These responses attempt to show that infinite regressions do not necessarily preclude the possibility of proof. He is careful, however, to acknowledge that the common-sense appeal of the sceptical mode of infinite regress against proofs was likely to be Sextus' intention. See Barnes, 1990, pp. 44-57.

[116] For a summary of the Stoic notion of the *lekton*, see Bochenski, 1951, pp. 84-86; Mates, 1961, pp. 11-26; Kneale and Kneale, 1962, pp. 138-158; and Long, 1996, pp. 75-113.

[117] Sextus, *Outlines* II, 104-106

[118] Ibid., 96, 134. See also Diogenes, *Lives*, VII, 79-81.

[119] Sextus, *Outlines* II, 156. For a description of the five Stoic unprovables, see Mates, 1961, 67-74; Bochenski, 1951, pp. 97-99; and Kneale and Kneale, 1962, pp. 158-176.

[120] See Sextus, *Outlines* II, 106 and *Against the Mathematicians* VIII, 260-261. I. M. Bochenski has noted that 'the argument [for the Stoics] must have been conceived as a system of [*lekta*].' See Bochenski, 1951, p. 93. Catherine Atherton confirms this view citing Diogenes, *Lives*, VII, 63 and Sextus, *Outlines* II, 107. See Atherton, 1993, p. 413.

[121] See Sextus, *Outlines* II, 157.

[122] See *Against the Mathematicians* VIII, 262-264. For a brief account of the relation between the *lekton* and the proposition in Stoic logic, see Mates, 1961, pp. 27-33. William and Martha Kneale have noted Sextus' sceptical objection, in *Against the Mathematicians* VIII, 262-264, to the Stoic's attempt to demonstrate the truth of propositional *lekta* through the conjunction of other propositions. See Kneale and Kneale, 1962, p. 142.

[123] Sextus, *Against the Mathematicians* VIII, 223 (cited in Mates, 1961, p. 67)

[124] *Prior Analytics* 24b23-4, 29a30-1

[125] *Topics* (Cicero) 57. Cicero gives the Greek *dialectice* for dialectic. For further discussion of this passage, see Mates, 1961, pp. 67-68. See also *Topics* (Cicero) 55 where the rhetorical value of the unprovables is considered; Cicero, following Aristotle on the rhetorical syllogism (*Rhetoric* 1355a4-18), classes them under the heading 'enthymeme'. Boethius, following Aristotle, also distinguishes dialectic's use of syllogism and rhetoric's use of enthymemes. See Boethius, *De Differentiis Topicis*, IV. '*Item dialectica perfectis utitur syllogismis. Rhetorica enthymematum brevitate contenta est.*'

[126] It is interesting to note that the five unprovables of the Stoics were, according to Benson Mates, 'incorporated into the Peripatetic logic under the title "theory of the hypothetical syllogism".' See Mates, 1961, p. 69.

[127] *Posterior Analytics* 100b3-5. See also *De Anima* 432a6-7. 'Hence no one can learn or understand anything in the absence of sense.'

[128] *Posterior Analytics* 99b35-100a2. For discussion of the relation between Aristotle and the Stoics on the relation of signs and real objects, see Long, 1996, pp. 79-82. For discussion of the difference between Aristotelian and Stoic axioms and their relation *lekta*, see Bochenski, 1951, p. 93; and Kneale and Kneale, 1962, pp. 152-153.

[129] The problem of applying information regarding the external world, which has been gathered empirically through the senses, in both the minor premise of a deductive argument as a particular proposition and in the induction of universal propositions, remains current in discussions of scepticism today. See for example, Stine, 1976, pp. 249-261; Vogel, 1993, pp. 235-250; and Falvey and Owens, 1994, pp. 107-137.

[130] See *De Anima* 428a1ff.

[131] *Academica* II, 18. In his criticism of the sceptical tactics of the New Academy, Lucullus complains that the class of arguments called *sorites*, which exploit the ambiguous nature of relative terms such as 'few' and 'much', is 'erroneous' and 'captious'. See *Academica* II, 49-50. In defense of the Stoic position, Lucullus argues that such arguments deny our ability to discern the absolute distinctions between objects of perceptions, and thus lead to the elimination of any criteria for judging even the relative values of external objects. To avoid such a consequence, the Stoics assert the relibility of the *lekton*. Lisa Jardine has discussed Lorenzo Valla's response to Lucullus' complaints about the *sorites* in

the *Academica*. See Jardine, 1977, pp. 143-164. The problem of the *sorites* continues to concern logicians today. For a recent discussion of the problem, see Raffman, 1994, pp. 41-74. For an overview of the problem, an account of various logicians' attempts at a solution and a guide to further reading on the subject, see Read, 1995, pp. 172-202.

[132] Diogenes, *Lives*, VII, 45

[133] Ibid., 50. Epicurus also asserted that 'every presentation is of a real object and is of the same kind as is the object which excites the sensation'. See Sextus, *Against the Mathematicians* VIII, 63. For a discussion of the problematic relationship between the *lekton* and *phantasia*, see Atherton, 1993, pp. 223-267. For a summary of the Stoic understanding of the relation between *phantasia* and cognitive assent, see Sandbach, 1996, pp. 9-21.

[134] For a discussion of Sextus' critique of the Stoic theory of *phantasia* in *Against the Mathematicians* VII 242-246, see Shields, 1993, pp. 325-347.

[135] Sextus, *Outlines* II, 156. On the importance of the *lekton* for the grounding of Stoic dialectic and ethics, see Atherton, 1993, pp. 40-55. For more on Sextus' objections to Stoic dialectic, see Atherton, 1993, pp. 424-450; and Hamblin, 1970, pp. 91-97.

[136] *Brutus* 153

[137] See *Gorgias*, 447c5-8; and Wardy, 1996, p. 58.

[138] Gorgias, *Encomium*, 15

[139] Ibid., 16

[140] Ibid., 17

[141] Ibid., 13

[142] Ibid., 13

[143] Ibid., 13

[144] *Melissus, Xenophanes, and Gorgias* 980b18-20

[145] Ibid., 980b20-21

[146] Sextus, *Against the Mathematicians*, VII, 87

[147] For a brief discussion of the function of *epoche* in Pyrrhonist scepticism, see Barnes, 1990, pp. 8-11.

[148] Donne jokingly refers to the difference between *veri simile* and 'undenyable truth' in his eighteenth problem, 'Why doe Women delight so much in Feathers?' (ll. 3-4). Michael W. Price has observed that Donne's creation of likenesses of truth in his *Paradoxes and Problems* is intended to lead his reader to an awareness of their differences. See Price, 1995, pp. 149-184, esp. 166ff. For a discussion of Gorgias' '*paradoxologia*' in his *Encomium of Helen, On What is Not*, and Plato's *Gorgias*, see Wardy, 1996, pp. 20-93.

[149] M. T. Jones-Davies fails to recognize Cicero's probabilist scepticism in her attempt to demonstrate Sextus' influence on sixteenth-century paradox, and as a result makes all paradoxical statements reflect a Pyrrhonist critique of knowledge. See Jones -Davies, 1994, pp. 99-109. In an earlier essay, Jones-Davies stressed the use of the paradox as prescribed by Cicero in the *Paradoxa Stoicorum* in the quest for truth, but there, she failed to distinguish the Ciceronian and Aristotelian probabilism which informed the inquisitive nature of the academic and scholastic disputation of paradoxes (*theses*), and the neoplatonic and Augustinian fideism which asserted that faith in the truth of the Christian paradoxes was assisted by an attempt to perceive the allegorical correspondence between the universal intelligibles and the particular sensibles that particpate in them. As a result of this failure, Donne's paradoxes continue to be associated with Lando's *Paradossi* and Montaigne's *Essays*. See Jones-Davies, 1982, pp. 105-123.

[150] *Gorgias* 458a

[151] See ibid., 479b-c.

[152] Ibid., 486a-b

[153] See *De Oratore* III, 60, 70-72.

[154] *Gorgias* 449b. See also *Gorgias* 462a, 475d. Robert Wardy details the evidence from the original Greek that this juxtaposition was intentional. My attention to this point and its consequences owes much to his analysis. See Wardy, 1996, p. 57.

[155] *Gorgias* 449d

[156] *Paradoxa* 4

[157] Ibid., 2-3. In Petrus Marsi's commentary in his 1499 edition of the *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, he explains that Cicero's intention was to make these interrogatory pin-pricks appear '*probabile*' and '*credibile*' by rhetorical elaboration. See also Wardy, 1996, p. 60.

[158] *Gorgias* 473e. We recall Aristotle's advice in the *Sophistical Refutations* 172 b30-31 to 'question [one's interlocutor] as to some point wherein their [school of philosophy] doctrine is paradoxical to most people'.

[159] *Gorgias* 481b-c

[160] See ibid., 475e-476a, 482a-c.

[161] See *Academica* I, 22; I, 43; and *De Finibus* IV, 20; IV, 60; V, 74.

[162] For more instances of the Stoic paradoxicality of Socrates' ethics see Shorey, 1978, pp. 7-34. Socrates is traditionally thought to have defended three distinct ethical paradoxes; first, that 'no man desires evil', second, that 'no man who (knows or) believes that an action is evil does it willingly-on the contrary, all that the actions that a man does willingly he does with a view to achieving some good', and third, that 'it is better to suffer injustice at the hands of others that to do unjust acts oneself'. For a discussion of the first of these paradoxes (and for the source of the above definitions of them) with regard to its formulation in *Gorgias* and *Meno*, see Nakhnikian, 1973, pp. 1-17.

[163] *Gorgias* 508e-509a

[164] In his attempt to show that Socratic dialectic was a vehicle for Platonic idealism, Stanley Fish claims that Plato intentionally utilized ambiguous language so that his readers/listeners would realize that discourse (rhetorical and dialectical alike) was unable to convey the true nature of reality. He goes on to argue that Augustine adopted Plato's 'self-consuming' dialectical strategy as a part of his sign theory, in order to persuade his readers/listeners 'to a vision in which all points are one' (p. 39). Not only does Fish overlook Socrates' commitment to the power of dialectic to persuade through bare, but valid inferences, he also fails to observe, as we will later, Augustine's use of Stoic unprovables as arguments against scepticism in *Against the Academicians*. Finally, Fish mistakenly places Donne in this tradition. See Fish, 1972, pp. 1-21 on Plato, 21-43 on Augustine, and 43-77 on Donne. Robert Wardy has shown that Gorgias' *On What is Not* may have served the 'self-consuming' function that Fish imagined Socratic dialectic was designed to serve, but of course, Fish would not have wanted to argue that Gorgias was a model for Augustine or for Donne. See Wardy, 1996, pp. 21-24. Brian Vickers discussion of Plato's criticisms of the sophictical rhetoric provides a more representative and accurate account of the philosophical applications of Socratic dialectic. See Vickers, 1988, pp. 83-147, esp. 133ff. Jonathan Culler has discussed Fish's theory of the reader's role in the generation and corruption of the meaning of a text in the context of the principles of deconstruction from which it is derived. He conludes, as we have, that Fish's lack of familiarity with the traditions of literary interpretation with which he is dealing is ultimately responsible for the confusion which arises when his theory is applied. Culler says, 'It is too bad that a man who enjoins us to think about reading should have so vague an idea of the nature of the conventions by which he himself is reading' (p. 130). See Culler, 1981, pp. 119-131.

[165] Quintilian had noted that Socratic dialectic employs rhetorical amplification in the service of clarity. See Quintilian, *Institutio* V, xiv, 28-29.

[166] For a discussion of the formation of the concept of right reason according to the Stoic/Socratic paradox that knowledge is virtue, see Hoopes, 1962, pp. 1-45.

[167] Erasmus, 1979, pp. 130-131

[168] Ibid., p. 133

[169] Ibid., p. 132

[170] T. W. Baldwin has observed that Isocrates' complaint against sophistical abuses, *Contra Sophistis*, was used as a standard Greek text in sixteenth-century grammar schools. See Baldwin, 1944, v. 1, p. 400; v. 2, p. 650.

[171] Thomas Wilson referred to Gorgias' 'praisyng unrighteousnes' in Plato's *Gorgias*. See Wilson, 1982, p. 48. Neil Rhodes has noted Gosson's animosity to the pretenses of Gorgianic rhetoric in his *School of Abuse* (1579). See Rhodes, 1992, p. 19.

[172] Gosson, 1579, sig. G4

[173] Donne, 1980, p. 12, ll. 28-33

[174] See Gorgias, *Encomium*, 19. James Biester has examined Gorgias' characterization of the force of language in his defense of Helen in relation to the production of wonder in Donne's obscure, but 'masculine' use of language. He makes no mention of Donne's sixth paradox, however. See Biester, 1997, pp. 109-116.

[175] Donne, 1980, p. 12, ll. 38-39. In his discussion of Gorgias' seminal characterization of the persuasive force of rhetoric, Neil Rhodes emphasizes the concept of the physically potent word, which sixteeenth-

century England inherited through their reading of Plato's and Isocrates' accounts of Gorgianic rhetoric. See Rhodes, 1992, pp. 8-19.

[176] For a reading of Donne's Elegy VII in light of the tradition of sophistry recorded by Isocrates and Plato, see Bueler, 1985, pp. 69-85. For a reading of the same poem which concludes that Donne was defending the claims of the sophists against the ability of language to convey truth, see Brodsky, 1982, pp. 829-848.

[177] Donne, 1980, p. 12, ll. 34-38. Even for a critic of reason such as Luther, conviction in the objectivity of the truth was necessary for rectified Christian belief. Writing against the scepticism which he believed was reflected in Erasmus' *De Libero Arbitrio* (1524), Luther argues, 'A Christian ought...to be certain of what he affirms, or else he is not a Christian...Anathema to the Christian who will not be certain of what he is supposed to believe, and who does not comprehend it. How can he believe that which he doubts'. Quoted in Popkin, 1960, pp. 6-7. Luther's *De Servo Arbitrio* (1525) was written as a response to Erasmus' *De Libero*. Melanchthon, Luther's protégé in Wittenberg, had taken a slightly milder view in a letter to Erasmus. There he claimed that, though certainty is necessary on some points of doctrine, 'in extrascriptural disputes', the 'Academic style' which acknowledges doubt is acceptable. Quoted in Schmitt, 1972, p. 60.

[178] See Plutarch, 'The Education of Children,' 6 in the *Moralia*.

[179] Lyly, 1973, p. 270

[180] Ibid., p. 270. Lyly did not get it quite right. It was Polus who asked Socrates about the king of Persia, not Gorgias. See *Gorgias* 470e.

[181] Donne, 1980, p. 13, ll. 60-61. As we will see below, the author of *The Mirrour of Madnes* (which was supposed to have been translated by the English translator of Cornelius Agrippa's *Vanity of the Arts and Sciences*, James Sandford) produced a similar conclusion regarding the nothingness of virtue utilizing similarly fallacious syllogistic argumentation.

[182] In a 1624 sermon, Donne again discusses the relative value of the goods of the soul and of fortune. See Donne, 1953, VI, p. 234. Coleridge took an interest in his discussion in this sermon, and expressed his dissatisfaction with Donne's terminological distinctions. See Brinkley, 1955, p. 195.

[183] For a typically fanciful account of the relation between Donne's, Erasmus' and Lyly's use of logic and rhetoric, see Docherty, 1987, pp. 85-104.

[184] Lyly, 1973, p. 180

[185] Joan Webber has considered Donne's antithetical prose style in the context of the emergence of the Senecan *stile coupè* in the early seventeenth century. Though she concludes that Donne's style was Senecan, she does not attempt to co-ordinate Donne's supposed rhetorical allegiance to Seneca with those of his philosophical and theological views which may have placed him at odds with other aspects of Seneca's Stoicism. This potential incompatibility cannot be investigated here, but should be noted as a qualification of Webber's suggestion of Donne's Stoicism. See Webber, 1963, pp. 29-70. D. C. Allen has argued that the general preference for the Senecan style was a consequence of a desire to recreate the confidence of Seneca's didactic moralism, though he expresses his doubts about Donne's philosophical affinities with other Senecans (p. 171). See Allen, 1948, pp. 167-175. Winfred Crombie has suggested that Donne's apparent Senecan style may better be understood in terms of 'semantic relational features' which reflect a purely stylistic preference (p. 123). See Crombie, 1984, pp. 123-138. In a study of Donne's use of the couplet, Arnold Stein reached conclusions similar to Webber's. See Stein, 1942, pp. 676-696. Louis I. Bredvold also concluded Donne's Senecanism after an analysis of the emergence of English classicism (pp. 263-264). See Bredvold, 1950, pp. 253-268. Morris Croll locates the seventeenth-century preference for the Senecan style not in a preference for Seneca, *per se*, but in a desire to avoid the confusion which elaborate Ciceronian rhetorical compositions could cause. Though Croll recognizes common stylistic features which both Ciceronians and Anti-Ciceronians shared, he argues that Anti-Ciceronians such as Bacon, Montaigne and Justus Lipsius followed Plato (in the *Gorgias*) in an attempt 'to make and legalize a breach between oratory and philosophy' (p. 79). See Croll, 1966), pp. 45-101. George Williamson provides the most balanced assessment of the problem of the relation between stylistic and philosophical preferences when he observes that the same rhetorical figures could be used by writers as different as Ascham and Lyly to quite different ends (p. 86). See Williamson, 1951.

[186] Lyly, 1973, p. 181

[187] Ibid., p. 196

[188] Ibid., p. 204

[189] Ibid., pp. 233, 226

[190] Ibid., p. 226

[191] Ibid., p. 238

[192] For an analysis of the manipulation of contrary senses of terms (with a brief mention of the *Paradoxa Stoicorum*) in Beaumont and Fletcher's *A King and No King* (1611), see Neill, 1981, pp. 319-332. Neill, himself, conflates the various senses in which the term paradox would have been used by paradoxists of various epistemological positions (e.g. Montaigne, Lando and Donne). For a similar discussion of the manipulation of opposites in metaphysical imagery, see Lepage, 1984, pp. 621-644.

[193] In his analysis of the influence of Gorgianic scepticism on Donne's thought, James S. Baumlin will not accept that Donne's 'alarums to truth' were constructed to challenge the reader to discriminate the ambiguous terms which invalidate his paradoxical arguments with an eye ultimately to confirming the truth of the orthodox position. Despite Donne's, as well as the bulk of sixteenth-century educators, consistent recommendation of the defense of paradoxical *theses* as a means to clarify the truth of a contested issue, Baumlin persists in making Donne a disciple of Gorgias, and a libertine, who eventually resorts to a mystical epistemology to confirm the truths which his supposed Pyrrhonist critique of dialectic denies. See Baumlin, 1991, pp. 230-262.

[194] Donne, 1980, pp. 19-20, ll. 12-19. See *On Generation and Corruption* 318a24-25, 331b26-35. See also Donne, 1980, p. 87 for citation of Henrie Cuffe's use of this Aristotelian idea in his *Differences of the Ages of Mans Life* (1607).

[195] Donne expresses this commonplace idea in his seventh paradox, 'That good is more common than evill'. He says, 'And these three things [fairness, goodness, profitableness] I thinke embrace all things but ther utter contraryes'. See Donne, 1980, p. 15, ll. 31-32.

[196] Isocrates, *Panathenaicus* 224-226. For a representation of the common opinion of discord to which Isocrates is referring, see Plato, *Sophist* 228a. 'Do you not conceive discord to be a dissolution of kindred elements, originating in some disagreement?...And is deformity anything but the want of measure, which is always unsightly?' See also *Republic* 462a-e.

[197] Isocrates, *Panathenaicus* 226

[198] Ibid., 240-241. The Loeb translator, George Norlin, believes that this statement is ironical (p. 520, n. a), but Robert Wardy argues that Isocrates is genuinely advocating the use of 'wholesome "falsehood"' in philosophical discourses because it '"benefits and pleases..." the listeners'. See Wardy, 1996, p. 131.

[199] See Lyly, 1973, pp. 190, 223.

[200] It is important that we note these similar issues here because it modifies the view that the influence of Ortensio Lando's *Paradossi* can be seen in the similar subjects treated in Donne's *Paradoxes*. This view has been defended by John Carey and Helen Peters, and is ultimately derived from Brian Vicker's tentative claims for Lando's influence on Shakespeare. See Vickers, 1968, pp. 305-314. Because this study will show that the epistemological principles which informed Donne's *Paradoxes* were distinct from those which informed Lando's *Paradossi*, the assumption that their mutual treatment of classical commonplaces known to any educated person in the sixteenth-century is more misleading than informative. For Carey's view that Donne's *Paradoxes* follow in Lando's tradition, and anticipate a fideist response to the sceptical critique, which Donne somehow reconciles with his scholastic methods of reasoning, see Carey, 1981, pp. 217-246, esp. 221-222. For Peters' less detailed opinion, see the general introduction of Donne, 1980, pp. xvi-xxvi, esp. xxii-xxiii. Rosalie Colie has also mistakenly credited Lando with introducing the subjects of sixteenth-century paradoxes, and more confidently than Vickers, suggests that they are recognizable in the paradoxes of *King Lear*. See Colie, 1966, pp. 461-481.

[201] See *On Youth, Old Age Life and Death, and Respiration* 478b31-32.

[202] Donne, 1980, p. 2, ll. 29-33

[203] Lyly, 1973, pp. 189, 217; Shakespeare, *Sonnet* 6, ll.1-4. See also *Sonnet* 12, ll. 11-12, *Sonnet* 15, ll. 1-2.

[204] Donne employed a related image of death following the actualization of particular states, such as infancy and youth, in his sermon on his own impending death, *Deaths Duell*. See Donne, 1953, X, p. 234. In his criticisms of popular Roman orators in the preface to the tenth book of the *Controversiae*, the elder Seneca had recorded, disapprovingly, Musa's ingenious defense of the statement of the paradox 'by deaths we live.' For more on the elder Seneca's literary criticisms, see Bonner, 1949, pp. 145-148.

[205] Donne, 1980, p. 13, ll. 47-50

[206] Ibid., p. 3, ll. 21-23

[207] Ibid., p. 13, ll. 50-56

[208] Lyly, 1973, pp. 201-202. Thomas Wilson's *Arte of Rhetorique* (1553), the most popular rhetorical handbook of the sixteenth century, provides another instance of the subject of the gifts of the mind, body and fortune. It is interesting to note that Donne's *thesis* 'That the guifts of the body are better then those of the mind or of Fortune' may be considered a refutation of Wilson's first principle of demonstrative (epideictic) oratory. Wilson says, 'In a mannes life, praise must be parted threfolde. That is to saie, into the giftes of good thynges of the mynde, the body, and of fortune. Now the giftes of the body, and of fortune, are not praise worthy, of their awne nature...Giftes of the mynde, deserve the whole trumpe and sound commendacion above all other'. See Wilson, 1982, p. 43. We should not make the mistake of concluding that Donne's paradox is actually a paradoxical encomium of the body and fortune, however.

[209] Lyly, 1973, p. 213

[210] Greene, 1987, p. 176

[211] Ibid., p. 179

[212] Donne, 1980, p. 13, ll. 52-56; Cicero, *De Officiis* I, 139. In his eighth problem, 'Why are the fayrest falsest', Donne considers the question of the physical beauty of women again, but this time explicitly advances the orthodox view. There he asks, 'Doth the mind so follow the temper of the body that because these [fair women] complections are aptest to change, the mind is therefore so too?' He quickly responds to his question in the negative, not forsaking the opportunity to pun on the word 'false' in the process. 'But sure, it is not in the complection, for those that doe but thinke themselves fayre are presently enclined to this multiplicity of loves, which beeing but fayre in conceipt are false indeed'. See Donne, 1980, p. 30, ll. 10-18. Evelyn M. Simpson and P. N. Siegel fail to ackcnowledge the source of this image in Cicero, and as a result, overlook the relevance of Cicero's treatment of the ability of dialectic to discern the difference between appearance and reality to Donne's paradoxes. Both, not surprisingly, locate the source of the image in 'Renaissance Platonic Idealism'. See Simpson, 1931, pp. 21-49; and Siegel, 1949, pp. 507-511.

[213] Marie-Madeleine Martinet has observed that 'le paradoxe de la représentation' constituted the foundation of all poetic expressions of the union of contrary states ('l'union des contraires dans la vie'). Her analysis of poetic statements of contradiction or contrariety usefully locates the source of these paradoxes of representation in the power of metaphor (or conceit) to resolve the sceptical problem of the correspondence of appearance and reality. She does not, however, distinguish Platonic from Aristotelian responses to the problem of correspondence. See Martinet, 1982, pp. 195-209.

[214] For another view on the relation of Gorgias, Socrates and Cicero to paradox, see MacMillan, 1971, pp. 36-49.

[215] For a reading of Lyly's comedies which focuses on their function as *theses*, but which makes no mention of their affinity with paradoxes, see Altman, 1978, pp. 196-229.

[216] Lyly, 1973, p. 229

[217] See also ibid., pp. 235-236. 'The friendshippe betweene man and man as it is common so is it of course, betweene man and woman, as it is seldome so is it sincere, the one proceedeth of the similitude of manners, ye other of the sinceritie of the heart.'

[218] Donne, 1980, p. 18, ll. 21-29

[219] Ibid, p. 19, ll. 39-41

[220] In the third book of his *De vero falsoque bono* (1441), Lorenzo Valla had praised Cicero's acknowledgement of the ambiguity with which the term '*bonum*' could be used in contrast to Boethius' restrictive, scholastic application of the term. See Marsh, 1980, pp. 63-64.

[221] *Paradoxa* 7

[222] Ibid., 7

[223] Donne, 1980, pp. 18-19, ll. 36-37. See Donne, 'Confined Love' (ll. 18-21), and 'Community'.

[224] *Paradoxa* 9. See also *Gorgias* 492c.

[225] See *Gorgias* 489b-e.

[226] *Paradoxa* 10. Wesley Trimpi has argued that Boccaccio's description of the function of narrative in the *Decameron* corresponds exactly to this statement of the need for rhetorical elaboration in the *Paradoxa*. See Trimpi, 1974, pp. 81-97, esp. 94, n. 112.

[227] Donne, 1980, p. 18, ll. 30-31

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[228] See *De Partitione Oratoria* 74, and *Nicomachean Ethics* 1098b11-15.

Chapter II

The Dialectical Procedure of the Paradoxical *Thesis*

1

The Philosophical *Thesis* and the Rhetorical *Controversia*

We have already observed that the defense of the *thesis*, as discussed by
Aristotle and Isocrates, was a specifically philosophical undertaking, which could
result in the appearance of a paradox. In spite of the sophistical abuses of eristics,
such as Gorgias and Protagoras, which threatened to render the defense of a *thesis*
no more than an exercise in sceptical word-play, Cicero recorded its continued
serious application in the schools of the Roman Republic, and left for posterity an
example of such an application in his *Paradoxa Stoicorum*. Though philosophers
such as the second-century Stoic, Posidonius, complained that it had been degraded
by its use by rhetoricians as a mere exercise in deliberative oratory, the utility of the
thesis as an exercise in both dialectic and rhetoric would continue to be recognized
without interruption throughout late antiquity, the middle ages and into the sixteenth
century.[1] As we mentioned earlier, in the *Topics*, Aristotle defined the *thesis* as:

> a paradoxical belief of some eminent philosopher; e.g. the view that
> contradiction is impossible...or it may be a view contrary to men's usual
> opinions about which we have an argument...That a thesis is a problem, is
> clear; for it follows of necessity that from what has been said that either the
> mass of men disagree with the wise about the thesis, or that the one or the
> other class disagree among themselves, seeing that the thesis is a paradoxical
> belief. Practically all dialectical problems indeed are now called theses.[2]

Apart from suggesting a plausible reason for the appearance of Donne's *Paradoxes*
and *Problems* together in the *Juvenilia* published in 1633, Aristotle's definition of
the *thesis* reveals its fundamental role in dialectic.[3] Throughout his writing,

Aristotle associates the *thesis* with the defense of an uncommon opinion maintaining that the *theses* of philosophers are by their very nature potentially paradoxical. For this reason, the questioner of an advocate of one of these philosophical *theses* should exploit this potential for paradox.

> The business of the questioner is so to develop the argument as to make the answerer utter the most implausible of the necessary consequences of his thesis; while that of the answerer is to make it appear that it is not he who is responsible for the impossibility or paradox, but only his thesis.[4]

The *thesis* as Aristotle understood it constituted the principal subject matter for dispute; and in so far as disputation was the means by which dialectic judged truth, the reduction of a given *thesis* to the status of the paradoxical in disputation was tantamount to demonstrating its falsehood. Aristotle, however, recognized that debates upon *theses* were by their nature contentious and that any demonstration of the paradoxical could be manipulated by a deft disputant to appear to be a demonstration of the probable, and therefore, common, opinion.[5]

The paradox as a defense will continue to be associated by Cicero and Donne with the *thesis*, most conspicuously in Donne's case, in his description of *Biathanatos* as both a paradox and a *thesis*. We must take care, however, not to confuse paradoxes, which, like *theses*, are defended according to the principles of dialectical exposition familiar to both Cicero and Donne, with the exercises in Roman forensic rhetoric called *controversiae*, which were practiced in order to give pupils practice in preparing and delivering a defense before the law court.[6] The *controversia* represented a specific type of declamatory exercise in which a circumstantially complex situation is presented, and the declaimer required to defend a position for or against conviction or acquittal. According to Quintilian, the *controversia*, as well as the closely related *suasoria*, may have begun to be declaimed as early as the fourth century B.C. during the time of Demetrius of Phalerum, the master of Athens from 317-307 B.C., though their specific use as exercises in forensic (*controversiae*) and deliberative (*suasoriae*) rhetoric is not recorded until the elder Seneca wrote his own *Controversiae*, which included

examples of both.[7] Though Seneca claims that *controversiae* had not come into practice by Cicero's time, their equivalent, *causae*, were certainly in use by then.[8] The *causa*, like the *controversia*, required the orator to defend a position in light of specific circumstantial limits such as time, place, person, etc. Cicero himself appears to contradict Seneca's claim that *controversiae* were not practiced in his time and uses the term alternatively with the term *causa*.[9] In this passage, however, Cicero contrasts not one but three specifically rhetorical applications of the *controversia* with the unlimited applications of the *thesis* (*quaestio infinita et quasi proposita 'consultatio' nominatur*), thus indicating that for him a *controversia* did not yet have a purely forensic rhetorical function.[10] Not coincidentally these three rhetorical applications (*lite aut deliberatione aut laudatione*) correspond neatly to those delineated later in the *Topics*, and in the *Rhetoric* of Aristotle, to the forensic, deliberative and epideictic.[11] Cicero makes the principally rhetorical objectives of *causae* and *controversiae* clear when he asserts, '*Tria sunt genera causarum: iudici, deliberationis, laudationis*.'[12]

When he records the corresponding Greek term for *causa* and *controversia*, *hypothesis*, he does so in light of its original opposition to the *thesis* as described by Aristotle in his own *Topics*.[13] Cicero's recognition of this opposition in this passage is important because his summary of Aristotle's *Topics* in his own *Topics* represents one of the primary sources for medieval commentators, such as Isidore (c. 560-636) and Boethius (c. 480-c. 524), on ancient rhetorical and dialectical taxonomy.[14] Cicero says of *quaestiones*:

> There are two kinds of inquiry [*quaestionum*], one general and the other particular. The particular is what the Greeks call...(hypothesis), and we call cause or case; the general inquiry is what they call...(thesis), and we can call a proposition. The hallmark of a case is that it involves definite persons, places, times, actions, or affairs...[15]

Though he claims that *propositiones* (*quaestiones*) are 'parts of' *causae*, they continue to remain the less restricted of the two in their rhetorical function. The orator delivering a forensic speech in defense of a particular act committed by a particular person under a particular set of circumstances must draw on the arguments

(*theses*) relevant to the general concerns of the case, and therefore, depends on a principally dialectical process of thinking *in utramque partem*, which seeks only to comprehend the contradictory positions available to a disputant of a certain general problem. Each position as well as its accompanying argument is a *thesis*, and for Aristotle, represents the often paradoxical results of a philosopher's dialectical program. In so far as these results seem to follow necessarily from their premises within the framework of a deductive argument, any apparent paradox is rendered plausible by the force of the logic by which it is inferred; and therefore, the skilled orator declaiming a *controversia*, *causa* or *hypothesis*, must be familiar with the dialectical expositions of all of the *theses* relevant to the specific situation, so that he can decide how he should rhetorically manipulate the presentation of these *theses* such that their paradoxicality is suppressed or exposed.

After the fall of the Republic and the passing of Cicero's notion of the orator scrupulously trained *in utramque partem dissere*, *controversiae* became subjects upon which the speaker could display his verbal ingenuity, without consideration of the original rhetorical purpose of the exercise, to make a convincing defense of an action taken under complex circumstances. The Elder Seneca tells us, mistakenly, that in Cicero's time, the *thesis* had ceased to be debated as it had been by the philosophers mentioned by Aristotle in the *Topics*.[16] In a letter to his brother Quintus, Cicero admits both his preference for a 'more scholarly and argumentative...system of instruction' as well as his view that the declamatory style [*declamatorio genere*] of instruction is more 'charming' to the young.[17] The pedagogical value of declaiming *controversiae* continues to be recognized by Favorinus of Arles in the second century because it is 'very useful in arousing the imagination, sharpening the mind and accustoming the mind to difficult cases.'[18] However, the convoluted themes of *controversiae*, as well as the slightly less convoluted themes of *suasoriae*, which were designed as hortative exercises in deliberative oratory, were less favorably received by Quintilian, Tacitus and Petronius.[19] The increasingly complex circumstances of the subjects of *controversiae* made their complementary relation to the dialectically expounded subjects of *theses* now quite remote. By the time Seneca was writing his

Controversiae, controversiae had become mere declamatory exercises, which were designed ostensibly to instruct pupils in legal oratory, but which were equally, if not more, valued as a source of entertainment. The heavy emphasis placed on legal education during the early Empire restricted the considerations of declaimers of *controversiae* to the rhetorical advantages of a certain line of argumentation; the dialectical considerations of the *thesis*, which sought, as Socrates' dialectic had in the *Gorgias*, to judge the truth or falsity of the philosophical positions relevant to a particular *controversia*, had all but vanished amid the displays of verbal wit so highly prized as ingenious and novel ways of defending a position.

2

The Use of Dialectic and the *Thesis*

Unlike *controversiae, theses* were never wholly absorbed into a specifically rhetorical program of education because their subjects were recognized to demand first, a philosophical treatment, and then, a rhetorically appropriate presentation. In *Orator*, Cicero describes the rhetorical value of arguing *theses*, and attributes to Aristotle the practice of using *theses* to train the young 'not for the philosophical manner of subtle discussion, but for the fluent style of the rhetorician, so that...[they]...might be able to uphold either side of the question in copious and elegant language.'[20]   Though Aristotle certainly valued the ability to argue *in utramque partem*, Cicero here seems to overestimate the rhetorical value he attached to creating arguments *pro* and *contra*. In the *Topics*, Aristotle advises his pupils of both the rhetorical and philosophical benefits of arguing *theses*:

> Select...arguments relating to the same thesis and range them side by side; for this produces a plentiful supply of arguments for carrying a point by force, and in refutation is of great service, whenever one is well stocked with arguments pro and con-for then you find yourself on guard against contrary statements. Moreover, as contributing to knowledge and to philosophic wisdom the power of discerning and holding in one view the results of either of two hypotheses is no mean instrument; for it then only remains to make a right choice of them.[21]

Cicero himself moderates his view of the rhetorical primacy of the *thesis* in *De Oratore*. Though his characterization of the *thesis* remained consistent, a question 'propounding an unlimited subject of inquiry', his names for it varied.[22] He alternatively used the Greek *thesis, quaestio, infinita quaestio, propositum* or *consultatio*.[23] When he says, in *De Oratore*, that the orator must be expected to speak on the philosophically ranging subjects of *theses* (*quaestionem*) such as 'good and evil', and 'things to be preferred and things to be shunned', he does not require him to do so in the dialectical manner of the philosophers, 'one by one', because an exposition of the 'verbal controversies' of dialecticians is ineffective in persuasive speech.[24] Nevertheless, as has been said, a familiarization with the philosophers' dialectical treatment of *theses* is indispensable in the training of an effective orator because it is through such a process that the fundamental and general issues relevant to the more specific circumstances of *controversiae* and *suasoriae* are discovered.

Cicero complained that the Academic and Peripatetic schools had appropriated the *thesis* as a means for expounding their system of philosophy and that orators were left with the relatively insignificant task of arguing *controversiae* irrespective of any relevant general philosophical concerns. He says of the *thesis* (here rendered *disputationes, in quibus de universo genere in utramque partem disseri copiose licet*), that it is 'now considered the special province of the two schools [Academic and Peripatetic] of which I spoke before'. The orators, he continues 'have been ousted from ...[their] own estate and left in occupation of a trifling little property, and that contested, and...[they]...who are the defenders of other people have been unable to hold and safeguard our own possessions'.[25] It is Cicero's goal, therefore, to return to rhetoric its philosophical content, to collapse the distinction between dialectic and rhetoric imposed by Socrates in his attack on the inability of the verbal subtlety of sophists such as Gorgias to guide their listeners to an understanding of ethical truths.[26] He says:

> if you are content with these rules [of forensic rhetoric]..., you are making the orator abandon a vast, immesureable plain and confine himself to quite a narrow circle. If on the other hand you chose to follow the famous Pericles of old, or even our friend Demosthenes with whom his many writings have

made us better acquainted, and if you have grown up to love that glorious
and supreme ideal, that thing of beauty, the perfect orator, you are bound to
accept either the modern dialectic of Carneades or the earlier method of
Aristotle. For, as I said before, the older masters down to Socrates used to
combine with their theory of rhetoric the whole of the study and the science
of everything that concerns morals and conduct and ethics and politics.[27]

As we have seen, the sceptical dialectic of Carneades was used to demonstrate how a

valid contradictory position could be advanced against any of the assertions of

dogmatic logicians such as the Stoics. The 'earlier method of Aristotle' mentioned

here refers to the instructions given in *Topics*, which advise the disputant to prepare

for his debates by collecting arguments for and against a number of *theses*.[28]

Cicero's probabilism, which he also inherited from Carneades, leads him to

recommend the dialectic of Carneades because, while it demonstrates the doubt

inherent in any syllogistically defended position, it also clarifies the critical terms of

that position making it easier for the disputant to perceive its probability with respect

to its various conflicting positions.[29] As we have seen, and will see further, Donne's

dialectical presentation of his positions in both the *Paradoxes* and *Biathanatos*

serves this same interest of clarification, and therefore, can only be understood in

light of the practice of the disputed *thesis* articulated by Cicero and Aristotle.

The reason Cicero approves the use of the *thesis* as an exercise in dialectic in

De Oratore, a use which he seemed to reject in *Orator*, is because he recognized that

Aristotle's dialectic was not at odds with his rhetoric; Aristotle's rhetoric, unlike the

merely verbal rhetoric of his contemporaries, was a conduit to truth.[30] In the

Rhetoric, Aristotle explains that the rhetorician should prepare himself in the same

manner, and to the same end, as the dialectician preparing deductions for and against

a given *thesis*.

We must be able to employ persuasion, just as deduction can be employed,
on opposite sides of the question, not in order that we may in practice
employ it in both ways (for we must not make people believe what is wrong),
but in order that we may see clearly what the facts are, and that, if another
man argues unfairly, we on our part may be able to confute him. No other of
the arts draw opposite conclusions: dialectic and rhetoric alone do this.[31]

In light of Aristotle's unsceptical view that 'men have a sufficient natural instinct for what is true, and usually do arrive at the truth', the use of rhetoric or dialectic to advocate false opinions becomes an intentional and culpable act of deception, a considered 'choice' to deceive.[32] It is his propensity to make this choice to mislead that distinguishes the sophist from the dialectician. Furthermore, sophists such as Gorgias who practice misleading dialectic have, as a result, been classified by honest dialecticians such as Socrates as mere rhetoricians because of their concern only to persuade. It is for this reason that Aristotle acknowledges two senses of the term 'rhetorician', one which denotes the legitimate knowledge of the art, and the other, the potential for the sophistical 'choice' to deceive. No such division exists in dialectic because, as Socrates established, sophistical dialectic is not dialectic at all, but rather a species of rhetoric.

> What makes a man a sophist is not his abilities but his choices. In rhetoric, however, the term 'rhetorician' may describe either the speaker's knowledge of the art, or his choices. In dialectic a man is a sophist because he makes a certain kind of choice, a dialectician in respect not of his choices but of his abilities.[33]

Like Cicero, Quintilian complains of the divorce between rhetoric and philosophy initiated by Socrates' rejection of the rhetoric of Gorgias.[34] He blames the orators for abandoning their general inquiries into the natures of things and allowing the philosophers to restrict their treatment of such subjects (*theses*) to the dialectical method of close reasoning. He identified the frivolity of the schools of declamation of his time as the principal reason that such a divorce between rhetoric and dialectic persisted. Though far from calling for the elimination of ornamentation in the exposition of philosophical subjects, Quintilian believed that the orator should take a greater interest in reality and that his '[declamation], therefore, should resemble the truth.'[35] His belief in the propriety of rhetoric's claim to the subject matter of the philosophers stems from another belief which he shared with Cicero, that dialectic was really just a class of oratory. Given this subordination of dialectic, Quintilian asks, 'Since the discussion of whatever is brought before it is the task of dialectic, which is really a concise form of oratory,

why should not this task be regarded as also being the appropriate material for continuous oratory?'[36] Later in the *Institutes*, he gives examples of the ways in which the enthymeme, a syllogism with one or both of its premises missing, may be employed by the orator. His advice is guarded, however, because of his recognition of the confusion with which syllogistic proof is likely to be met by the listener untrained in dialectic. Unlike the discourse of trained philosophers who 'subject everything to a minute and scrupulous inquiry with a view to arriving at clear and convincing truths', orators 'must speak before an audience of men who, if not thoroughly ill-educated, are certainly ignorant of such arts as dialectic'.[37] Cicero's justification of his more rhetorically elaborated presentation of the Stoic syllogisms which purport to demonstrate their *paradoxa* reveals precisely the same concern with rendering dialectical proofs comprehensible to the untrained.

In the preface to the first book of his *Controversia*, the elder Seneca indicates that the *Paradoxa Stoicorum* cannot be as easily classified rhetorically as his declamations because they are neither *suasoria* nor *controversia*; they are, as Cicero himself explains in the preface of the *Paradoxa*, his transpositions of the astounding logical demonstrations of Stoic ethics, their *paradoxa*.[38] Cicero describes these demonstrations as Aristotle had described the paradoxical arguments of the philosophers in the *Topics*, '*quae dicuntur in scholis θετικῶϛ*'. And though Cicero explains that he will defend these Stoic *theses* in the 'oratorical style of discourse that is [his] own', none of the three rhetorical classifications (epideictic, deliberative, forensic) adequately explain the method or objective of his arguments. The simple reason for this lack of neat rhetorical classification is that the *Paradoxa Stoicorum* is not primarily a rhetorical work; it is a consideration of *theses*, and as such, fundamentally a philosophical work. When discussing Hermagoras' distinction between *theses* and *hypotheses* in *De Inventione*, Cicero makes clear that *hypotheses* (*causae*), as they are concerned with 'definite individuals' (*personarum certarum*), are to be treated under the appropriate rhetorical heading, 'judicial, deliberative, [or] epideictic', while *theses* (*quaestiones*), as they are concerned with circumstantially unrestricted philosophical issues such as the shape of the world and whether the senses can be trusted, are not limited to any of the three rhetorical categories. He

says, referring to the relative triviality of rhetorical *hypotheses* to philosophical *theses*, 'It seems the height of folly to assign an orator as if they were trifles these subjects in which we know that the sublime genius of philosophers has spent so much labour'.[39] Quintilian follows Cicero on the division of the *thesis* and the *hypothesis*, and expresses his relief that in *Orator*, *De Oratore* and *Topics*, Cicero retracted the view expressed in *De Inventione*, that only philosophers ought to consider *theses*.[40] The relationship between the *thesis* and *hypothesis*, he explains, is one of *genus* to *species*; and therefore, the orator speaking on a particular matter (*hypothesis*) must be aware of the underlying general question (*thesis*) in order to execute his rhetorical objective effectively. Quintilian offers an example of how this process of abstraction functions, and implies that it is only the *hypothesis* that is restricted by the prescriptions of the three rhetorical categories. 'The question "Should a man marry?" is *indefinite* [*infinita*]; the question "Should Cato marry?" is *definite* [*finita*], and consequently may be regarded as a subject for a *deliberative* theme [*suasoria*].'[41] Ungoverned as they were by rhetorical agendas, the investigation of the subjects of *theses* were subject only to the demands of proof. It is for this reason, therefore, that we must turn to rhetoric's counterpart, dialectic, for an explanation of the ways in which a *thesis* may be demonstrated.

3
Doubt and the *Thesis*

Cicero's main objection to the Stoic ethical tenets treated in the *Paradoxa Stoicorum* was the manner of their exposition; the logic according to which Stoic dialectic functioned was simply unpersuasive.[42] It is important that we recognize that this lack of persuasiveness does not result primarily from a specifically rhetorical shortcoming, though Cicero undoubtedly implies that the barren dialectic of the Stoics may be rendered more acceptable by the sort of rhetorical elaboration found in his speeches in the law-courts or before the Senate. In Thomas Newton's translation of the *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, Cicero's description of his transposition of the Stoic *theses* is rendered from the Latin '*cum ea quae dicuntur in scholis* θετικῶς

ad nostrum hoc oratorium transfero dicendi genus' as 'when I select and excerpe

suche sayings as amonge the Philosophers in their schooles are called their positive

and peculier arguments [*θετικῶς*], and interlace the same into the Rhetorical trade

that we use in pleadynge and traversinge causes and matters Iudicial.'[43] Newton's

supplemented translation suggests that Cicero will utilize his skill in forensic oratory

to provide the Stoic *paradoxa* with the rhetorical adornment necessary to convince

his imagined audience.[44] We may be tempted to conclude from Newton's addition

to the Latin text that Cicero considered the dialectical proofs of the philosophers to

be unpersuasive without rhetorical elaboration, but this conclusion overlooks the fact

that the *Paradoxa Stoicorum* is a defense of philosophical conclusions (the *theses* of

the Stoics), which as such, is principally bound to submit to the demands of logical

proof.

None of the three general rhetorical classifications provide for these demands

specifically. Only deduction and induction, the two classes of proof outlined by

Aristotle in the *Topics* and Cicero in *De Inventione*, are necessary to the

demonstration of *theses*; the particularly rhetorical considerations regarding both the

partisan objectives of the speaker and the circumstances in which those objectives

are couched are not relevant to the general investigation of the *thesis*.[45] This is not

to say that Cicero thought that arguments for or against certain *theses* did not benefit

from rhetorical elaboration. As we have seen, Cicero insisted that the claims of

rhetoric and dialectic to the use of logical structures such as syllogisms were not

mutually exclusive. When Cicero deploys a syllogism in the *Paradoxa Stoicorum*,

for instance, the procedure of the deduction from major to minor premise to

conclusion is properly analyzed by dialectic while the relation of the deduction to

information, such as examples, provided in its support is properly analyzed by

rhetoric. Even in the defense of *theses*, which by definition are concerned with

natures or values irrespective of the specific rhetorical objectives to which they

might be applied, the principles of rhetoric can assist in confirming the likelihood of

conclusions reached through dialectical arguments. However, such rhetorical

confirmation must follow the clarification and order which only a dialectical

analysis of the issue under consideration may provide. Cicero emphasizes this point as an introduction to his discussion of induction and deduction in *De Inventione*.

> It is the embellishment of the argument once it has been discovered (*inventa*), and the arrangement of it in definite divisions, which make the speech attractive to the audience...For that reason it seemed necessary to us to speak about the rules for this [embellishment] and to do so at this point so that the subject of invention of arguments may be combined with the theory of argumentation.[46]

It is because of his observation of this process of discovery and arrangement that Cicero, in his *Brutus*, rates the forensic oratory of Servius Sulpicius superior to that of Lucius Crassus and Quintus Scaevola. There, he praises the ability of Crassus to extrapolate from both the circumstances in which the prescriptions of a particular law are relevant and the wording of that law, the underlying general issue of equity. In legal cases, issues of equity (*aequitas*) bear the same relationship to the specific circumstances of the case (e.g. who, when, where, etc.) as *theses* bear to the specific circumstances of *controversiae* and *suasoriae*. Crassus, therefore, unlike Scaevola who remained ever faithful to the letter of the law, exhibited a more penetrating insight into the general philosophical content relevant to the specific legal case and was able to incorporate that content into his legal pleading. Cicero prefers Crassus' ability to discern the general behind the particular to Scaevola's scrupulosity, but seems to imply that Crassus could have benefited from Scaevola's thorough knowledge of the particulars of the law. Servius, though not as attentive to the details of the law as Scaevola, knew 'as much of the civil law as was requisite for the orator' and combined that knowledge with an ability to discern the general and the particular that surpassed even Crassus.[47] Cicero explains that Servius' exceptional ability is derived from:

> that art which teaches the analysis of a whole into its component parts, sets forth and defines the latent and implicit, interprets and makes clear the obscure; which first recognizes the ambiguous and then distinguishes; which applies in short a rule or measure for adjudging truth and falsehood, for determining what conclusions follow from what premises, and what do not.[48]

This art, Cicero calls the art of all arts (*ars omnium artium maxima*), dialectic.[49] As we have seen, Cicero objects to the dialectical procedure which purports to demonstrate the Stoic *paradoxa* absolutely and with certainty; his rhetorical objections stem from objections to the exposition of the arguments, and therefore, are merely a function of his philosophical objections. He says when describing the difference between his and Cato's (the Stoic) speeches in the Senate that he (Cicero) '[makes] more use of a system of philosophy which is the parent of oratorical fluency'.[50] His philosophical views, therefore, prescribe the rhetorical elaboration of his dialectic.

Similarly, in contesting *theses*, the debater must utilize dialectical analyses to penetrate any ambiguous rhetorical elaboration. In the *Sophistical Refutations*, Aristotle advises debaters that an effective way to render an opponent's argument unpersuasive is to demonstrate that its paradoxicality does not follow as a logical necessity, and therefore, is soluble under dialectical scrutiny.

> Again, to draw a paradoxical statement, look and see to what school the person arguing with you belongs, and then question him as to some point wherein their doctrine is paradoxical to most people; for with every school there is some point of that kind. It is an elementary rule in these matters that you have a collection of the theses of the various schools among your propositions. The solution appropriate here, too, is to show that the paradox does not come about because of the argument: whereas this is what your opponent always really wants.[51]

Cicero's defense of the Stoic paradoxes requires just such an attempt to show that their startling conclusions are not necessary consequences of the arguments, but merely reflect the laconic manner in which they were presented.[52] It is because Zeno believed his surprising ethical tenets could validly be deduced from first principles by necessary consequence according to his sophisticated rules of logical inference that he presumed to term these tenets *paradoxa*.[53] By attempting to make a persuasive case for the Stoic paradoxes, however, Cicero had to expose what he considered to be their false claim to logical necessity and argue for their mere probability. Naturally, such an argument for probability would be advanced with respect to the relative likelihood of competing positions, and thus, amount to an

argument for preferability. Due to the influence of Cicero's defense of the Stoic *theses* according to the principles of his probabilist scepticism, arguments for preferability were to become the proper subjects of *theses* in sixteenth-century textbooks of rhetoric and dialectic. The *thesis* would not lose its essentially philosophical character, but its advocates would often acknowledge the doubt intrinsically associated with its exposition by stating their *theses* in relative terms (e.g. it is better to marry than not to marry). Such an acknowledgement indicates the disputant's awareness of the contentiousness of the point under examination, while the lack of such an acknowledgement indicates either a genuine belief in the certainty of the *thesis* proposed (as with the Stoics) or an attempt to make a doubtful proof appear certain (as with the sophists).

4
Aphthonius and the *Thesis*

While Cicero and Quintilian had preserved the distinctively philosophical character of the *thesis* against the more mundane concerns of its rhetorically prescribed progeny, the *controversia* and *suasoria*, they had simultaneously insisted upon an end to the antagonistic applications of dialectic and rhetoric.[54] Philosophical inquiry was to be undertaken employing the analytical techniques of dialectic as well as the argumentative strategies of forensic and deliberative rhetoric. The declamation of *theses*, therefore, became a part of an educational program which sought to cultivate the student's knowledge of the general issues underlying particular cases (i.e. *hypotheses, causae, controversiae, suasoriae*) by introducing those issues, abstracted from the particular circumstances in which they may be relevant, as independent subjects of both dialectical and rhetorical treatment. Hence, in the fourth-century compilation of the exercises of the Greek schools of declamation, the *Progymnasmata* of Aphthonius (a textbook, it should be said, whose influence upon the humanist educational program was rivaled only by those collected out of Quintilian and Cicero), the *thesis* is included among the fourteen minor works which must be mastered by the student before he can proceed to the

study of oratorical compositions which incorporated elements of these minor works in various combinations.[55] In keeping with their use in the ancient Greek schools of declamation, the exercises of the *Progymnasmata* were presented by their most widely read Latin translators, Rudolph Agricola and Johannes Maria Cataneus, as introductions to rhetorical schemata, but as the supplementary *scholia* of Reinhard Lorich indicate, the student practicing these exercises would have to recognize when the assistance of dialectic would be required to clarify the issues under consideration.[56] It for this reason that Lorich included a reminder to the student of the particular and complementary functions of dialectic and rhetoric.

> *vel ut naturam cuiusque rei explicet, nunc quae obscura sunt, definiendo, nunc quae multa & confusa, dividendo, nunc quid cuique vel consequens vel repugnans sit, colligendo, quam vim dialecticem vocant: vel ut proprie distincte, copiose, ornate, de quauis re proposita cum quadam audientium admiratione dicamus, quae facultas proprie est oratorum.*[57]

Such a division of labor follows the order which Cicero had described and, with respect to dialectic, is particularly reminiscent of his discussion of Servius' superior oratory in *Brutus*.[58] In his *Foundacion of Rhetorike* (1563), which was modeled on the *Progymnasmata*, Richard Rainolde urges precisely the same comprehension of logic and rhetoric upon the aspiring orator.

> In the one [rhetoric], as a Oratour to pleade with all facilitee, and copiously to dilate any matter of sentence: in the other [logic] to grounde profunde and subtill argument, to fortifie & make stronge our assercion or sentence, to proue and defend, by the force and power of arte, thinges passing the compasse & reach of our capacitee and witte.[59]

In his guidebook to grammar school education, *Ludus Literarius* (1612), John Brinsley recommends the *thesis* as the most valuable of Aphthonius' fourteen minor works because it provides the general training in controversial argument with which the orator must be furnished before he can proceed to the more rhetorically specific tasks (i.e. forensic or deliberative) of the lawyer or counselor.[60] As an example of a *thesis* which may be both affirmed and denied, he cites Aphthonius'

'*Uxor est ducenda, Uxor non est ducenda*'.[61] As we will see, Aphthonius followed Cicero's definition of the *thesis* as a *consultatio*, and hence, preserved the involvement of logic which Cicero had insisted must be present in the investigations of *theses*. Brinsley, in following Aphthonius, follows Cicero on the nature of the *thesis*, and confirms his allegiance, when he conspicuously offers his praise for those 'singular patternes of true Rhetoricke', Cicero's *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, immediately after he recommends the Aphthonian *thesis* as the most valuable declamatory exercise in guiding students to attaining that 'singular patterne'.[62] But Brinsley is careful to mention that in using Aphthonius, the instructor must be aware of the difficulties which the student unfamiliar with logic may encounter in attempting to declaim upon philosophical questions such as he finds in the *Paradoxa Stoicorum*. He explains that 'to follow the Logicke places in Aphthonius in a Philosophical discourse, doth require some insight in Logicke, and reading in such Authors as have written of such morall matters.'[63] Brinsley, like Rainolde and Lorich before him, continues to observe Cicero's and Quintilian's belief that the orator must be prepared to speak on philosophical matters, and therefore, must cultivate his skills in both rhetoric and dialectic.[64]

Hence, it is Brinsley's, as well as Rainolde's and Lorich's, opinion that when Aphthonius says that the *thesis* is '*rei alicuius inuestigandae per orationem consideratio, vel disquisitio*', the process of oratory (*oratio*) is neither exclusively nor primarily rhetorical.[65] As Aristotle had stated in the *Poetics*, speech (*oratio*) embraces both the probative interests of dialectic and the persuasive interests of rhetoric. 'The thought of the personages [of a tragedy] is shown in everything to be effected by their language-in every effort to prove or disprove, to arouse emotion (pity, fear, anger, and the like), or to maximize and minimize things.'[66] Cicero reiterates this view when explaining to his son the dual function of invention, the process by which the orator discovers arguments to support his case.

> C.Jun. Inasmuch then as the first of the speaker's functions is to invent, what will be his aim?
> C.Sen. To discover how to convince the persons whom he wishes to persuade and how to arouse their emotions.

> C.Jun. What things serve to produce conviction?
> C.Sen. Arguments, which are derived from topics that are either contained in the facts of the case itself or are obtained from outside.[67]

Invention, as Agricola had emphasized in his *De Inventione Dialectica* (1515) and as Ramus would confirm, was as much a function of dialectic as rhetoric.[68] It is critical that we do not make the mistake of reducing speech (*oratio*) to rhetoric when interpreting Aphthonius' definition of the *thesis*, for if we do, we will misrepresent his appreciation of Cicero's reconciliation of the divergent interests of dialectic and rhetoric. When Aphthonius equates the *thesis* with the *consultatio* ('*Thesis, id est, consultatio*'), therefore, we must recognize the reference to Cicero's *De Partitione Oratoria*.[69] There, Cicero explains that the *quaestio* has two divisions, '*infinitam, quam consultationem appello, et definitam, quam causam nomino.*'[70] These divisions correspond exactly to those described by Aphthonius, the *thesis*, as we have seen, being called *consultatio*, and the *hypothesis*, *causa*.[71] From these divisions, Aphthonius continues to follow Cicero's distinctions in *De Partitione Oratoria*, dividing the *thesis* into questions concerning being and natures, and questions concerning action and duties.[72] As we might expect by now, in the remaining discussion of *De Partitione Oratoria*, Cicero classifies *hypotheses* (*causae*) under the three rhetorical headings, forensic, deliberative and epideictic. In his discussion of the first type of *theses*, those which seek to resolve questions of being or natures (which he calls *cogitationis*, 'of learning'), he distinguishes a further three classes of treatment which firmly establish the affinity of the *consultatio* to Donne's *Paradoxes* and *Biathanatos*, as well as to other paradoxes of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In so far as these classes persist in Aphthonius' exposition of the *thesis*, they serve to mark a point of continuity between Aristotle's understanding of the function of the *thesis* and that which, we have seen, would inspire the general philosophical inquiries to which Nashe referred in his *Lenten Stuffe*.

5
The *Cogitatio* and Arguments for Preferability

The first class of the *cogitatio* is concerned to discover answers to ontological and aetiological questions such as 'Is a certain result possible?' and 'How is a particular result produced?' Cicero suggests that such investigations are properly the business of natural philosophers. Affirmative propositions regarding such questions should remind us of the *theses* of those philosophers associated by Aristotle and Isocrates with paradoxical assertions (e.g. Zeno of Elea and Melissus). The second class of the *cogitatio* begins to take the interest in more particular ethical matters which will characterize the third class. It seeks to establish the relative and intrinsic definitions of qualities such as 'pertinacity', 'perseverence' and 'pride'. Cicero's question in his first paradox, '*Quid est igitur...bonum?*', belongs to this class of inquiry. As we have seen, Donne's eighth paradox, 'That good is more common than evill', also examines the nature of good, and therefore, may be categorized under this heading. In this paradox Donne asserts, following Aristotle, that 'good...must of necessity be more common then evill, because it hath this Nature and end, and perfection to be common.'[73] The third class of the *cogitatio* has specifically to do with ethical questions of honor (*honestas*), utility (*utilitas*) and equity (*aequitas*), and is by Cicero's admission the most explicitly contentious.[74]

> For the question asked is not only the simple inquiry, what is honourable, what is useful, what is equitable, but it also involves comparison-what is *more* honourable or useful or equitable, and also what is *most* honourable or useful or equitable-a class of consideration which comprises the supreme value of life.[75]

If we recall Cicero's praise of the ideal forensic orator's ability to discern general matters of equity behind the particulars of his case, we should see that this third class of the *cogitatio* is of especial interest to the lawyer. And though it is unlikely that Donne was seriously studying for a career in law while he was writing his *Paradoxes* at Lincoln's Inn, his abiding interest in the legal and doctrinal controversies of his day and their relation to ethical conduct would suggest an

intimacy with Cicero's instructions concerning this specifically ethical type of *thesis*.[76] Whatever the case, Donne's arguments for preferability in the *Paradoxes* may be categorized under this third class of the *cogitatio*. When he argues 'That the guifts of the body are better then those of the mind or Fortune', 'That women ought to paint themselves', 'That Nature is our worst Guide', 'That old Men are more Fantastique then younge', that 'the best things kill themselves soonest' or that women have most reason, he acknowledges his involvement in an inquiry which by its nature can only state its conclusion in comparatives or superlatives such as 'more' or 'most'. It is neither informative nor contentious to state, for instance, that there are gifts of the body, mind and fortune; what Donne wants to show, albeit facetiously, is that one of these gifts is preferable to the others. Such a project requires that the criteria by which that preferability will be judged are clear and univocal; if we want to prove that gifts of the body are superior to those of the mind or fortune, we must, as Donne does, maintain that physical health is superior to mental health or material wealth, which of course requires further proof according to other criteria. In Donne's *Paradoxes*, this search for clear and univocal criteria is the medium in which his wit seizes and misapplies the critical ambiguous terms of his arguments. For Cicero, however, this search, as it leads to the consideration of natures and causes, utilizes the other two classes of the *cogitatio*; and therefore, he concludes that this third class 'is a class of consideration which comprises the things that constitute the supreme value of life.'[77]

Relative conclusions are a natural consequence of Cicero's moderately sceptical adaptation of the Stoic *paradoxa*. For instance, his concern for equity, which arises out of his relativist ethics, moves him to conclude that the Stoic *thesis* that all transgressions are equal must be analyzed under his third class of the *cogitatio*; the absoluteness of their claim is derived from special definitions of good and evil which, he argues, are valid only in a restricted way. Therefore, he expands the defense of the Stoic *thesis* by applying the principles of the third class of the *cogitatio* maintaining that if 'you posit those cases without qualification, their real nature cannot easily be judged'.[78] After comparing the relative gravity of an unjustified murder of one's slave and an unjustified murder of one's father, he

concludes that because many transgressions are committed when one kills one's father (i.e. 'violence is done to the author of one's being, to him that gave us nurture and education and a place in his house and a home in the state') 'the parricide stands first in the number of his transgressions and therefore deserves a greater penalty.'[79] Cicero, further clouds the issue by introducing intention as the paramount criterion by which the gravity of the crime must be judged. He explains that 'it is the motive that distinguishes these actions, not the nature of the action'.[80] Notwithstanding the difficulty of establishing another's intention, this criterion introduces the further problem (to be treated by the third class of the *cogitatio*) of establishing the relative value of motives, and so on *ad infinitum*. It should be said that the success of Donne's defense of suicide in *Biathanatos* will depend fundamentally on his establishment of the reliability of right reason's determinations of these relative values; right reason, he will argue, is sufficient to discern the truth of some universal moral principles from which valid deductions regarding particular ethical questions may be drawn.[81] Cicero's moderate scepticism, following its doctrine of probabilism, is not committed either to the abolition of a criterion of truth (as Sextus and the Pyrrhonists were) or to its establishment (as dogmatists such as the Stoics were). His objective was probability (*veri simile*), and the inquiries of *theses*, particularly those of the third class of the *cogitatio*, conduce to that objective. It is for this reason that the Academic values arguing *pro* and *contra* paradoxical *theses*. It is, as Cicero's Latin term for *theses* concerned with being or nature (*cogitationis*) indicates, his desire 'of learning' which establishes the paradoxical as the Academic method of inquiry.[82]

Aphthonius did not further divide his classification of the *thesis contempliuae* as Cicero had his *thesis cogitationis*, perhaps because he thought the three classes of the *cogitatio* did not contribute more information about the types of questions which *theses* raise. His *ciuiles*, which correspond to Cicero's *actionis* (of action), function as the third class of the *cogitatio* had; they argue that one position is preferable to another. Aphthonius gives an example of such an argument when he poses the standard *thesis, An ducenda uxor?* [83] The argument proceeds alternating from *solutio*, a reason for marriage, to *contradictio*, an objection to marriage. The

same structure of argument *pro* and *contra* is observed in Lorich's examples in his *scholia*. The advocacy of the relative preferabilility of the positions argued follows naturally from the contentiousness of the question under investigation. Hence, Aphthonius claims in favor of marriage, '*Rectius ergo est matrimonii bona laudare, quam accusare mala*' and '*Quando enim enumerare nuptiarum bona cogis, laudator matrimonii factus eo potius quam reprehensor*'.[84] The objective of the student advocating the Aphthonian *thesis*, that one should take a wife, therefore, is to argue that it is 'most' justifiable to favor rather than to reprehend marriage. In the *Epilogus*, Aphthonius piously refers the contested question to the authority of God, denying the claim of oratory to settle such a question. '*Adeo non est oratione recensere quanta matrimonium deferat bona*.'[85] Lorich's two examples of *theses*, *quod senectus non molesta, nec onus Aetna grauius* and the suspiciously Socratic/Stoic *diuitias non esse summum bonum*, continue to argue the preferability of positions with respect to their alternatives. The conclusion of his second *thesis*, that riches do not comprise the highest good, translates neatly into a title of a paradox which Socrates, Cicero (defending the Stoics) or Donne (by inversion) might have proposed. '*Ergo non in diuitiis, unde malorum (ut aiunt) mare profluit, sed potius in virtute summum est bonum collacandum*.'[86] Rainolde's list of examples of *theses* follows Aphthonius' characterization of them as questions on which one must argue the preferability of one of two opposing positions, and provides yet more evidence that Donne's *Paradoxes* were derived from the *thesis* both in form and matter. After presenting the standard Aphthonian definition of the *thesis*, Rainolde lists Lorich's second *thesis* in question form, 'Whether are riches chieflie to be sought for in this life, as of all good thynges, the chief good', then proceeds to the Stoic *thesis*, 'Whether is vertue the moste excellente good thynge in this life', and then to the *thesis* from which Donne would have derived his paradox on the same subject, 'Whether dooe the giftes of the mynde, passe and excelle the giftes and vertues of fortune and the bodie'.[87]

6

Inventio, Dispositio and the Problem of Verification

In addition to the advice given by humanist educators such as Lorich on the proper procedure of arguments of *theses pro* and *contra*, Donne would have had the use of a logic that was growing ever more independent from rhetoric in its operations. The reconciliation of rhetoric and dialectic which Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian had sought was being severed again by the beginning of the sixteenth century. No one denied that three of Cicero's rhetorical categories, (i.e. *elocutio, memoria, pronuntiatio*) properly belonged to rhetoric. But whether the remaining two categories, *inventio* and *dispositio*, fell under the heading of dialectic or rhetoric was not entirely clear.[88] The confusion is due largely to Cicero himself. After introducing the five categories of rhetoric in *De Inventione*, he proceeds to define the special functions of *inventio* and *dispositio* with respect to the methods of argumentation. 'Invention is the discovery of valid or seemingly valid arguments [*rerum verarum aut veri similium*] to render one's case plausible. Arrangement is the distribution of arguments thus discovered in the proper order.'[89] After referring the speaker in search of arguments to the categories of Aristotle, Cicero begins his discussion of *dispositio*, the part of rhetoric which, he says, has been greatly neglected by writers on the art of rhetoric.'[90] This neglect resulted from the appropriation of *dispositio* by the Academic and Peripatetic dialecticians about which Cicero had complained in *De Oratore*.[91] In keeping with his commitment to the cooperation and unity of rhetoric and dialectic in the service of oratory, Cicero does not classify his subsequent discussion of *dispositio* under the heading of dialectic despite his admission that the division and arrangement of arguments must accord with the logical demands of induction and deduction.[92] Though Cicero's exposition of the procedure of inductive and deductive arguments is presented with an eye to its application in persuasive speech, its analysis is still fundamentally the task of dialectic. This fact is acknowledged when he names those philosophers with whom the two methods of proof are most closely associated. The 'form of argument which proceeds by induction was practiced particularly by Socrates and the

Socratics' and that 'which is elaborated in the form of a syllogism [*per ratiocinationem*], was most largely used by Aristotle and the by the Peripatetics and Theophrastus'.[93] It is only after the principles of dialectic as an independent set of rules governing the methods of proof had been established that they could be adopted 'by the teachers of rhetoric who have been regarded as the most precise and accomplished in their art.'[94] We are reminded again of the praise which Cicero lavished on Servius Sulpicius in *Brutus*, a lawyer who used dialectic, '*ars omnium artium maxima*', to arrange 'all that had been put together by others without system, whether in the form of legal opinions or in actual trials.'[95]

Although the sceptical attack on scholastic logic waged by quattrocento Italian humanists such as Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499) and Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola (1469-1533) was familiar to the northern European humanists of the early sixteenth century, Melanchthon's *Rhetoric* (1546) did not seek to undermine the cooperative relationship between rhetoric and dialectic of which Aristotle and Cicero had approved.[96] He says:

> So close is the relationship between dialectic and rhetoric that a division can scarcely be discovered. For some consider that *inventio* and *dispositio* are common to both arts, consequently that the topics for finding out arguments, which the rhetoricians are accustomed to use, ought to be taught in dialectic. But they do say that there is this difference, that dialectic presents the bare facts. But rhetoric adds *elocution* as a garment.[97]

In his *De Inventione Dialectica* (1515), a work which revived the interest in the role of logic in the operation of rhetoric which had been lost by centuries of scholastic domination of the teaching of dialectic, Rudolph Agricola had appropriated *inventio* and *dispositio* to dialectic.[98] In his *Arte of Rhetorique* (1553), which was modelled on Agricola's *De Inventione Dialectica*, Thomas Wilson continues to list *inventio* and *dispositio* with the other three Ciceronian rhetorical categories, but like Melanchthon and Agricola, he also uses *inventio* and *dispositio* to represent the two parts of dialectic in his English logic, the *Rule of Reason* (1551). Significantly, Wilson places *inventio* before *dispositio* in his discussion of the parts of rhetoric, but inverts that order in his treatment of dialectic.[99] Though his definitions of them

remain roughly the same in the two works, it is apparent that dialectical inquiries are more properly served by *dispositio*, which according to Wilson, 'is nothyng els, but an apt bestowyng, and orderly placyng of thynges, declaryng where every argument shalbe sette, and in what maner every reason shalbe applied, for confirmacion of the purpose.'[100] Not surprisingly, in the *Arte of Rhetorique*, Wilson makes no mention of the four arguments (i.e. syllogism, enthymeme, induction, example) which constitute the bulk of his discussion of *dispositio* in the *Rule of Reason*. The simple reason for this omission is that Wilson considers the subject of proof proper to dialectic. It is for this reason that he says that 'thei that will prove any cause and seke onely to teache thereby the truthe, must search out the places of Logique'; in other words, the rhetorician who seeks to demonstrate a truth by proof must consult Aristotle's *Organon*, and hence, must consult logical, not rhetorical, commonplaces.[101] Such consultation in the context of dialectical inquiry returns us to the problem of the priority of *dispositio* or *inventio*, which, as we will see, Wilson solves by asserting the primacy of judgment in inquiries regarding truth. With regard to the investigation of *theses*, which Wilson, like Rainolde, defines according to the model derived from Cicero, Quintilian and Aphthonius, Wilson makes explicit the critical role which *dispositio*, as the adjudicative function of dialectic, must play.[102] 'Thynges generally spoken without al circumstaunces [i.e. *theses*], are more proper unto the Logician, who talketh of thynges universally, without respect of persone, time, or place'.[103] If *theses* are to be treated by logicians, then it follows that the tools of argumentation employed by *dispositio*, syllogism, enthymeme, induction and example, will be required to provide proof for the position advocated. Furthermore, according to Wilson, this position will be argued as Aphthonius, Lorich and Rainolde had specified, as one preferable to an opposing position. Wilson's examples of *theses* are typical in this respect: 'whether it is best to marie, or to live single. Which is better, a courtier's life, or a scholar's life'.[104] Though preferability also characterizes Wilson's examples of *hypotheses*, which he claims are the proper subjects for orators, he recalls Cicero's advice in *Orator*, 'that whosoever will talke of a particuler matter, must remember that within thesame also, is comprehended a generall.'[105] Wilson's orator, like Cicero's, must not neglect

dispositio in favor of *inventio*. The arguments *pro* and *contra* general *theses* are always implicit in the rhetorician's *hypotheses*. Therefore, to advocate positions on definite questions such as 'Whether now it be best here in Englande, for a Prieste to Marie, or to live single', the rhetorician must first analyze the preferabilities of the underlying general questions according to the rules of dialectic; he must first provide arguments for or against the preferability of any priest being married at any time, anywhere. These arguments, as Wilson explains in his *Rule of Reason*, are collected out of the logical commonplaces by *inventio*, but more importantly, are confirmed by *dispositio*. It is for this reason that he recommends, as Cicero had when he praised Servius Sulpicius, 'that every manne should desire and seke to have his Logique perfect, before he looke to profite in Rhetorique, consideryng the grounde and confirmacion of causes, is for the moste part gathered out of Logique'.[106]

As we have seen, Cicero's exposition of *inventio* and *dispositio* in *De Inventio* provides ample authority to support the view that invention is as fundamentally proper to dialectic as judgement. The question, briefly put, is whether a utilization of Aristotle's ten predicaments, which comprised the ten general categories under which a subject could be described, was prior to the judgement of propositions constructed of these predicaments and arguments constructed of conjunctions of them. The utilization of the predicaments to generate an assertion such as 'Socrates is white' requires that the speaker 'discover' this way of predicating the subject, Socrates, by choosing in which of the ten categories the relationship between the subject and the predicate is described. In this case, the speaker invents his assertion by recognizing that he wants to say something about a 'quality' of Socrates, and therefore, must invest his assertion with the generic logic of the predicament of quality, that some distinct *genus* (i.e. quality) of the primary substance, Socrates, is described by the predicate, white. However, as many sixteenth-century theorists of rhetoric and dialectic will object, the question of priority remains because it is not clear how an assertion, which has been invented out of one of the ten predicaments, can be made without the implicit and simultaneous assertion of its truth. Assertions of truth, as such, are the objects of

judgement, which, as Cicero noted in *De Inventione*, are therefore subject to the analytical scrutiny of dialectic.

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7

Dialectic, Credibility and the Paradox

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The history of the controversy over the priority of *inventio* and *dispositio* is extensive, and as it has already been more than adequately recorded by others, we shall restrict our attention only to those aspects which are relevant to the dialectic exhibited in paradoxes such as Donne's. The most prominent of these relevant aspects is the persistent problem of verification which the conjunction of rhetoric and dialectic always seems to raise. If, as Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian had insisted, rhetoric is not an art of deception, its utterance must be governed by the limits of verifiability imposed by dialectic. Despite his view that dialectic is the art which secures all the other arts, Cicero claimed that *dispositio* was second in the order of nature after *inventio*.[107] He makes this claim in the context of his criticism of the Stoic neglect of *inventio*, and without any intention to consider the sceptical problems introduced by allowing *inventio* to operate prior to *dispositio*. 'The Stoics', he says, 'have worked in only one of the two fields. That is to say, they have followed diligently the ways of judgement by means of the science which they call...(dialectic), but they have totally neglected the art which is called...(topics), an art which is more useful and certainly prior in the order of nature.'[108] In light of his criticisms of Stoic dialectic, it is clear that Cicero is not concerned about the infinite regress or reciprocity to which an extreme application of sceptical dialectic may reduce any argument.

Cicero's complaints about the Stoics' excessive attention to dialectic reflect their commitment to eliminating ambiguities which only a sceptical application of dialectic to even the simplest of assertions could expose. Once the ambiguity of a particular term was identified, precise definitions could be assigned from which deductions could be drawn with confidence.[109] Both parts of this process, however, are subsumed under dialectic, both the analysis of composite propositions into their

fundamental component propositions as well as the synthesis of new composite propositions based on true premises (such as arise from the Stoic unprovables). Stoic dialectic, unlike the dialectic of Socrates, Aristotle and Cicero, was committed to a dogmatic program which sought the establishment of unambiguous and irrefutable truths discoverable through reason. The dialectic which Cicero identifies with the process of *dispositio* advances arguments in the hope only of credibility. He says summarizing the respective operations of *inventio* and *dispositio*, '*Itaque licet definire locum esse argumenti sedem, argumentum autem rationem quae rei dubiae faciat fidem* [credible].'[110] Similarly, Aristotle, whose own ordering of *dispositio* and *inventio* in the *Topics* begins with the enumeration of the categories to be consulted by *inventio*, delimits the role of dialectic to the investigation of doubtful matters which do not admit of the possibility of knowledge, but only of more or less credible opinions. 'For purposes of philosophy we must treat things according to their truth, but for dialectic only with an eye to opinion.'[111] This is not to say that Artistotle thought that dialectical proofs could not draw necessary conclusions, or that those conclusions could not be true. In the eighth book of his *Topics*, in which he explains the arrangement of arguments (*dispositio*), he makes the distinction between philosophical and dialectical inquiry which both confirms their affinity with respect to rhetoric and their difference with respect to truth.

> how to go on to arrange his points and frame his questions concerns the dialectician only; for in every problem of that kind a reference to another party is involved. Not so with the philosopher, and the man who is investigating by himself: the premisses [sic] of his reasoning, although true and familiar, may be refused by the answerer because they lie too near the original statement and so he foresees what will follow if he grants them; but for this the philosopher does not care. Indeed, he may possibly be even anxious to secure axioms as familiar and as near to the question in hand as possible; for these are the bases on which scientific deductions are built up.[112]

What distinguishes a dialectical from a philosophical inquiry is the former's dialogic form and attending contentiousness. As Aristotle is careful to mention, the dialectician's premises may be 'true and familiar', and hence, grounds upon which

to deduce true conclusions, but that does not make him a philosopher, because in a debate, even grounds which are commonly believed to be true will be contested. In light of the function of dialectic in disputation prescribed by Aristotle and Cicero, it is not surprising that the *thesis* and its progeny, the paradox, became associated with the *pro* and *contra* procedure of dialectic. The rhetorician, unlike both the philosopher and the dialectician, is not investigating the subject upon which he is speaking; his position is fixed and may be advanced without incorporating the modifications suggested by the objections either of the interlocutor of a dialectical inquiry or of his own philosophical misgivings. It must be acknowledged that in this light Donne's description of the function of his paradoxes in his letter to Wotton quite explicitly specifies their role as dialectically expounded *theses*, for he says that 'if they make you to find better reasons against them they do there office'.

Sixteenth-century works on logic recognized the contentious function of dialectic, but also its potential for misuse by those who would pervert the truth by exploiting doubts and ambiguities to obscure fallacies in their argumentation. We recall that Aristotle had said, 'In dialectic a man is a sophist because he makes a certain kind of choice, a dialectician in respect not of his choices but of his abilities.'[113] It is against these deceitful choices that Ralph Lever advised the student of his *Art of Reason* (1573). When he discusses the way to handle 'doubtfull Questions', he adamantly opposes dialectical treatment of any question which is 'either so manifestly true, or so manifestly false, that no man can doubt of it...Suche questions then, are only disputable, as admit some doubt, and offer shew of matter to argue of and on.'[114] The 'choice' which Lever hopes to preclude by these directions is that which seeks to deceive in the manner of sophistical paradoxists such as Gorgias and Melissus. He says condemning the abuse of dialectic committed by such sophists, 'And here by the waye yee maye see, that they whych thynke, that a man cunnyng in this Arte, is able to proue, the snowe to bee blacke, and the Crowe to bee white, iudge unskilfully of this worthye facultie, which purposely forbiddeth the propounding of such fond stuffe.'[115] In the first three books Lever had outlined the forms of inductive and deductive argumentation rejecting the view of those who would place *inventio* before *dispositio* in the teaching of dialectic. As we will see

when we examine the innovations to Aristotelian dialectic introduced by Peter
Ramus, with the increase of confidence in the power of dialectic to distinguish
absolutely the true from the false, so grew the opinion that *dispositio*, the judging
part, is naturally inherent in *inventio*, contrary to Aristotle's presentation in the
Topics and Cicero's statement in his own *Topics*.[116] Lever makes his confidence in
the power of 'the decerning part' of dialectic clear when he restricts the role of
inventio to the finding of a middle ('prouing') term for a deductive argument. In the
syllogism, All men are mortal, Socrates is a man, therefore, Socrates is mortal,
inventio need only present 'man' as a possible middle term through which some
relationship between the extreme terms, Socrates and mortal, may be proven. We
should be on the alert for the sceptical objection, which Cicero had disregarded in
his ordering of *dispositio* and *inventio* in the *Topics* but apparently entertained in his
reversal of that order in *De Inventione*, that the act of judgement is implicit in the
invention of the middle term, and therefore, naturally precedes it. As we saw above,
however, when such precedence is attributed to the role of *dispositio* as a verifier of
proofs, the sceptical critique begins its ineluctable dialectical analysis, which seeks
above all to discredit the grounds from which syllogisms proceed by constantly
requiring their proof. The result of this analysis, as Sextus argues, is the exposure
of reciprocally proven grounds or an infinite regress of verification. When he
condemned the use of dialectic to prove that the snow is black, Lever expressed his
distrust of eristics who would introduce the sceptical critique by attempting to
collapse the distinction between contraries as Gorgias had in *On What is Not* and as
wits such as Lyly and Donne had, albeit disingenuously, in *Euphues* and the
Paradoxes. To further prevent any such sceptical abuse, Lever explains that
dispositio should precede *inventio* 'not only for that it iudgeth of the forme of an
argument: but also for that it descryeth the truth and falsehode of al sentences: and
noteth the force, and signification of wordes...For how can a man eyther inuent or
teach any good reasons, to proue matters that lye in doubt, the nature of sentences
and wordes, being not first knowne.'[117] For Lever the appearance of a paradox,
such as the snow is black, belies a fallacy which may be exposed by the truth-
discerning power of dialectic, *dispositio*; in this respect, he is entirely faithful to

Aristotle's and Cicero's characterization of paradox as an argument which only appears validly to draw an absurd but necessary conclusion from true premises, but which actually has committed some fallacy such as equivocation. As a conclusion to his manual, Lever says that we must first suspect this fallacy when we conduct a dialectical analysis of a doubtful question such as those proposed in *theses* or paradoxes. 'First learne by the Storehouses the force of euery worde that is in your question: and if there bee wordes of double understanding in it, laye forth their sundrie and diuers significations.'[118]

The *Rule of Reason* (1551) written by Lever's contemporary, Thomas Wilson, was the first work in English to attempt to summarize the principles of Aristotelian logic. Like Lever's *Art of Reason*, it places *dispositio* before *inventio*, but Wilson's explanation for this organization makes more explicit the view that the judgement of an argument's truth is naturally inherent in its discovery as such. He says, 'And now some wil say, that I should first speake of the finding out of an argument, before I should teache the waye how to frame an argument. Truthe it is that naturally we find a reason or we beginne to [fashion] the same.'[119] The arrangement of arguments occurs while we seek through *inventio* to find them, and therefore, the structures of that arrangement, enthymeme, induction, example and most importantly, syllogism, are operative in all dialectical processes. In so far as *inventio* may consider any term fit for service as the middle term of an argument, it is clear that it is no longer operative after it has delivered its subject to the scrutiny of the proofs of *dispositio*. Wilson declares the indifference of *inventio* to the discovery of true arguments when he explains how the study of dialectic will expose the wiles of the sophist who employs it to deceitful ends. Like Lever's sophist who would prove 'the snowe to bee blacke, and the Crowe to bee white', Wilson describes the sophist as one who 'is euer occupied eyther in prouing the truthe alwayes to bee false, or els that whiche is false to be true'; but also like Lever, Wilson is confident 'that a skilful artificer mai [the] soner put the vayne Sophister to silence by opening the fraude, & declaring the crafte of his inuencion'.[120] Though it is assumed that even the sophist may discern the truth or falsity of his arguments, 'his inuencion' need not be bound to the dictates of his true judgement and may

proceed to deliver middle terms which are likely to be equivocal. The result, as we might expect, is a paradox; something that appears true is actually false or *vice versa*. It is illuminating to read another part of Donne's letter to Wotton in the context of Wilson's direction to the 'skilful artificer' who silences the paradoxes of sophists by opening and declaring their fraud. Donne calls his *Paradoxes* 'swaggerers' which are 'quiet enough' when resisted by the 'better reasons' of dialectic rightly applied, and stresses that the apparent validity of their arguments is exposed for fraud when their fallacies are 'hatcht' under the pressure of logical inquiry. As Wilson and Lever (and Aristotle) had prescribed, those who hope to refute the conclusions of Donne's *Paradoxes* must utilize *dispositio* to judge where and to what end fallacies were committed. Of course this refutation may involve recognizing when the commonplaces of *inventio* have been improperly combined or arranged, but again, such judgement presupposes a knowledge of the structures of argument through which the generic propriety of the commonplaces are established.[121]

When Wilson comes to his third book, 'The places of false conclusions, or deceitful reasons,' he reiterates the priority of *dispositio* in the refutation of sophistical arguments. He says that 'ther is no argument so deceitful but thee al mai easly be auoyded, if the rules be marked, that are rehersed before, concerning the true makyng of an argument'.[122] To illustrate this point, Wilson likens the relationship between deceitful and true arguments to the opposition of contraries. Just as the painter who is able to render perfectly the likeness of a lion is also able to recognize any defect in any other painting, so, Wilson says, 'if one can make an argument, accordyng to the rules aboue rehersed, in his due fourme and mode, he can tell also, when an argument is other wise made then the rules [can] beare.'[123] He supports this claim, as he had in the *Arte of Rhetorique*, on the authority of the Aristotelian principle that '*contrariorum eadem est doctrina*...of contraries there is one maner of doctrine'.[124] Later in the *Arte of Rhetorique*, Wilson again recommends the opposition of contraries as a means to gaining a clear perception of the object under scrutiny. '*Contraria inter se opposita magis elucescunt*. That is to say, Contraries beyng set, the one against the other, appeare more evident.'[125] To

maintain that the opposition of contraries contributes to the clarification of the true nature of an issue under consideration presupposes a belief that the human mind can, in fact, discern true natures as such. Again, we are reminded of the sceptical issues raised by Gorgias' sophistical conflation of contraries in *On What is Not*, Isocrates' clarifications in his paradox of concord in *Panathenaicus*, Lyly's instructions to the young wit in *Euphues* and Donne's equivocations in the *Paradoxes*. As we will see, in light of the two strains of scepticism available to sixteenth-century thought, claims about the clarity which the juxtaposition of contraries yields begin to reflect the general epistemological views of their claimants, views, it must be said, that bear heavily not only on our understanding of their philosophical positions, but on their theological allegiances as well.

8

Clarification by Refutation

Though Donne and his fellow paradoxist, Ortensio Lando, both disavow the seriousness of their *theses* by emphasizing the illumination which results from the observation of their manipulation of contraries, we must ask whether such manipulation could be applied to the same epistemological end by one who wrote from within the scholastic logical framework derived from Aristotle (Donne) and another who repudiated that framework for overestimating the power of human reason to attain a vision of truth (Lando).[126] In his prefatory epistle to the reader, Lando, like Wilson, stresses the virtue of the opposition of contraries. He says:

> Gentle Reader, euen as contrarie thinges compared one with another, do giue the better euidence of their value and virtue: so the truth of any matter whatsoever, appeareth most cleerly, when the different reasons against the same, is equalled or neighboured therewith...For this intent, I haue vndertaken (in this book) to debate on certaine matters, which our Elders were wont to cal Paradoxes: that is to say, things contrary to most mens present opinions: to the end, that by such discourse as is helde in them, opposed truth might appeare more cleere and apparant.[127]

As we will see, Lando's paradoxes do not attempt to make unorthodox conclusions, such as ignorance is preferable to wisdom, appear true by deploying the critical terms of his arguments ambiguously. Their conclusions, like those of the Socratic/Stoic paradoxes, appear contrary to common opinion only when presented without their qualifying argumentation; just as happiness may only consist in virtue given a specific definition of happiness, so may ignorance only appear preferable to wisdom given a specific definition of ignorance. Lando's paradox of ignorance, therefore, is no more a disparagement of wisdom than Erasmus' in the *Praise of Folly*; he argues for ignorance only in so far as it advances his defense of the moral wisdom of the pious Christian. When those 'different reasons against' the truth of the superiority of wisdom are 'equalled and neighboured' with the reasons of an orthodox defense of wisdom, only those reasons which may be utilized to support an uncontroversial but clarified statement of the superiority of wisdom remain. Hence, Lando's defense of ignorance becomes a specific defense only of the ignorance of those things which undermine the attainment of true wisdom, just as the defense of the student lawyer who 'must adventure to defend such a cause, as they that are most imployed, refuse to maintaine', proceeds by emphasizing only those actions of the accused which accord with justice.[128] The 'true' distinction between the contraries of ignorance and wisdom, injustice and justice, is never obscured. Donne's *Paradoxes*, on the other hand, require his readers to apply the analytical techniques of dialectic to discriminate the ambiguous terms which permit his unusual conclusions to follow. To the extent that Donne's arguments proceed by such ambiguities, they provide precisely the practice in refutation for which readers of the first two books of the *Rule of Reason* were supposed to be prepared.

Wilson, like Lever, is explicit about the priority which attention to ambiguity must take in the refutation of apparent paradoxes. Though this concern with the utilization of dialectic to eliminate ambiguity originates in Aristotle's discussion in the *Topics* and *Sophistical Refutations*, it became all the more acute as a response to the sceptical critique, both radical and moderate. Though the certainty of the schoolmen's syllogisms was under attack by sceptics guided by the methods of dissent outlined by Cicero in the *Academica* and Sextus in the *Outlines of*

Pyrrhonism and *Against the Mathematicians*, there was no shortage of English manuals of logic defending the power of Aristotelian syllogistic to demonstrate truths. Lever, Wilson, Ramist logicians such as Dudley Fenner and Abraham Fraunce, as well as anti-Ramist Aristotelians such as Thomas Blundeville, all explicitly promoted the power of dialectic to eradicate doubt on the authority of Aristotle.[129] Wilson says that 'to confute, is nothyng els but to Judge false packyng, and to unlose by reason, thynges knit together by craft'. It is the duty of the logician, he explains, not simply to defend his own position, but also to 'ouerthrow, the assercion of other, and also by [reason], proue their saiyngs [sic] to be false, whiche by deceipte, would inueigle the weake.'[130] In the *Sophistical Refutations*, Aristotle had required his dialectician to expose precisely this pretense to truth. 'For it is a general rule in fighting contentious persons [sophists], to treat them not as refuting, but as merely appearing to refute; for we say that they don't really *deduce* anything, so that our object in correcting them must be to dispel the appearance of it.'[131] If we recall Aristotle's claim that the sophist wants to create the appearance that his opponent's argument generates a paradoxical conclusion by necessary consequence, the relationship between apparently necessary deductions and sophism becomes clear.[132] Just as it was Cicero's objective to eliminate the impression that the Stoic *paradoxa* were deduced by necessary consequence from true and unambiguous premises, so it is the objective of both Lever's and Wilson's dialectician (following Aristotle) to discredit the apparent truth of the sophist's arguments. In describing the distinction between a genuine and apparent refutation, Aristotle reveals the principal fallacy committed by arguments which merely appear to deduce a valid conclusion.

> If refutation is a non-homonymous contradiction arrived at from certain premisses [sic], there will be no need to draw distinctions against ambiguity and homonymy; for they do not effect a deduction. The only motive for drawing further distinctions is that the conclusion reached looks like a refutation. What, then, we have to beware of, is not being refuted, but seeming to be, because of course the asking of ambiguities and of questions that turn upon homonymy, and all other tricks of that kind, both conceal a genuine refutation and make it uncertain who is being refuted and who is not.[133]

A genuine refutation is one that is deduced from certain and unambiguous (non-homonymous) premises, and as such, does not require the analysis of the various senses of its critical terms which Lever and Wilson claim sophistical deductions require. However, what Aristotle emphasizes, which Lever and Wilson do not, is that an increased attention to the various senses of terms can obscure as well as clarify genuinely valid deductions. As we have seen and will see further, the deductions of Donne's arguments in the *Paradoxes* clearly rely on ambiguously deployed terms, and therefore, demand the kind of dialectical analysis (by *dispositio*) recommended by Aristotle, Lever and Wilson. Though the apparent paradoxicality of Donne's arguments will be dispelled after such analysis, the awareness of the multiplicity of meanings which results does not necessarily serve to clarify that the contraries of Donne's *theses* are true. Though it may be paradoxical to assert, as Donne does in his fourth paradox, 'That Nature is our worst Guide', after discriminating the various senses in which the term 'nature' is used, it is clear that the contrary *thesis*, that nature is our best guide, can be made to appear paradoxical as well, if 'nature' is understood as the impulse to indulge our appetites. To Donne, nature was a particularly slippery term. Before attempting to restrict its meaning by identifying it with reason within the context of his argument in *Biathanatos*, he complained, 'This term "the law of nature" is so variously and unconstantly delivered, as I confess I read it a hundred times before I understood it once, or can conclude it to signify that which the author should at that time mean.'[134] In light of his consciousness of the difficulties which such variability and inconstancy present to accurate interpretation, his claim that his *Paradoxes* are 'alarums to truth to arme her then enemies' appears considerably less confident. Though Donne characterizes his *Paradoxes* as 'nothings' in his letter to Wotton because the conclusions of their arguments do not follow validly from their equivocal premises, their contrary positions are far from proven by the elimination of the appearance of paradox. As Aristotle had explained in the *Sophistical Refutations*, a paradox is dispelled when it is shown not to follow as a necessary consequence of the argument, but as he also explained, the elimination of an

apparent paradox by the analysis of ambiguous terminology assists only in exposing falsity, not truth. Therefore, Donne's *Paradoxes* merely claim to alert truth to the presence of falsehood by encouraging a dialectical exposition of fallacy which demonstrates what is not true. Though Donne's reserve with respect to the power of logic to establish truth becomes evident by contrast to Wilson's example of the fallacious use of the term 'nature', we will see that we must be wary of concluding that Donne thought that dialectic was of no use whatever for the discovery and the application of truth.

9

Equivocation, Paradox and the Libertine Threat

Of the thirteen 'deceitful arguments' which Wilson recognizes, only six have specifically to do with ambiguous words, while the rest he calls 'subtilties without the worde'.[135] Nonetheless, the result in all cases is an ambiguity in the meanings of the critical terms of the argument. A false conclusion which follows from the confusion of two or more senses of the term 'nature' (e.g. 'sensuous appetite' and 'right reason') is a case of equivocation by homonymy, and one which follows from the confusion of two or more senses of an ambiguous sentence is a case of equivocation by amphiboly. These two fallacies clearly have to do with ambiguous words. However, when Wilson comes to the seventh fallacy of things 'without the worde', the last of the thirteen fallacies to be discussed in his section on the refutation of sophistical arguments, he explains that this seventh 'deceipt', Aristotle's '*ignoratio elenchi*', is 'a mistakyng of contradictorie propositions...which comprehendeth in it selfe al other aboue rehersed subtilties.'[136] The conclusion of an argument that commits this fallacy will be of the form 'p is q and not q'; we are reminded again of the amazement of Theodorus at the consequence of Pythagoras' relativism, and of Marbeck at the founding of the earth upon the sea. The fallacy which embraces all other fallacies, therefore, is that which confuses contradictory senses of the same term in order to generate a conclusion which seems to affirm that the law of non-contradiction may be validly violated. Such a conclusion appears all

the more amazing when the united contradictory states are also contraries, as may be the case in conclusions such as 'p is good and not good' when 'not good' is synonymous with the contrary of good, evil. Wilson's example of an argument which makes a fallacious use of the term 'nature' presents just such an amazing conclusion, that 'to synne is not euill'. The argument reads:

> What soeuer is naturall, that same is not euill.
> To synne is a thyng naturall.
> Ergo to synne is not euill.[137]

Of course, as the conclusion stands, there appears only to be a contradiction given the common understanding of the term 'sin' as 'evil'; it does not assert that sin is good, only that it is not evil. Wilson maintains that in this argument, the fallacy arises because 'the wordes of either proposicion...signifie diuerse thynges, or be diuersly applied', and recommends that it be flatly denied 'as folishe, or els dissolue it, as doubtfull.'[138] In his own refutation of this argument, Wilson chooses to deny the second premise rather than to take the weaker and more controversial position, that it is doubtful that sin is natural. This weaker position would require the kind of drawing of distinctions between the various senses of nature which Aristotle had warned could result in even further confusion. As Wilson is not willing to concede that the proposition that sin is natural is true in any sense of the term 'nature', he will not even acknowledge that the question is doubtful, and therefore, worthy of the kind of inquiry initiated by the argument of *theses*. To begin his denial of the second premise, he first transforms the predicate of the first premise, not evil, from a contradiction of evil into the contrary of evil, good. He defends this transformation explaining that 'God did create the nature of man, pure and cleane, and saied, that all was good, whiche he made, at the firste creacion'. The transformed first premise now asserts the stronger position, that whatever is natural is good, thus eliminating the possibility that a sin, which by definition is at least not good, may be identified with a natural thing. As the first premise stood originally, it was possible to have indifferent natural things, which are neither evil nor good.[139] Given this possibility, the second premise could be translated: there is a thing which is not good (to sin)

which is also a thing which is not evil (natural), hence allowing the conclusion to follow: to sin is not evil. This conclusion, however, would assert the valid yet paradoxical view that to sin is a thing indifferent. Wilson's transformation from contradictory to contrary in the first premise requires that the second premise assert the contradiction: a thing which is not good (to sin) is a thing which is good (natural), which, as we have seen, falls under his seventh fallacy, *ignoratio elenchi*, and thus, is a violation of the law of non-contradiction. He could have obtained the same result without transforming the first premise had he explicitly extended the definition of sin beyond 'a thing which is not good' to 'a thing which is evil'. In either case, the amazing conclusion, that to sin is not evil, is proven to be false and the apparent paradox dispelled.

As we will see when we examine his argument in *Biathanatos* that suicide is 'not so naturally Sin that it may never be otherwise,' Donne's concern to draw distinctions between the various meanings of the term 'nature' indicates that the position which he is advocating is, as he states on the title page, both a paradox and a *thesis*. Opponents of *Biathanatos*, such as the Cambridge Regius Professor of Divinity *circa* 1655, Anthony Tuckney, the Provost of Eton in 1700, John Adams, and Charles Moore, in 1790, will argue vehemently against this paradox, maintaining the dangers of Donne's manipulation of ambiguous terms in the service of what the mid-seventeenth century will consider to be the 'libertine' argument for the individual's power to justify any and all sinful actions.[140] Even in 1551, twelve years before the earliest recorded use of the term in English, Wilson recognized this threat and was using 'libertine' to refer to the sophistical practice of proving by syllogism that both nature and reason permit and approve what custom and doctrine have condemned as sinful. The syllogism proving that sin is not evil, he calls 'the libertines reason'.[141] Wilson's categorical denial of the libertine's claim that sin is natural is characteristic of the Aristotelian logician's defense of Christian first principles against the sceptic's attempt to reveal the paradoxical conclusions which may be deduced from such unqualified universal propositions. As Lever had advised, when a paradoxical conclusion is encountered, the Aristotelian dialectician suspects an ambiguous use of 'sundrie and divers significations' which may be

exposed by the analysis of *dispositio*.[142] And as Wilson had illustrated, when one discovers a particular sense of a term which threatens to qualify a fundamental moral law, one should judge that sense to be false. Had he contested the view that whatever is natural is not evil on the grounds that it makes a universal statement where only a particular is defensible, he would have had to concede that some natural things are not evil, a proposition which he would not deny, but which leaves the issue unsettled and still under threat of sophistical abuse. The sceptic could continue to argue that the natural things which are not evil cannot be considered sins, and would defend his position with respect to his own criteria for sinfulness. If these criteria are to be able to serve as objective standards by which to judge evil and sinful things, they will in turn require further proof which does not lead to regress or reciprocity. The Pyrrhonist will maintain that such criteria do not exist, while the probabilist sceptic will argue, as Cicero does in the *Paradoxa*, that it is the responsibility of the individual agent to utilize his reason to determine what is and is not sinful in any given set of circumstances, to terminate the process of reciprocity or regress by deciding when criteria have been clarified enough to serve as sufficiently (though not perfectly) objective standards of judgement.

It will not suffice according to Cicero, merely to define what is sinful as what is evil or *vice versa*. He says in his third paradox, 'It is unquestionable that transgression is not allowed to anybody; but what is not allowed depends upon the single point of being proved not to be allowed'.[143] After providing further examples of the Stoic polemical practice of circular reasoning (reciprocity), he asserts the relativist principle, 'If you posit...cases without qualification, their real nature cannot easily be judged' and concludes, 'Consequently, it is the motive that distinguishes...actions, not the nature of the action'.[144] As we will see, Donne's argument in *Biathanatos* that the 'seeming' good of particular 'ends' justifies a reasonable person's decision to act contrary to the law, advocates a similarly intentionist position that is easily confused with the form of relativism which Wilson and Adams had condemned in the libertine and which would later be associated with Montaigne.[145] What initiates this progression to relativistic conclusions is the doubt intrinsic in the exposition of a paradox or *thesis*, a doubt which questions the

grounds upon which absolute ethical definitions are based. According to Wilson and Adams, the response to motions of doubt which will lead to the moral chaos of relativism and libertinism must be swift and peremptory. Wilson preempts the further inquiry of the 'libertine' argument into the nature of sin, evil and nature by deferring to a definition derived from scripture, that anything natural is good because it was created by God. Adams employs a similar strategy, arguing that there are universal ethical principles which are evident in themselves to everyone, such as the law prohibiting suicide. Adams' comments are worth quoting here because they reflect the same dogmatic insistence on reason's ability to discern first principles which, we will see, Ramus and his followers offer as the solution to the unnecessary verbal subtleties of scholastic disputation.

> Wherefore if there can be no ignorance as to these Fundamental Principles [e.g. law of self-preservation]; and if there can be no want of Power to observe and practice 'em, to what purpose is it to plead for particular Reason, and for the privilege of Judging for ones self? A man cannot do so safely without some Rule, and that Rule must be universal publick Reason...[146]

Notes to Chapter II

[1] See Marrou, 1964, p. 289.

[2] *Topics* (Aristotle) 104b19-105a1

[3] Donne's problems were written intermittently between 1603 and 1609/10. See Donne, 1980, p. xv.

[4] *Topics* (Aristotle) 159a18-22

[5] Aristotle was aware, however, that the ackowledgement of probability depended on the audience to which arguments were directed. He explains that the 'wise' judge plausibility against 'the standard of nature and the truth' while the 'majority' judge according to 'convention'. He does not, however, give rhetorical precedence to one standard or the other, but merely recommends that 'if anyone speaks as do the expert reasoners, lead him into opposition to the majority, while if he speaks as do the majority, then into opposition to the wise.' Presumably, what is a common opinion for the wise may be paradoxical to the majority and *vice versa*. See *Sophistical Refutations* 173a20-30. For more on Aristotle's use of *theses* as exercises in *pro* and *contra* debate, see Bonner, 1949, p. 5.

[6] Though Thomas O. Sloane recognizes that *controversiae* are forensic declamations, he fails to acknowledge their derivation from *theses*. As a result, he mistakenly restricts all argument *in utramque partem* to *controversiae*. Not surprisingly, a host of errors follow, most problematic of which is his confusion of Cicero's Academic scepticism and its relation to the function of *inventio* (p. 89). See Sloane, 1985, pp. 67-207.

[7] See Quintilian, *Institutio* II, iv, 41; and Bonner, 1949, p. 12. The elder Seneca's *Controversiae* were probably written near the end of his life (c. 35 A.D.).

[8] See Seneca, *Controversiae*, I, preface 12.

[9] *De Oratore* III, 109 (cited in Bonner, 1949, p. 29)

[10] In *Topics* 95-96, however, Cicero mentions *controversiae* in particular reference to legal disputes. The question of whether *controversiae* had a specifically forensic rhetorical function when Cicero was writing is difficult and ultimately beyond the scope of this study.

¹¹ See *Topics* (Cicero) 91; and *Rhetoric* 1358b5-7.

¹² *Topics* (Cicero) 91

¹³ Wesley Trimpi has argued, 'In rhetorical terminology, which refers to subject matter, the *genera* are described as *theses*, the particular situations as *hypotheses*. In dialectical terminology, which refers to the procedure by which we discover and present that subject matter, the *genera* are described as *hypotheses* (literally that which *under*lies the theses), the particular "situations" (i.e. the initial propositions to be tested) as *theses*. The rhetorical thesis corresponds to the dialectical hypothesis, and they combine with one another in the paradoxical term *thema*, a "proposed hypothesis," of declamation.' It is important to recognize that Trimpi identifies the rhetorical *thesis* with the dialectical *hypothesis* only in so far as they represent an implicit underlying content to which the analysis of a particular problem (*thesis*) or case (*causa*) will lead. In this respect his identification is informative. He makes this identification in part, however, to explain the advent of the *thema* (pp. 61-62) which he calls 'a proposed hypothesis'. He claims that, as such, a 'proposed hypothesis' is paradoxical because of his mistaken view that *hypotheses*, in dialectic, are not propositions, while their counterparts, *theses*, are, thus resulting in the apparent paradox of a proposed non-proposition. In both the *Posterior Analytics* and *Topics*, however, a *hypothesis* is simply an assumed proposition, which need not be any more or less universal than a *thesis*; the critical difference is that explicit proofs may be offered for the illumination of the *thesis*, while none are offered for the *hypothesis*. Furthermore, contrary to Trimpi's claim that 'situations' of testing *theses* are the particulars of the general *hypotheses*, it is only when a *hypothesis* as a proposition, (e.g. 'if the soul of man is immortal, so are other souls as well, while if this one is not so, neither are the others' 119b33-120b6) is tested that it becomes a subject of dialectical inquiry. Aristotle advises disputants how to dispel the apparent paradoxicality of certain deductions which proceed from equivocal suppositions (*hypotheses*). This method of refutation results in converting the assumed premise, which Aristotle says 'may be true or false', into a proposition to be defended in its own right; the *hypothesis* is, therefore, converted into a problematic *thesis* by dialectical inquiry (152b16-24; cf 163b4-11 where '*hypotheses*' is used alternatively with '*theses*' to indicate their [*theses*] contentious nature). The ability of the *hypothesis* to be operate like a *thesis* is further supported by Aristotle's definition of the *hypothesis* as a subcategory of the *thesis* in the *Posterior Analytics* (72a18-24). Considered etymylogically, the term '*hypothesis*' merely indicates an unproven proposition which informs a *thesis*. In light of this clarification of Trimpi's distinction between the dialectical and rhetorical *thesis*, it should be noted that Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian and Aphthonius did not, in fact, observe such a distinction. It seems more plausible to suggest, based on the textual evidence, that '*hypothesis*' was employed in two senses, one indicating the assumption upon which a *thesis* depended, and another which indicated the particular circumstances in which a *thesis* could find expression. The suggestion seems all the more likely when we remember Quintilian's and Cicero's complaints about the dispute over the propriety of the *thesis* between orators and philosophers (*De Oratore* III, 107-108; *Institutio* II, xxi, 13). See Trimpi, 1974, pp. 55, n. 65, pp. 61-62. See also Kneale and Kneale, 1962, pp. 7, 99-100.

¹⁴ In his *De Differentiis Topicis*, Boethius had observed Cicero's, Quintilian's, and Aphthonius' distinction between the *thesis* and *hypothesis* and emphasized the philosophical nature of the dialectical *thesis* and the merely rhetorical nature of the *hypothesis*. '*Quaestionis autem duae sunt: una quae dicitur a dialecticis thesis; haec hujusmodi est quae de re caeteris circumstantiis quaerit ac disserit, quales a dialecticis maxime ad disputationem sumuntur, ut voluptasne summum bonum sit? Ducendane uxor? haec a nobis propositio vel propositum dicitur. Altero vero quae a Grecis vocatur hypothesis, a nobis dicitur causa; haec quaetio est personis, temporibus, factis caeterisque circumstantiis implicita...et thesis quidem philosophis, hypothesis vero oratoribus attributa est*' (lib. 1). '*Dialectica facultas igitur thesim tantum considerat. Thesis vero est sine circumstantiis quaestio. Rhetorica vero de hypothesibus, id est de quaestionibus circumstantiarum multitudine inclusis*' (lib. 4). See Boethius, 1847, 1, 4. In his *Etymologiae*, Isidore observes these distinctions. '*Genera quaestionem duo sunt: quorum unum est finitum, alterium infinitum. Finitum hypothesis Graece, Latine causa dicitur, ubi cum certa persona controversia est...Infinitum quod Graece thesis, Latine propositum nominatur. Hoc personam non habet certam, nec inest ei aliqua certa circumstantia, id est, nec locus, nec tempus*'. See Isidore, 1850, XX, xv. For more on the function of Isidore's *Etymologiae* and Boethius' *De Differentiis Topicis* as intermediaries between classical Greek and

Roman writers on rhetoric and dialectic and their later medieval commentators, see Vickers, 1988, pp. 216-224. Vickers notes that R. P. McKeon has observed that 'the subordination of rhetoric to logic [in the medieval period] was based usually on the greater particularity of of its subject matter, that is, its concern with hypotheses rather than with theses (p. 276).' See McKeon, 1952, pp. 260-296; from *Speculum*, v. 17 (1942) (quoted in Vickers, 1988, p. 223).

[15] *Topics* (Cicero) 79-80

[16] Seneca, *Controversiae* I, preface 12

[17] *Epistulae ad Quintum Fratem*, III, 3. The Loeb translator, W. Glynn Williams, gives 'argumentative' where Cicero gives the Greek adjective for *thesis*. See also *Letters to Atticus*, IX, 4, in which Cicero discusses his defense of *theses* as a source of consolation.

[18] Quoted in Marrou, 1964, p. 278

[19] See Quintilian, *Institutio* II, x, 6-15; Tacitus, *A Dialogue on Oratory*, 35; and Petronius, *Satyricon*, 1-4. In *A Lover's Complaint*, Shakespeare used 'controversy' to denote a declamatory exercise on a trivial subject, the truth of which cannot be conclusively established. See Shakespeare, *A Lover's Complaint*, ll. 110-112.

[20] *Orator* 46

[21] *Topics* (Aristotle) 163b3-11

[22] *De Oratore* III, 109-110

[23] For a summary of Cicero's terms for the *thesis*, see Bonner, 1949, p. 2.

[24] *De Oratore* II, 67-68. Quintilian agreed with Cicero on this point maintaining that speeches which are cluttered with syllogisms and enthymemes 'resemble dialogues and dialectical controversies [*dialecticis disputationibus*] rather than pleadings of the kind with which we are concerned'. See Quintilian, *Institutio* V, xiv, 27.

[25] *De Oratore* III, 107-108. It should be noted that at *De Oratore* III, 109-110, Cicero acknowledged the specifically rhetorical practice of *controversiae* in the Academic and Peripatetic schools. He is careful to point out, however, that only the *thesis* (here denoted by *quaestio infinta, quasi proposita* and *consultatio*) is used 'in establishing their system'.

[26] See *De Oratore* III, 60.

[27] *De Oratore* III, 70-72

[28] See *Topics* (Aristotle) 163b3-11. See also *Sophistical Refutations* 172b29-35, *Topics* 159a18-22.

[29] Quentin Skinner has argued that 'the anxieties expressed by seventeenth-century philosophers about moral ambiguity stem less from the rise of Pyrrhonism than from the Renaissance revival of the classical art of eloquence' (p. 269). Though he mentions scepticism of the 'Academic stamp', Skinner fails to appreciate the degree to which Cicero's and Aristotle's moderately sceptical evaluation of terminological ambiguity informed their rhetorical views. Nor does he recognize the fundamental role which dialectic played in distinguishing the various senses of terms which would ultimately be rhetorically deployed by the orator described by the models of classical eloquence, Cicero, Aristotle and Quintilian. He seems to believe that the clarification and conflation of ambiguous terms was restricted to the rhetorical figure, *paradiastole*. As we will see, however, the very Tudor rhetorician upon whom Skinner largely relies to support his view, Thomas Wilson, describes not only the fundamentally logical nature of the problem of terminological ambiguity, but also requires a thorough knowledge of logic before the student begins his study of rhetoric. Wilson, explains in his logical manual, the *Rule of Reason* (1551), that the logical fallacy described by Aristotle, *ignoratio elenchi*, underlies all ambiguously deployed terms, in rhetoric or dialectic. See Wilson, 1551, sig. Tv. Symptomatic of Skinner's neglect of dialectic in his appraisal of rhetoric and ambiguity is his omission from his study of Wilson's *Rule of Reason*. Also, his insistence on Carneades' rhetorical skill at arguing *in utramque partem* makes the New Academic (Ciceronian) regard for the truth indistinguishable from the Pyrrhonist and sophistical disregard for the truth. The difference, as we have seen, is vital because it makes Carneadean rhetoric valuable, not as a vehicle to suspension of assent, but to a clearer perception of truth through the scrutiny of dialectic such as we have observed in Socrates' critique in the *Gorgias*. See Skinner, 1994, pp. 267-292. On *paradiastole* and ambiguity, see Skinner, 1996, pp. 138-161; on Carneades and rhetoric, see Skinner, 1996, pp. 9-10, 93-99, 316-326, esp. pp. 9, 98, 318. Veronica Kahn also fails to recognize the Academic sceptic's view that dialectical inquiry could produce a perception of verisimilitude, a view which Augustine would argue in his *Against the Academics* implied an accurate perception of external reality. As a

result, she attributes a Pyrrhonist rejection of dialectic to fifteenth-century humanists, such as Giovanni Pontano, in her attempt to show that prudential judgement became primarily a rhetorical undertaking. Kahn recognizes that the influence of Sextus' *Outlines* was not felt until after Etienne's and Hervet's Latin translations, but refuses to admit that Cicero's influence on the scepticism of the fifteenth century would have recommended the use of dialectic (in combination with rhetoric) for the clarification of the probability of certain positions. As a result of this refusal, Kahn concludes that argument *in utramque partem* was used to emphasize the inability of logic to establish truth and the need for rhetorical elaboration for the elucidation of the probable (pp. 72-73). All argument *in utramque partem* is consequently appropriated to a rhetoric which is antagonistic to the traditional dialectic which utilizes unelaborated logical argument to distinguish the true from the false. The paradox, therefore, as one side of a debate *in utramque partem* becomes a principally rhetorical exercise which seeks to expose the intractability of truth. Kahn reaches this mistaken conclusion when she follows Rosalie Colie in classifying Erasmus' paradoxical encomium, *The Praise of Folly*, as a paradox. Kahn's mistake derives from her failure to recognize that, although both dialectic and rhetoric are traditionally concerned with opinion, dialectical argument is bound to proceed according to rules of logical inference which ultimately address themselves to true or false relations between premises, while rhetorical argument may proceed without utilizing the strength or weakness of logical inferences to support its position. See Kahn, 1985, pp. 72-73, 89-114, esp. 89-90; and Colie, 1969, pp. 95-96. In his assessment of the 'ambivalence' of Donne's *Paradoxes*, Richard E. Hughes has made similar errors in following Colie's classifications of paradox. See Hughes, 1968, pp. 60-66. Brian Vickers, though far from dismissing the importance of logic in Renaissance curricula, also emphasizes the increased attention paid by humanists to the teaching of rhetoric. See Vickers, 1988, pp. 266-272. Joel B. Altman has resolved some of this confusion by usefully observing that Cicero's emphasis on the cooperation of rhetoric and dialectic was a result of his moderate sceptical epistemological and his advocacy of arguing *in utramque partem*. See Altman, 1978, pp. 68-70. For further discussion of the influence of Cicero's Academic epistemology on his rhetoric, see also Seigel, 1968, pp. 16-39. In her examination of his *Dialecticae disputationes* and *De vero falsoque bono*, Lisa Jardine has observed that Lorenzo Valla recognized that the scepticism espoused in Cicero's *Academica* informed his rhetorical theory. See Jardine, 1977, pp. 143-164.

[30] In *De Oratore* II, 160, Cicero explains that Aristotle 'surveyed these concerns of the art of rhetoric, which he disdained, with that same keen insight, by which he had discerned the essential nature of all things'. See also III, 70-72; and *Orator* 46.

[31] *Rhetoric* 1355a30-35

[32] Ibid., 1355a15-16

[33] Ibid., 1355b18-23. Robert Wardy's discussion of these passages is illuminating especially with respect to their corraboration of Isocrates' view that rhetoric and dialectic involved the same intellectual activity (*dynamis*) applied to different ends. See his discussion of Aristotle and Isocrates' *Nicocles* 8 in Wardy, 1996, pp. 94-95, 111-125.

[34] For a brief discussion of Cicero's response to the division of rhetoric and dialectic initiated by Socrates, see Seigel, 1968, pp. 9-12.

[35] Quintilian, *Institutio* II, x, 12

[36] Ibid., xxi, 13. See also *Brutus*, 309.

[37] Quintilian, *Institutio* V, xiv, 28-29

[38] Seneca says that 'Cicero used to declaim, but not the *controversiae* which we speak nowadays, or even the kind called *theses* which were spoken before Cicero.' S. F. Bonner, however, claims that the *Paradoxa Stoicorum* are examples of *theses* and that 'Cicero seems generally to have preferred the wider scope and more philosophical subject-matter of the [*thesis*] to the limited scope afforded by the rhetorical '*causa*' (p. 30). See Bonner, 1949, pp. 2, 22-31.

[39] See *De Inventione* I, 8. In *Orator*, where the ideal is described, Cicero permits the treatment of *theses* to orators. It is interesting to note that two of the *theses* mentioned by Cicero in this passages are Stoic ('Is there any good except honour?' and 'What is the shape of the world?'). See *Orator*, 1939, p. 18, n. a.

[40] For more on the views of Hermagoras, Cicero and Quintilian on the role of the *thesis* in oratory and philosophy, see Trimpi, 1974, pp. 7-23.

[41] Quintilian, *Institutio* III, 8

[42] See *Paradoxa* 2. 'Cato, in my view a perfect specimen of a Stoic, holds opinions that by no means meet with the acceptance of the multitude, and moreover belongs to a school of thought that does not aim at oratorical ornament at all or employ a copious mode of exposition, but proves its case by means of tiny little interrogatory pin-pricks [syllogisms].' See also *Brutus* 119 where Cicero says that the Stoics' 'attention is absorbed in dialectic: they pay no attention to the qualities of style which range freely, which are discursive and varied.'

[43] Cicero, 1569, sig. Aii

[44] See Cicero, 1569, sig. Aii. Newton likely justified this addition in light of Cicero's comparison between his rhetorical 'practice in the law-courts and the assembly' and Cato's bare Stoic rhetoric. See *Paradoxa* 1. We have seen a similar addition to Cicero's Latin made by Newton (above p. 14). Though it is impossible to say for certain that the Latin text from which Newton made his translation did not correspond exactly to his English version, neither the 1499 edition of Petrus Marsi, nor the 1545 and 1552 editions of Paulus Manutius Aldus, contain any variation from the Loeb or Belles-Lettres versions of the Latin. Therefore, it seems likely that Newton supplemented Cicero's original Latin.

[45] See *Topics* (Aristotle) 105a10-19; and Cicero, *De Inventione* I, 51-74.

[46] *De Inventione* I, 50

[47] *Brutus* 150

[48] Ibid., 152-153

[49] Ibid., 153. See also *De Oratore* I, 186-188. Commenting on this passage from *Brutus*, Wesley Trimpi says, 'In this idealized portrait (*Brut.* 152-3), the liberal intentions of rhetoric and philosophy complement each other...As dialectic brings out the order of legal science, the general question [*thesis*] brings out the ethical significance which lies latent and implicit in the bare words of of a document or in the admitted facts of a criminal action.' See Trimpi, 1974, p. 38.

[50] *Paradoxa* 2

[51] *Sophistical Refutations* 172b29-35. See also *Topics* (Aristotle) 159a18-22, 163b3-11.

[52] On the relation of the *thesis* to deductive and inductive analysis, see Trimpi, 1974, pp. 51-61.

[53] Catherine Atherton has discussed the differences between Aristotle's and the Stoics' responses to the fallacies which resulted in paradoxes such as The Liar and the Sorites. See Atherton, 1993, pp. 407-414, 458-462.

[54] For more on Cicero's and Quintilian's views on the reconciliation of philosophy and rhetoric, see Vickers, 1988, pp. 163-170.

[55] For a discussion of the influence of Aphthonius on sixteenth and early seventeenth-century education, see Baldwin, 1944, v. 1, pp. 88-90, 221-227, 343-350; v. 2, 254-255, 288-354.

[56] T. W. Baldwin has observed that although Richard Rainolde's *Foundacion of Rhetorike* (London, 1563) provided an English version of the *Progymnasmata*, the Latin edition of Agricola, Cataneus and Lorich remained the preferred school edition when Donne would have been studying it. See Baldwin, 1944, v. 2, pp. 43-44, 288. On the integration of the teaching of dialectic and rhetoric at Cambridge and Oxford in the late sixteenth century, see Curtis, 1959, pp. 94-96. Agricola's *De Inventione Dialectica* (1515) was among the first and most influential attempts to reintegrate the interests of dialectic and rhetoric. Like Cicero, Agricola recognized that valid syllogistic demonstrations were unconvincing if their first principles were held in doubt, and therefore, promoted the assistance of a broader range of rhetorical topics to which the disputant could refer (through the use of invention) to render his arguments plausible. His view that the role of dialectic was to assist in the construction of probable, rather than certain, arguments places him in the moderately sceptical tradition of Cicero. As we will see, anxiety over the ramifications of scepticism led to the late sixteenth-century resurgence in interest in Aristotelian syllogistic as a means of grounding and verifying first principles. For an overview of Agricola's (and other humanists') attempt to reconcile the interests of rhetoric and dialectic, and its relation to his epistemological position, see Ong, 1958, pp. 101-112; Jardine, 1974, pp. 25-35; Rummel, 1995, pp. 153-192; and Reiss, 1991, pp.7-9.

[57] Aphthonius, 1572, p. 76

[58] See *Brutus* 152-153.

[59] Rainolde, 1563, sig. Aj

[60] T. W. Baldwin has also noticed Brinsley's insistence on the value of the Aphthonian *thesis* 'for disputative orations and declamations'. See Baldwin, 1944, v. 2, pp. 96-97. For further discussion of

Brinsley's view of Aphthonius and Cicero's *Paradoxa*, see Baldwin, 1944, v. 2, pp. 299-301. Quentin Skinner claims that Brinsley's characterization of the Aphthonian *thesis* reflects the view that argument *in utramque partem* was a specifically rhetorical process, which embodied what he mistakenly believes to be the principally rhetorical interests of classical writers on oratory. See Skinner, 1996, pp. 26-31. His claim is partially a response to Victoria Kahn's view that the fifteenth and sixteenth-century interest in argument *in utramque partem* developed as a practical response to the revival of the sceptical critique (both Pyrrhonist and Academic) of the ability of Aristotelian logic to establish certainty (see Skinner, pp. 299-303). Kahn argues that the emphasis which moderate humanist critics of Aristotelian logic placed on prudence reflects their acceptance of a combination of Cicero's New Academic scepticism and a logic of probability salvaged from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Rhetoric*. What begins to emerge in Kahn's analysis are the associations of the practical reason of Aristotle with the rhetorical persuasion of Cicero, and the speculative reason of Aristotle with the dogmatic logic dismissed by Cicero as unpersuasive. These associations are mistaken most crucially in their common assumption that practical reason, as it is concerned both with opinion and action, utilizes less logically rigorous (and therefore, more 'rhetorical') methods of proof, while speculative reason, as it is concerned with knowledge and truth abstracted from circumstance, utilizes deductive methods which seek exclusively to demonstrate necessary conclusions from known first principles. As we will see, Aristotle distinguished dialectic from demonstration on the grounds that it was concerned with opinion, while demonstration was concerned with knowledge, but both utilized the same types of argumentation. Furthermore, Aristotle maintained, as did Aquinas after him (*Summa* I, q. 79, a. 2), that the first practical principles were no less certain than the first speculative principles; they were simply more difficult to apply reliably because of the complexity of the circumstances to which they were relevant. Kahn explicitly denies that practical reason has universal precepts (p. 42). Although she recognized Aristotle's distinction between the dialectical and demonstrative syllogism, Kahn, like Skinner, does not acknowledge the fundamental role which sixteenth-century commentators on rhetoric believed dialectic played in the composition of persuasive oratory, and as a result, attributes to Hobbes an affirmation of the priority of logical proof against the claims of sophistical rhetoricians, which, we will see, sixteenth-century commentators on Ciceronian and Aristotelian rhetoric had faithfully observed. See Kahn, 1985, pp. 30-54, 152-181. Dwight Cathcart confuses the relation between speculative and practical reason in a similar way when he claims that 'Donne is not a philosophical poet' because his 'investigations are not theoretic but practical' (p. 29). See Cathcart, 1975, pp. 29-30. See also Hoopes, 1962, pp. 73-85.

[61] Brinsley, 1612, p. 184. S. F. Bonner describes the manner in which Quintilian, in *Institutes* II, iv, 25 and III, v, 5, thought an investigation of the *thesis*, 'An uxor ducenda', could become a more particular *suasoria*. See Bonner, 1949, p. 8.

[62] Brinsley, 1612, p. 184

[63] Ibid., p. 174. Brinsley thought that the study of logic, and with it, the serious treatment of the abstract *theses* of the philosophers, was too difficult for grammar school students, and should be reserved for university students. For more on Brinsley's opinions of logic and disputation, see Watson, 1908, pp. 91-95.

[64] In the commentary of his edition of Livy, Joannes Velcurio also emphasized the philosophical nature of the *thesis* compared to the *hypothesis*. 'Thus hypotheses-that is, good, or bad, or intermediate examples of individuals-can properly be drawn from history; these are then considered and assigned to theses, that is to their common places (*loci communes*), and to the general principles of morality and other things'. Quoted in Grafton and Jardine, 1990, p. 70. It should be noted that Grafton and Jardine are quoting from Gabriel Harvey's copy of Velcurio's Livy.

[65] Aphthonius, 1572, p. 207

[66] *Poetics* 1456a35-b2 (cited in Trimpi, 1974, p. 32)

[67] *De Partitione Oratoria* 5

[68] For the view that invention and the *topoi* to which it referred were fundamentally the property of dialectic, and that the rhetorical use of invention (particularly in metaphysical poetry) presupposed a dialectical framework, see Woods, 1968, pp. 66-73.

[69] Aphthonius, 1572, p. 207

[70] *De Partitione Oratoria* 4

[71] See Aphthonius, 1572, p. 207. '*Differt autem Consultatio ab hypothesi, id est, causa...*'. Lorich points to Aphthonius' derivation of the term *consultatio* from *De Partitione Oratoria* in his *scholia* (p. 210). Altman overlooks the effort made by both Cicero and Quintilian to reconcile the philosophical *thesis*, which they claimed had been unfairly appropriated by the dialecticians, with the rhetorical *controversiae* and *suasoriae* practiced in the schools of declamation. He cites Aphthonius' definition of the *thesis* in Agricola's *Progymnasmata*, but fails to notice that Lorich explicitly refers to Cicero's various Latin equivalents for *thesis* as support for his own definition of the term. Had Altman been aware that Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian and Aphthonius maintained that the ideal orator should be able to utilize the techniques of dialectic as a part of his rhetorical expertise, he would not have claimed that '[philosophers] argued their philosophical *quaestiones* and rhetoricians their *theses* and *hypotheses*' (p. 390). As we have seen, Cicero and Quintilian argued explicitly against this distinction, as did Aristotle in the passage quoted by Altman (*Rhetoric* 1355a32-35). Finally, Altman's distinction places him at odds with Bonner on the philosophical nature of the *thesis*. See Altman, 1978, pp. 389-395; and Bonner, 1949, pp. 1-31. For more on the relation of *controversiae* and *suasoriae* to the *thesis*, see Trimpi, 1974, pp. 61-75.

[72] Aphthonius calls those questions concerning being and natures '*contemplatiuae*' and those concerning action '*ciuiles*', while Cicero calls the former '[*res*] *cogitationis*' and the latter '[*res*] *actionis*'.

[73] Donne, 1980, p. 17, ll. 7-10. It was a commonplace that Aristotle maintained that the good approached perfection to the extent that it participated universally in particular goods. Aristotle discusses this question in *Nicomachean Ethics* 1096a12-1098b8, and concludes, 'human good turns out to be activity of soul in conformity with excellence, and if there is more than one excellence, in conformity with the best and most complete'. See also Blundeville, 1599, sig. A3. 'So my hope is not to offend the learned, who, I am sure doe well allow of Aristotle in saying, that euery good thing, the more common it be, the better it is'. Cicero's threefold division of the good in *De Partitione Oratoria* 74 ('external goods, goods of the body and goods of the mind') corresponds exactly with Aristotle's in *Nicomachean Ethics* 1098b11-15 ('external,...relating to soul or body'); it is vital that we keep this classification in mind when we read Donne's sixth and eighth paradoxes. For more instances of Donne's manipulation of the term 'good' see 'Confined Love' (ll. 18-21) and 'Community'.

[74] On the utility of *theses* and *hypotheses* in forensic determinations of *aequitas*, see Trimpi, 1974, pp. 23-42; and Bonner, 1949, pp. 46-47. For an examination of the role of *theses* and *hypotheses* in the representation of problems of *aequitas* in Elizabethan drama, see Altman, 1978, pp. 66-67, 169-174, 226-227, 273-282, 312-320.

[75] *De Partitione Oratoria* 66 (translator's emphasis)

[76] On the defense of paradoxes in the Inns of Court and its relation to Donne's *Paradoxes and Problems*, and *Biathanatos*, see Bullough, 1972, pp. 66-70. On the use of the more specific *causae* (*hypotheses*) described by Cicero and Quintilian in the academic disputations of the Inns of Court, see Schoek, 1957, pp. 498-508. After devoting considerable space to recording the scholastic tradition of the disputation of *theses* in sixteenth-century Oxford and Cambridge, Una Nelly fails to notice its relation to Donne's utilization of paradox. When she discusses paradox in Donne, she quite conventionally assumes that a paradox for Donne signified a contradiction, not an unorthodox opinion. See Nelly, 1969, pp. 33-57, 74-78.

[77] *De Partitione Oratoria* 66

[78] *Paradoxa* 24. See also Trimpi, 1974, p. 98, n. 115.

[79] *Paradoxa* 25

[80] Ibid., 24

[81] In his discussion of Aphthonius' treatment of the *thesis*, Wesley Trimpi notices the analytical contribution which the Academic's *pro* and *contra* consideration of *theses in utramque partem* makes to the 'discovery of a principle of order' which may then be applied to particular casuistical considerations (p. 81). See Trimpi, 1974, pp. 75-81.

[82] In *De Natura Deorum*, Cicero says that the 'Academic style' is 'to combat received opinion' (*Academicorum more contra communem opinionem*). See *De Natura Deorum* III, 72.

[83]Aphthonius, 1572, p. 207. The question of marriage was a commonplace subject for the *thesis*. See Quintilian, *Institutio*, III, 8; Boethius, *De Differentiis Topicis* I; and Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, Bk. 3, c. 9 ff.

[84]Aphthonius, 1572, p. 209. Aphthonius' use of the term *laudare* here should remind us of Erasmus' contention against Clichtove that his praise (*laus*) of marriage in his *Declamation in Praise of Marriage* incorporates the techniques of the derivatives of the *thesis*, the *suasoria* and *obligatoria*. See above pp. 29-30.

[85] Ibid., p. 210

[86] Ibid., p. 220

[87] Rainolde, 1563, sig. Dj. Rainolde's definition of the *thesis* reads: 'a certain question in consultacion had, to bee declaimed upon uncertaine, notyng no certaine persone or thyng'.

[88] Cicero enumerates the five parts of the art of rhetoric at *De Inventione*, I, 9. For a fuller account of the debate over *inventio* and *dispositio*, and their relation to rhetoric and dialectic, see Baldwin, 1944, v. 2, pp. 1-68; Howell, 1961, pp. 16-23, 157-165; Ong, 1958, pp. 112-116; and Ong, 1968, pp. 39-69.

[89] *De Inventione*, I, 9

[90] Ibid., I, 50

[91] See *De Oratore* II, 67-68; III, 107-108

[92] See *De Inventione*, I, 51

[93] Ibid., I, 61. In his *Rule of Reason* (1551), Thomas Wilson continued to associate Socratic dialectic with induction. See Wilson, 1551, sig. Tiij.

[94] *De Inventione* I, 61

[95] *Brutus* 153

[96] On Melanchthon's recognition of the primacy of dialectic's claim to *inventio* and *dispositio*, and its relation to the general interest of northern European humanists (e.g. Ramus, Agricola, Sturm) in dialectic, see Ward, 1983, pp. 126-173, esp. 156ff; and Jardine, 1982, pp. 797-807.

[97] Melanchthon, 1546, pp. 11-12 (quoted in Baldwin, 1944, v. 2, pp. 9-10)

[98] Agricola completed *De Inventione Dialectica* in around 1479, but it was not printed until 1515. It exerted a great influence on the teaching of logic in England until the mid-sixteenth century when the debate between Agricolan and scholastic logic was supplanted by the debate between Ramist and traditonal Aristotelian logic. For more on this transition, see Reiss, 1991, pp. 91-99. For the debt of Ramus to Agricola generally, see Ong, 1958, pp. 92-224. Agricola's appropriation of *inventio* to dialectic is traditionally thought to betoken the burgeoning humanist interest in a more rhetorically elaborated dialectic. Though this interest is undeniable, it should not be permitted to obscure the fact that the same Aristotelian logical structures according to which scholastic dialectic had functioned continued to exert their influence in humanist dialectic under the name of *dispositio*. Though *dispositio* could refer to the arrangement of the parts of an oration, it also referred, as we will see, to the method of proof in all forms of argumentative speech or writing. Hence, while it is possible to observe a more rhetorical dialectic emerging with the humanist interest in *inventio*, it is equally possible to observe the emergence of a logical rhetoric founded on both Cicero's and Quintilian's insistence on the co-operation of dialectic and rhetoric in oratory. For an example of the traditional view of a dialectic which becomes dominated by rhetoric with the ascendency of the humanist revival of classical learning, and a corresponding misrepresentation of the commitment of Cicero and Quintilian to the value of dialectic to oratory, see Skinner, 1996, pp. 26-65.

[99] Walter J. Ong has observed that the placement of *dispositio* before *inventio* was derived from Aristotle through Boethius. See Ong, 1958, pp. 112-113. On the significance of the arrangement of *dispositio* and *inventio* generally, see Ong, 1958, pp. 112-116.

[100] Wilson, 1982, p. 32

[101] Ibid., p. 32. Wilson's insistence on teaching truth represents his departure from the more overtly sceptical dialectical principles of Agricola. On Agricola's scepticism and its relation to scholastic logic, see Ong, 1958, pp. 92-130; Reiss, 1991, pp.7-9; and Jardine, 1974, pp. 25-35.

[102] Wilson's definitions of *theses* and *hypotheses* ('questions infinite' and 'questions definite') constitute the most general classifications to which the rhetorician must refer. 'Those questions are called infinite, whiche generally are propounded, withoute the comprehension of tyme, place, and person, or any such like...Those questions are called definite, whiche set furthe a matter, with the appoynctment, and namyng of place, time, and persone'. See Wilson, 1982, p. 23.

[103] Ibid., p. 24

[104] Ibid., p. 23

[105] Ibid., p. 24

[106] Ibid., p. 236

[107] See *Topics* (Cicero) 6-7.

[108] Ibid., 6-7. The Loeb translator, H. M. Hubbell, retains the Greek used by Cicero for dialectic and topics.

[109] For a full account of the Stoic response to ambiguity and its relation to the development of their dialectic, see Atherton, 1993.

[110] *Topics* (Cicero) 8. I have quoted the Latin because the Loeb translates *fidem* as 'firmly'. In the context of his critique of Stoic dialectic, Cicero would not have wanted to give the impression that dialectic could produce any more than 'credible' arguments.

[111] *Topics* (Aristotle) 105b30-31

[112] Ibid., 155b8-15

[113] *Rhetoric* 1355b18-23

[114] Lever, 1573, pp. 230-231

[115] Ibid., p. 231

[116] See *Topics* (Cicero) 6-7.

[117] Lever, 1573, pp. 138-139

[118] Ibid., pp. 231-232

[119] Wilson, 1551, sig. Bj. Joel B. Altman disregards this comment and mistakenly persists in maintaining that Wilson asserted the priority of *inventio*. See Altman, 1978, pp. 51-52.

[120] Wilson, 1551, sig. Bij

[121] Wilbur S. Howell seems to forget the adjudicative function of *dispositio* when he explains the subordination of *inventio* as indicative of an unsceptical frame of reference. He says, 'This attitude is a significant phenomenon in intellectual history. It really is a way of saying that subject matter presents fewer difficulties than organization, so far as composition is concerned. A society which takes such an attitude must be by implication a society that is satisfied with its traditional wisdom and knows where to find it. It must be a society that does not stress the virtues of an exhaustive examination of nature so much as the virtues of clarity of form'. See Howell, 1961, p. 23.

[122] Wilson, 1551, sig. Piiij

[123] Ibid., sig. Piiij

[124] Ibid., sig. Piiij. See also Wilson, 1982, pp. 53-54; and Aristotle, *Categories* 4a17, *Topics* 110b20-21.

[125] Wilson, 1982, p. 257

[126] For more on Lando's suspicion of wordly knowledge, see Grendler, 1981, pp. 27-38; and Grendler, 1966, pp. 230-249.

[127] Lando, 1593, sig. A4. In the epistle dedicatory of his translation of the first three of Lando's four books of problems, *Quattro libri de dubbi* (1552), *Delectable demaundes and pleasaunt questions* (London, 1566), Alain Chartier praised Lando for providing valuable instruction for the young in virtue by rhetorically asking questions and, more importantly, giving the answers to those questions. The *Short Title Catalogue* notes that W. Painter, and not Chartier, is the translator of the *Quattro libri*, though it continues to be catalogued under Chartier's name.

[128] Lando, 1593, sig. A4

[129] Alvin Sullivan examines the discussion of sophistical arguments and their refutation in these writers' books on logic and rhetoric, and their representation in some of Donne's poems. Sullivan neglects to acknowledge Aristotle's *Sophistical Refutations* as the source for this discussion and mistakenly claims that in their treatments of similitudes, these writers often confused sophistry and logic. See Sullivan, 1982, pp. 107-120.

[130] Wilson, 1551, sig. Piij

[131] *Sophistical Refutations* 175a33-36 (translator's emphasis)

[132] See Ibid., 172b29-35; and *Topics* 159a18-22.

[133] *Sophistical Refutations* 175a36-175b3.

[134] Donne, 1982, ll. 1486-1489

[135] Wilson, 1551, sig. Qi

[136] Ibid., sig. Tv. See also Blundeville, 1599, pp. 167-8 on *ignoratio elenchi*. For an overview of the teaching of the thirteen Aristotelian fallacies at Cambridge in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, see Costello, 1958, pp. 52-55.

[137] Wilson, 1551, sig. Piiij

[138] Ibid., sig. Piiij

[139] The doctrine of morally indifferent states derives from Stoic ethics, and was exploited by 'libertines' in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries who sought to defend actions which were 'not good'. See Diogenes, *Lives*, VII, 102-107.

[140] See John Adams, 1700; Moore, 1790.

[141] Wilson, 1551, sig. Piiij. The *OED* cites John Northbrooke's *Dicing* (1577) as the earliest use of libertine to signify one who acknowledges no law in religion or morals. Wilson's use of this sense of the term 'libertine' is quite important in the context of the extensive debate over the nature of Donne's supposed libertinism. Though it suggests the possibility of licentiousness, it only comments specifically on the sophistical argumentation used to justify sinful behavior. In 1923, Louis I. Bredvold discussed Donne's naturalism and scepticism in relation to the libertinism traditionally attributed to Montaigne; see Bredvold, 1923, pp. 471- 502. H. J. C. Grierson, in his 1912 edition of Donne's poems, referred to the young Donne as a libertine See Donne, 1912, p. xxxv. In 1934, George Williamson investigated the use of *Biathanatos* as a model for libertines by examining the attributions of libertinism and relativism of John Adams in his *An Essay Concerning Self-Murther* (e.g. p. 160 of 1700 edition) and of Charles Moore in his *A Full Inquiry into the Subject of Suicide* (1790). He also acknowledges Donne's awareness of the distinction between Academic and Pyrrhonist scepticism, which Bredvold had failed to do. See Williamson, 1934, pp. 276-291. Later, S. E. Sprott attempted to explain how Grierson and Williamson (and others) were using the term. Sprott went on to suggest that *Biathanatos* became a 'manifesto of libertine suicide' by 1700. Though Sprott never claims that Donne conceived of *Biathanatos* as such a 'manifesto', he does not deny the claims of relativism from which, Wilson and Adams argue, issue the sophistical arguments of the libertine. See Sprott, 1949-1950, pp. 335-353; and Sprott, 1961, pp. 72-93. Robert Ornsetin challenged Bredvold's long uncontested association between the libertinism of Montaigne and Donne's scepticism by observing Donne's reliance on Aquinas for his belief in an objective natural law. See Ornstein, 1956, pp. 213-229. Though she acknowledges Ornstein, Rosalie Colie continues to assert Donne's libertinism. See Colie, 1966, pp. 96-141. See also Rockett, 1971, pp. 507-518; Sherwood, 1984, pp. 71-75; and Baumlin, 1991, pp. 230-262.

[142] Wilson, *Art of Reason* (1573), p. 232

[143] *Paradoxa* 20

[144] Ibid., 24. See also *Paradoxa* 22 for an example of the type of circular reasoning which Cicero condemns in *De Finibus*. 'If good deeds are deeds done rightly, and if nothing is more right than that which is right, undoubtedly also nothing can be found that is better than that which is good'.

[145] See Donne, 1982, ll. 1782-1797. In a sermon preached at the Hague on 19 December, 1626, Donne reveals his characteristic tolerance of the reasoning of those who subscribe to non-Anglican doctrines when he describes 'Libertines' and 'Separatists' only as those 'that never came to any Church. See Donne, 1953, III, p. 296.

[146] John Adams, 1700, p. 90

Chapter III

Ramist and Aristotelian Responses to Doubt and Paradox

1

Ramus and the Establishment of Certainty through Dialectic

Peter Ramus' innovations to the system of rhetoric and dialectic which the humanists of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries had adapted from the principles of Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian are so comprehensive that they could not be adequately summarized in this study. Fortunately, studies which have more than adequately accomplished this task have long been completed.[1] We will restrict our discussion of Ramistic dialectic, therefore, to those issues which bear directly on its treatment of potentially inconclusive questions such as we have found examined in paradoxes and *theses*. Unlike Lever and Wilson, Ramus is not concerned to respond to the threat posed by the sceptical critique of Aristotelian logic. In the preface to his *Dialectique* (1555), he reviews the various dialecticians of antiquity and concludes that the Pyrrhonists and the New Academics (i.e. Carneades and Cicero) have abused dialectic by applying it to expose the uncertainty of all things and offering verisimilitude as the most objective standard of judgement attainable by human reason. As we have seen, the exposition of uncertainty was properly associated with the destructive enterprise of the Pyrrhonists, and judgement by verisimilitude, with the constructive ethics of Cicero. In his *Dialectique*, Ramus, like Lever and Wilson in their manuals of logic, is not interested in making such distinctions in sceptical practice because his logic is devised to eliminate the obscurity and ambiguity with which sceptics, sophists and scholastics alike have plagued the disputation. He says, 'Anaxarque et tous ses sectateurs Pyrrhoniens et nouveaux Académiciens l'ont exercé, mais imprudemment, en renversant la certitude et science de toutes choses et laissant à l'homme une seulle et similitude de vérité pour toute guide et conduicte de jugement.'[2] In his *Scholae Dialecticae* (1548) he

does distinguish the Pyrrhonists from the New Academics, but continues to associate the abuse of dialectic with both schools.[3]

His criticism of the New Academics is less bitter than his condemnation of the destructive practices of the Pyrrhonists. Carneades is blamed for turning Stoic logic against its most prolific developer, Chryssipus, and for introducing the habit of unrelenting dissent to Academic disputation.[4] Every sect derived from Pyrrho (i.e. *aporetici, sceptici, ephectici, zetetici*), however, has taken as its sole aim the establishment of suspension of assent to any positive assertion because of the ungraspability (*akatalepsiae*) of all objects of knowledge.[5] Ramus' list of the ten *causae* according to which Pyrrhonist dialectic attempts to contradict any and all positive statements betrays a knowledge of the ten modes of scepticism enumerated in Sextus' *Outlines*, though his list strays in matter at times from Sextus'. Most importantly to our discussion, Ramus observed a startling quality in sceptical dialectic which was achieved by setting logic viciously upon itself. He had noted this combative use of logic in the New Academic dialectic of Carneades, which, as a derivative of the Stoic dialectic that produced the *paradoxa*, could have produced similarly wondrous arguments had its objective been dogmatic rather than probabilistic. For Ramus, the probabilism of Cicero and the New Academy was not unreasonable; it was simply unnecessary in light of the appreciable certainty of the first principles of the arts and nature. Pyrrhonists, on the other hand, as they have no positive logical agenda, may use their vicious dialectic to produce amazing, if nihilistic results. Ramus says, '*Atque ut mirabilis est hominum narura, cum logicas artes convellere velle videantur*', and continues to explain the method by which this false wonder is produced. '*Colligebant enim varias causas* [the ten modes], *atque; ex contrariis demonstrare conabantur persuadentibus aequales probabilitates, aequalitatemque; & contradictionem rationum confirmare rationibus*'.[6] Here we see contraries applied in dialectic to obscure rather than to clarify distinctions; the Pyrrhonist, like the sophistical dialectician of Gorgias' *On What is Not*, employs logic not as Wilson had recommended in his dictum '*Contraria inter se opposita magis elucescunt*', but as Sextus had noted in his comments on Gorgias' argument, to destroy the criterion of truth.[7]

Like Wilson, Ramus believed that it was the task of dialectic alone to ground the principles of all the other arts, and thereby, to preempt the specious contentions of unscrupulous dialecticians such as the Pyrrhonists. In his *Scholae Rhetoricae* (1569), he went to considerable lengths to establish the role of dialectic as the governor of the other arts, and most importantly, of rhetoric. In so far as rhetoric was concerned with rendering mere opinion plausible, its strategies, like those of the sceptics and the sophists, were suspect.[8] According to Ramus' dialectical method, no question was insoluble, and therefore, the special arguments of deliberative, forensic and epideictic oratory, which were informed by their acknowledgement of the contentiousness of the issues to which they were addressed, presented the misleading impression that their respective *quaestiones finitae* could not be solved with certainty. It was against this misleading impression that Ramus complained when he quoted Antonius' criticism of the ignorant teachers of oratory who advocated a distinction between the argumentation with which the specific questions of *controversiae* were debated and the dialectical rigor of the philosophers' arguments for and against *theses*.[9] Certainly Ramus could approve Antonius' conclusion that 'any debate whatsoever can be brought under the notion and quality of the general kind [*quaestio infinita*]'; what he could not approve was the view that general questions, such as are investigated in *theses*, fell most generally under the heading of oratorical subjects, that the commonplaces of *inventio* were fundamentally rhetorical, and not dialectical. Without explicitly referring to his characterization of dialectic as a class of oratory in the *Institutes*, Ramus rejects Quintilian's view that the dialectician presented proof for his *theses* according to a method of demonstration which was too purely logical to be persuasive to the typical member of the orator's audience by dismissing his identification of dialectic with the laconic syllogistical demonstrations of philosophers such as the Stoics.[10] He notes, as we have, that both Quintilian and Cicero located the strength of dialectic in the logical judgment of *dispositio*, but insists that *inventio* (as well as *memoria*) is equally proper and necessary to the discourse of dialectic.[11] Ramus declares, '*Dialectica mentis & rationis tota est, rhetorica & grammatica sermonis & orationis: Dialectica igitur inventionis, dispositionis, memoriae...artes proprias*

habebit.'[12] Having appropriated *inventio* to dialectic, Ramus can claim that when the orator refers the special questions (*controversiae*) to the commonplaces in which the general questions (*quaestiones infinita*) relevant to the case are enunciated, he is engaged in a dialectical, and not a rhetorical, process.

2
Dispositio, Method and the Vanity of Contention

Any question, therefore, no matter how convoluted, may be submitted to dialectic for resolution. And once the student of his dialectic has mastered the analysis of certain arguments by *dispositio* and their synthesis by *inventio*, he will have acquired the method which enables him to eliminate the two-stage treatment of similar arguments through the immediate perception of their order and significance. In his famous example of the power of this method, which he called the 'Method of Nature' in the *Dialectique* of 1555, Ramus imagines that all of the definitions, distributions and rules of Grammar are written on various tablets and mixed-up in a confusing bundle, and then submitted to dialectic for reorganiztion.[13] The resultant action, or lack thereof, taken by the method of nature upon this problem reveals the confidence with which Ramus believed his dialectician could approach any question whatever. 'Premièrement', he says, 'ne sera besoing des lieux d'invention car tout est jà trouvé: chacune énonciation particulière est prouvée et jugée. Il ne fauldra ny premier jugement de l' énociation ny deuziesme du syllogisme. La méthod seulle reste, et certaine voye de collocation.'[14] A little later he extends the explanatory power of the method of nature to all inquiries, not just questions about the arts and doctrine. 'Or ceste méthode n'est seullement appliquée en matière des ars et doctrines mais en toutes choses que nous délibérons enseigner facilement et clerement.'[15] The entire process of discovery and arrangement could be avoided if the clear light of the method of nature were shining equally on us all, but as the human mind needs assistance in organizing, applying, and most importantly, teaching, its knowledge, the divisions of *inventio* and *dispositio* must be retained.[16] Donne was deprecating of such attempts to reduce the discourse of natural reason to

its bare and supposedly unerring first principles when he asked in his fourth paradox, 'That Nature is our worst Guide', 'If by Nature we shall understand our essence, our definition, our reasonableness, then this, being alike common to all men (the ideot and the wisard being equally reasonable) why shall not all men having one nature, follow one course?' Ramus' Method of Nature represented the ideal of common reason because it claimed to eradicate all the ambiguities and uncertainties with which partisan philosophers had plagued disputation since Socrates' confrontations with the sophists. As we have seen, the most culpable of the wrangling philosophers of antiquity are the sceptics, whom Ramus was recalling out of Sextus' *Outlines* when he referred to the 'infinies contentions et procès entre les hommes' which, he suggested, could be resolved by his system of judgement.[17] In the *Scholae Dialecticae*, Ramus had listed such 'contentions' as the fifth *causa* on which the Pyrrhonists maintained suspension of assent: '*quinto ex legibus & institutis, & musicis persausionibus, & artificiosis decretis & opinionibus dogmaticis, quibus idem aliis bonum, aliis malum videtur*'.[18] Such differences of opinion were indicative of unnecessarily complex and partisan methods of demonstration which denied the self-evidency and simplicity of the Method of Nature. When he celebrated the fertility of discord in his ninth paradox, and the power of paradox to conduce to this fertility, Donne simultaneously denied the putative benefits of Ramus' homogenizing Method of Nature.

Abraham Fraunce's *Lawier's Logike* (1588) was an adaptation of Ramistic logic to the ends of the lawyer, and was the most current and relevant Ramist dialectic in English while Donne was writing his *Paradoxes* at Lincoln's Inn.[19] In the Preface, Fraunce enthusiastically supports Ramus' efforts to illuminate the power of common reason to discover and prove truths, the certainty of which had been imprudently obscured by subtle sceptics and divisive Aristotelians. In his praise of this common reason, Fraunce sets-up Ramus' Method of Nature as yet another target for Donne's exploitation of the ambiguity of the term 'common' in his eighth paradox, 'That good is more common then evill'.

> Coblers bee men, why therefore not Logicians? and Carters haue reason, why therefore not Logike? *Bonum, quo communius, eo melius,* you say so your selves, and yet the best thing in Logike you make to be the woorst, in thinking it lesse commendable, because it is more common. A spytefull speach, and a meaning no lesse malitious, to locke vp Logike in secreate corners, who, as of her selfe is generally good to all, so will shee particularly bee bound to none.[20]

Donne's argument, of course, perverts Fraunce's Latin dictum to defend the indifference of good generally. This indifference, Donne argues, arises from the ability of good to be found commonly in both its contradictories, 'worse' things, and its contrary, evil. We have already seen how Wilson's 'libertine argument' can validly conclude that something (sin) is both not good and not evil, that the same thing can possess opposing contradictories without entailing their contraries. The nature of such a thing with respect to good and evil is indifferent. What makes Donne's argument surprising is his conclusion that 'good doth not only prostitute her owne amiableness to all, but refuseth no ayd, no, not of her utter contrary evill, that she may be more common to us.'[21] Here he argues, though with transparent equivocation, that the same thing may be both good and evil; the law of non-contradiction is thus violated and either our admiration or, more likely, our resistance is aroused. Whether Donne was denying the facility of Ramus' logic by constructing paradoxical arguments depends on whether he thought that the dialectical resistance which he explicitly invited as a response to the obvious fallacies of the *Paradoxes* could produce a clear knowledge of the true significance of each sense of the various terms which he deployed ambiguously.[22] Merely raising the 'alarum to truth' may alert us to fallacy and falsehood, but it does not insure that we will consequently perceive the truth.[23] To assert that no rhetorical manipulation of ambiguous terms, such as is practiced in Donne's *Paradoxes*, can obscure the univocal truth of each sense of these terms, attributes to dialectic, and particularly to *dispositio*, a demonstrative power so extensive that paradoxical arguments present no more of a challenge than the shuffled definitions and distributions of grammar. Ramus argued that the tradition which advocated the intellectual value of arguing paradoxes and *theses*, the tradition of Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian and Aphthonius,

only advocated this practice because their rhetorical and dialectical systems were too confused and complex to guide their practitioners to the truths which his orderly dialectic exposed to anyone who used it.

Much of this confusion arose because Cicero and Quintilian had permitted the orator the use of *inventio* and *dispositio*. In his invective against Cicero's ordering of the subjects of dialectic and rhetoric, Ramus asks, '*Primum enim quale est quod jubes, ut genera verborum & singulorum & copulatorum in Dialectica videantur?*' Without acknowledging Cicero's characterization of dialectic as *ars omnium artium maxima*, he answers his own question by affirming dialectic's proper possession of *inventio* and *dispositio*, and insisting upon its precedence in the inquiries of other arts such as grammar.

> *Hoc enim Dialecticae nihil est, quae tota rationis est & mentis, ut saepe iam dico, orationis nullam curam habet: nec istud ad inventionem aut dispositionem reum, quae solae Dialecticae partes sunt.*[24]

Despite the promise of his method to clearly expose truth and falsity, the analytical task of Ramus' adjudicative art, *dispositio*, remained paramount in the confirmation of the truth of the consequences that followed from the application of the first principles of all things, which he called axioms or 'énonciations'. *Inventio* places no adjudicative demands on Ramus' dialectician; it is comprised of the commonplaces of argument, which should be consulted when one seeks a middle term to unite the extreme terms of a syllogism. *Dispositio*, on the other hand, is comprised of axiomatic and syllogistic judgement, the former requiring the dialectician to recognize the self-evident principle (i.e. énonciation or axiom) relevant in a given inquiry, the latter providing the various deductive procedures by which particular conclusions could be drawn. Once all of the *genera* of arguments were learned, all particular derivatives could be classified by *inventio*.[25] Once classified, any remaining questions could be submitted to axiomatic judgement to be resolved in light of the universal principles located by *inventio*. If any questions still remained, they could be arranged in the form of a syllogism to see what conclusion necessarily followed from the valid conjunction of the premises containing the middle or third

term. Fraunce confirmed this relation between *dispositio* and *inventio* in the *Lawier's Logike*, emphasizing that axioms which have had their truth approved by *dispositio* represent the 'fruites of Judgement', which henceforth, are catalogued in *inventio* to be consulted as rules by which to judge any future relevant question. Of course, Fraunce never entertains the possibility that any doubt will remain after *dispositio* has examined the axiom under scrutiny, and concludes confidently that 'euery precept of euery art' (which, we will see, Ramus explicitly associates with *theses*) 'because it is an axiome' represents one of:

> the fruites and examples of that Logicall judgement appeering in the orderly constitution of every art. And so in Inuention, euery rule is an axiome, euery rule doth judge, but euery rule teacheth not how to frame an axiome, euery rule sheweth not how to judge, which onely is the peculiar duetie of Logicall judgement.[26]

3
The Doubtful Axiom and the *Thesis*

In his Latin edition of Ramus, *Dialecticae Libri Duo* (1574), Roland MacIlmaine emphasized the power of syllogism's arrangement of its three terms to resolve doubtful propositions. As we will see, MacIlmaine's name for doubtful propositions, *axioma dubia*, reflects a distinction between axioms (which are certain and self-evident) and *theses* (which are obscure), which Ramus had observed in the 1555 edition of the *Dialectique*, but which did not appear in the later Latin editions from which MacIlmaine may have been working. MacIlmaine says, '*Nam cum axioma dubium sit, quaestio efficitur, & ad eius fidem tertio argumento opus est cum quaestione collacato*'.[27] We are reminded here of Cicero's description, in the *Topics*, of the power of *dispositio* to eliminate doubt. '*Itaque licet definire locum esse argumenti sedem, argumentum autem rationem quae rei dubiae faciat fidem*'.[28] However, in light of MacIlmaine's advocacy of Ramus' belief in the power of syllogism to clarify the truth of even doubtful axioms, his use of *fidem* must be distinguished from Cicero's.[29] For Cicero, credibility, and not certainty, was the epistemological limit of logical demonstration. Dubious questions could never be

definitively resolved, and thus, the utility of advancing paradoxical *theses* as subjects for debate always remained. For Ramus and his followers, however, the middle term of a syllogism that clarifies the true meaning of a doubtful axiom provides the proof which justifies its acceptance as a certain principle. Though we will see that he expresses considerably more confidence in the certainty of these first principles than Aristotle had in the *Posterior Analytics*, Ramus does not contradict the formulation of the syllogism in the *Prior Analytics* in maintaining that it follows necessarily that an axiom which is deduced as a conclusion from known premises is true.[30] Because a syllogism establishes truth soundly (*ad eius fidem*), no attempt to defend a *thesis* which contradicts the resolved axiom could be useful in further clarifying the matter; the paradoxical *thesis*, therefore, has no dialectical value. In the same year as his Latin edition was published, MacIlmaine produced the first English translation of Ramus' dialectic, *The Logike of P. Ramus* (1574).[31] In his own translation of the Latin comment on *axioma dubia*, he writes, 'For if a proposition be doubtfull, it is made a question: And to prove the question, we take an argument and dispone it with the question'.[32] The process described here yields not just probability or credibility, but proof. Dudley Fenner's translation in the next Ramist logic in English, *The Arte of Logicke* (1584), emphasizes even more strongly the ability of syllogistic judgement to render doubtful axioms certain. 'Therefore when an axiome is doubtfull, it is made a question, and for proofe of the trueth, we must inuente a thirde reason and place it with the question after the forenamed order.'[33] Both MacIlmaine and Fenner were following Latin editions of the Ramus' *Dialectic* which contained substantial differences from the French edition of 1555. Andreas Wechelus' 1572 Latin edition of the *Dialecticae Libri Duo* provides precisely the same explanation *verbatim* of the judgement of doubtful axioms as MacIlmaine's Latin edition.[34]

In his 'Péroration du Premier Jugement' of the 1555 of edition of the *Dialectique*, Ramus provides an interpretation of the *thesis* which was omitted in subsequent editions, but which was a clear consequence of his anti-sceptical epistemology.[35] As Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian had before him, Ramus recognized that universal propositions about which there was some doubt were to be

analyzed by *dispositio*. The procedure of *dispositio*, he regularly called analysis or judgement because the exposition of the question in the structure of a syllogism indicated more than just what could necessarily follow if the premises were true; it demonstrated that what followed was necessarily true because the premises were, in fact, known to be true. Unlike Aristotle, Ramus believed all knowledge could be both learned and taught by syllogism. Inductive proofs could be used, but they never were the sole grounds on which the knowledge of their conclusions was based. Given his high estimate of the pedagogical value of syllogism and his confidence in the demonstrability of the truth of all things, Ramus had to assign a corresponding certainty to the principles from which the manifold particulars of every art, science and doctrine are deduced. Hence, the first part of *dispositio*, axiomatic judgement, operated simply through the recognition of the self-evidency of the axiom which explains the universal nature of the particular in question. For example, if we wonder what number represents two particular objects added to two other particular objects, we need only recognize the truth of the relevant universal mathematical axiom: two and two make four. In both the 1555 and the 1576 editions of the *Dialectique*, the axiom and its form of judgement are defined in the same way, and with respect to Aristotle's definition in the *Posterior Analytics*.[36] In the 1555 edition, he says of the axiom: 'Axiome est principe représentant son intelligence incontinent qu'il est énoncé, comme "Le tout est plus que sa partie. Deux fois deux sont quatre." et toutes telles intelligences qui sont bien cleres à nostre première et naturelle raison sans observation ny expérience de sens aucun'.[37] In the 1576 edition, he says of axiomatic judgement, 'Et le Jugement faict de telle sorte est sans discours de l'axiome manifeste de soymesme'.[38] When a proposition is to be analyzed by syllogism, discursive judgement begins; such discursive judgement is only necessary, however, when the dialectician is confronted with a doubtful axiom. Once treated by the discursive judgement of syllogism, the doubt is dispelled and the truth or falsity of axiom known. In *Biathanatos*, Donne, though far from embracing the scepticism about which Ramus complained, held a less confident view of the reliability of rational discourse, warning that deductions regarding doubtful axioms such as that categorically prohibiting suicide, may be 'corrupted or bastarded by

fallacy'.[39] Ramus, unlike Lever and Wilson who included sections corresponding to Aristotle's book recognizing fallacies, *Sophistical Refutations*, was evidently not concerned about the corruption of fallacy infecting his syllogistic judgements; any fallacy could easily be spotted by the diligent dialectician trained in the method.

In the 1555 edition of the *Dialectique*, the doubtful axiom is called a *thesis* (thèse), and is opposed to the axiom on the authority of Aristotle. Ramus explains that an axiom is a self-evident principle, while a *thesis* 'est principe qui n'est pas incontinent apperceu ains requiert le sens et expérience de quelque exemple familier'.[40] The principle expressed by a *thesis*, like the doubtful axiom, requires proof, but, in this passage, this proof appears to be gained by induction. Aristotle was not concerned to eliminate the inductive basis of universal principles, and was happy to recommend that 'one should cross from the particulars to the universals' for the sake of clarity.[41] Ramus agreed with Aristotle on the use of induction for clarity, but was careful to add that the clarification of doubtful axioms (thèses) was inductive only in so far as it was the result of a comparison to examples. These examples, however, were not of similar particulars to be compared to the *thesis* under question, for the *thesis* is a universal, not a particular, proposition. The examples to which a doubtful *thesis* could be compared were universal principles themselves which 'ont esté apperceuz'. The process by which this knowledge is acquired may involve the examples of our experience to the extent that they report the presence of a particular and exceptional case which seems to support the assertion of a strange, even paradoxical, *thesis*. Such would be the case for one who observes the apparent motion of the sun around the earth, and draws the strange (by today's knowledge) universal conclusion that the sun, indeed, does revolve around the earth. In such a case, Ramus recommends that the doubt aroused by such a strange axiom be eliminated by reference to the already known and undeniable axioms of the science which govern the motions of the heavens. Through a series of syllogistic demonstrations, which begin with known major premises such as objects of less mass revolve around objects of greater mass, the observer of the strange phenomenon learns that his doubtful axiom is false, and therefore, no axiom at all.[42]

It is in this way, that Ramus, in the 1555 edition of the *Dialectique*, instructs his dialectician to clarify *theses*.

> Pour esclerissement d'iceux [*theses*], nous avons recours aux exemples par lesquels ilz ont esté apperceuz et, pour ce, en tout l'art de dialectique et toutes ses reigles que nous suyvons, nous n'avons tenu ny tiendrons autre voye de déclaration sinon d'exemples les plus insignes et familiers que nous avons peu choisir par long estude et recherché du naturel usage et de la vraye practique de raison.[43]

The procedure here is from the more known (i.e. the self-evident axioms) to the less known, which for Ramus, is from universal to particular.[44] In the 1576 edition, this passage no longer refers to the clarification of *theses* and is moved to the beginning of the second book as an introduction to the axiom. The passages of the two editions are identical, except that in the 1576 edition, it is not *theses* that are clarified by reference to things more known, but the countless definitions and distributions of the arts and sciences, which we have seen in the case of the jumbled definitions and distributions of grammar, are all discernible by Ramus' method. All reference to this difficult process of clarifying *theses*, and deducing definitions and distributions is omitted from Wechelus' edition of 1572, both of MacIlmaine's editions of 1574 as well as Fenner's edition of 1584.

4

Ramus against the Paradoxical *Thesis*

In the *Scholae Dialecticae*, Ramus discusses the definition of the *thesis* which Aristotle gives in the *Topics*, 'a paradoxical belief of some eminent philosopher'. In the *Dialectique* (1555), he insisted that the *thesis*, though potentially uncertain, is soluble under the analysis of dialectic, which, according to the principles of *dispositio*, submits the doubtful proposition to syllogistic judgement. In subsequent editions, the definitions and distributions of the arts and sciences replace *theses* as the uncertain subjects of such analysis. As we have seen, Ramus could not permit the persistence of the paradoxical *thesis*, which had

traditionally been argued *pro* and *contra* by dialecticians and rhetoricians, because valid demonstrations of such positions could conclude only their falsity or absurdity. To maintain the viability of such positions as valuable exercises in disputation was to deny the penetrating simplicity of his analytical method. To begin his repudiation of the paradoxical *thesis*, he cites Aristotle's definition of the *thesis* in the *Posterior Analytics*. 'An immediate deductive principle I call a posit [*thesis*] if one cannot prove it but it is not necessary for anyone who is to learn anything to grasp it: and one which it is necessary for anyone who is going to learn anything whatever to grasp, I call an axiom'.[45] In the *Dialectique* (1555), Ramus cited the same passage stating 'Toutefois, comme les couleurs par soy visibles, ainsi les principes par soy intelligibles sont plus clers les uns que les autres, qui a esté cause à Aristote de faire deux espèces de principes: Axiome et Thèse'.[46] Clearly, the *thesis* is the less evident of the two types of indemonstrable principles, but because Ramus wanted to maintain that they were first principles of the same type as the definitions of the arts and sciences, he needed to de-emphasize the obscurity with which their self-evidency is perceived. In the *Topics*, Ramus explains, the *thesis* was defined in a variety of ways which produced a '*homonymia*' which, as a result of the mistaken interpretations of scholastic commentators, severely obscured Aristotle's notion of first principles.[47] One of the homonymous meanings of *thesis* which these commentators should have clearly distinguished from that signifying the uncertain axiom, was the paradoxical belief described in the first book of the *Topics*. Though he does not explain why he thinks that the *thesis* understood as *opinio incredibilis* cannot agree with its definition as an 'immediate deductive principle', it is clear from his subsequent discussion of the two species of the *thesis* described in the *Posterior Analytics*, the *hypothesis* and the definition, that he believed that any first principle is immediately credible, even if its certainty is not so easily ascertained.[48] In light of his association of the definitions of the arts and sciences with *theses*, we should not be surprised that he was committed to eliminating any understanding of *thesis* which could threaten the certainty of the principles upon which he believed all learning was founded.

Aristotle is not troubled by the prospect of *theses* functioning both as first principles upon which valid syllogistic demonstrations are based and as paradoxical propositions from which incredible conclusions are drawn because neither of these functions pertain to the fundamental knowledge required to attain any understanding whatsoever. As Ramus notes, axioms, such as 'the whole is greater than its parts' and 'two times two are four', serve this function. Aristotle, however, is careful to distinguish both forms of the *thesis*, the *hypothesis* and the definition, from axioms by virtue of the former's recognized uncertainty and potential contentiousness. He says, 'A posit [*thesis*] which assumes either of the parts of a contradiction-i.e., I mean, that something is or that something is not-I call a supposition [*hypothesis*]; one without this, a definition'.[49] The difference between the respective claims of *hypothesis* and definition is ontological; the former says *that* something is or is not, the latter *what* something is or is not.[50] Not surprisingly, Ramus adopts Aristotle's definition of the axiom stressing that such first principles are not known by demonstration, but in themselves. His concern to establish that axioms are not generated by human reason is informed by the threat which Aristotle recognizes the sceptical critique poses to first principles such as axioms. This threat takes one of the two forms to which Sextus reduced the modes of sceptical dissent in his *Outlines*; either the sceptic continually requires knowledge of a prior principle to inform the knowledge of a conclusion deduced from it, thereby reducing any demonstration of an axiom to an infinite regress, or he claims that any demonstration of the axiom in question is informed by another axiom which itself is informed by the initial axiom, thus reducing the demonstration to reciprocity.[51] Aristotle's solution was simply to acquiesce to the obvious necessity that we obtain knowledge of the universal first principles by induction. Such inductive knowledge does not provide proof of their certainty, however. Only syllogism can provide this certainty. Our awareness of the truth of these first principles is generated by inductive methods which ultimately rely on the accuracy of the senses, an accuracy which we have already seen questioned by Donne in his paradoxes on cosmetics and the gifts of the body, and which we have seen was the crux upon which the Stoic and Academic debate over knowledge turned. Ramus was just as content to permit our awareness

of the first principles to arise from inductive proofs, just as long as the truth of these principles remained independent of these proofs.[52] Donne was referring to the difference between syllogistic demonstration and inductive proof observed by Aristotle and Ramus, when he said of the syllogisms of his tenth paradox, 'These or none must serve as reasons: and it is my great happiness that Examples prove not rules, for to confirme this opinion the World yields not one Example.'[53] Of course, neither Ramus nor Aristotle thought that the respective conclusions of inductive proofs and syllogistic demonstrations should be contradictory. Donne's paradox, despite its insincerity, performs the traditional function of the *thesis* as defined in the *Topics* (paradoxical belief) by providing deductive arguments for an opinion that conflicts with the inductive arguments which are comprised of examples denying it. In *Biathanatos*, he earnestly sought to illustrate that 'Examples prove not rules', by denying the second reason against suicide which Augustine gave Donatus, '*none of the faithful ever did this act*'.[54] Donne will show that some of the faithful have indeed done this act (e.g. Eleazar, Razis, Samson), and conclude that though examples may be used to disprove the universality of a law, they may not be used to ground its universality.[55] He begins by citing the church's allowance of divorce after hundreds and even thousands of years during which it was prohibited on the grounds that there was no precedent examples justifying its lawfulness. He asks, simultaneously questioning the validity of universal conclusions which are based upon induction and those which are based upon sense data:

> Are not St Augustine's disciples guilty of the same pertinacy which is imputed to Aristotle's followers who, defending the heavens to be inalterable because in so many ages nothing had been observed to have been altered, his scholars stubbornly maintain his proposition still, though by many experiences of new stars, the reason which moved Aristotle seems now utterly defeated?[56]

Aristotle, himself, distrusted the information of the senses sufficiently to recognize that conflicts between examples and laws could occur, and therefore, reserved a place for principles, such as *theses*, which were not clearly understood to be either true or false.[57] Ramus, on the other hand, entertained no such misgivings about the

reliability of the senses, as his comparison of Aristotle's axioms and *theses* to colors more and less clearly perceived indicates.[58]

Ramus's denial of the paradoxical *thesis* relies on his rejection of the distinction which Aristotle draws between the *hypothesis* and the definition. The *hypothesis*, which claims *that* something is, Ramus claims, simultaneously makes an assertion about *what* the nature of that thing is, and therefore, may be considered a proposition which also performs the function of the definition. He explains that, as a proposition which makes an ontological assertion, the *hypothesis* is enunciated ('*est enunciato*'). To claim, as some scholastic commentators have, that a definition is not a proposition because it does not make a claim about the ontological status of its subject is a vain distinction.[59] Contrary to Aristotle, Ramus maintains that definitions, such as those of mathematics, are, in fact, enunciated and are, therefore, propositions.[60] Having collapsed the distinction between the *hypothesis* and the definition by insisting that they both make ontological claims about the nature of their subjects, Ramus dispenses with *hypotheses* and identifies the *thesis* with the definition. Out of all the inconstant and conflicting accounts of first principles which Aristotle gives throughout the *Organon*, Ramus says that he will choose that of the *Posterior Analytics*, which reduces all principles to axioms and *theses*. He then proceeds to reduce *theses* to the more particular, yet still immediate and primary, definitions of the arts and sciences, which, as such, cannot be understood to be opinions about which there may be insoluble doubts.[61] To emphasize the urgency of this view, he declares, '*Omnes scientiae definitione fiunt, est item verum, tanquam definitio per se doceat quamplurima, & sine definitione demonstratio nihil*'.[62] The power of the definition established, he may conclude confidently, '*Principia enim artium omnium sunt definitiones & partitiones*.'[63] As we have already observed, the *thesis* of the 1555 edition of the *Dialectique* performs the same function as the definitions of the arts and sciences in the 1576 edition, and as the doubtful axioms of Wechelus', MacIlmaine's and Fenner's Latin and English editions of the *Dialectic*. Between the publications of the *Scholae Dialecticae* (1548) and of Fenner's *Arte of Logicke* (1584), any acknowledgement of the problem of Aristotle's account of *theses* had been removed in favor of the less controversial classification of the

doubtful axiom. Though he acknowledges the variety of senses in which the definition may be understood, in his *Lawier's Logike*, Fraunce confirms Aristotle's view that the 'Logicall definition...expoundeth the nature of a thing'. To this view, he opposes the views of others who have 'mistook the woord' by intending 'breuem & circumspectam quandam iuris sententiam, quam iurisconsulti regulam, Dialectici *Thesin*, seu positionem; Medici *Aphorismum* nominant'.[64] Here, Fraunce observes the original distinction between the definition and the *thesis*, which Aristotle had established in the *Posterior Analytics* and the *Topics*, and thus appears to question Ramus' identification of the two terms on the grounds that the Dialecticians' *theses* and positions, like the physicians' aphorisms and the lawyers' rules, do not provide universal definitions from which necessary conclusions may be drawn. He raises this concern in the context of the lawyer's attempt to apply logical definitions to the execution of legal cases, and concludes along with Cicero in the *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, that 'who so attempteth to make Logicall definitions in the Law, shall finde it somewhat dangerous, because it is very difficult'.[65] Despite his misgivings about the identification of the *thesis* and the definition, Fraunce is not prepared to abandon his attempt to apply Ramist logic to the law, but his acquiescence to Aristotle's definition of the *thesis* indicates that Ramus' innovations were not comprehensively embraced even by his disciples. As we have mentioned already, Donne unequivocally rejected Ramus' reformulation of the Aristotelian *thesis* by calling *Biathanatos* both a paradox and a *thesis*, and as we will see, advocates of traditional Aristotelian logic, such as Thomas Blundeville, explicitly retained the distinction between the *thesis* and the definition.

5

Blundeville's Recognition of the Paradoxical *Thesis*

In the postscript to his *Art of Logike* (1599), Thomas Blundeville says that he was convinced by friends to publish the work, which he had written 'many yeares past', to provide ministers who 'had not beene brought up in any Vniversitie' with a logical training which would help them 'to defend the truth of Gods worde, and

orderly to confute such false conclusions as peruerse Schismatikes and Heretikes are wont to gather out of the very wordes of holy Scripture'.[66] Blundeville's ordering of *dispositio* and *inventio* reflects the order traditionally derived from Aristotle's ordering in the *Topics*, though the ten predicaments are discussed as part of his introduction to the proposition.[67] The commonplaces of argument are typically assigned to *inventio*, and since, Blundeville says, 'by order of Nature it is meete to find out matter before we go about to form, frame, or order the same', his treatment of *dispositio* follows his enumeration of the commonplaces.[68] Despite his reversal of Lever's order, Blundeville remained committed, as did all of his contemporary Aristotelian logicians, to the view that *dispositio* is the 'chiefest fruit of Logike' because it provides the means to judge truth or falsity.[69] The burden resting on the shoulders of *dispositio* in light of the sceptical critique should be clear; if the various forms of deductive and inductive argument fail to demonstrate truth reliably, there will be nothing to prevent the result which Sextus warned necessarily followed from the three *theses* proposed by Gorgias in *On What is Not*.[70] Aware of this threat, Blundeville is careful to confirm the power of syllogism to verify the truth of conclusions derived from the universal first principles of human knowledge. Of the four general types of argument available to *dispositio*, syllogism, enthymeme, induction and example, the syllogism, Blundeville explains, 'is the chiefest, whereunto all others are referred as thinges vnperfect, vnto a thing perfect'.[71] Provided we are equipped with true first principles that do not themselves require proof, which Blundeville assumes, we may feel confident that 'God hath shewed us an order, and prescribed certaine boundes and limites of necessitie to bee obserued in such composition, which boundes are Syllogisms rightly made: for so doe the Consequents plainely appeare.'[72] Fittingly, this statement is made as a conclusion to his chapter entitled 'Of the certainty of mans knowledge'. As we have seen, however, under the scrutiny of the sceptical critique neither the first principles, which Blundeville claims, on the authority of Aristotle, '[have] credite of themselves, and need no other proofe', nor the syllogisms which employ them retain their claim to certainty.[73]

Blundeville recognizes that the adjudicative task of *dispositio* is not so simple as his confident statements about the power of first principles and syllogisms would lead us to believe. Following Aristotle, he distinguishes three types of syllogism, the demonstrative, the dialectical and the sophistical. The demonstrative syllogism begins with a supposedly true proposition in its major premise such as 'All men are mortal'. It then proceeds uncontroversially to conclude from the particular minor premise, 'Socrates is a man', that 'Socrates is mortal'. As long as the premises are accepted to be true, the conclusion of a demonstrative syllogism is necessarily true. The dialectical syllogism and the sophistical syllogism, however, may appear indistinguishable because they both operate within the uncertain sphere of opinion. It is under these categories of syllogism, concerned as they are with opinion (*doxa*), that Blundeville discusses the respective functions of the *thesis* and the paradox. As Aristotle had emphasized in the *Topics*, dialectic is conducted 'with an eye to opinion', and so, Blundeville defines the dialectical syllogism as 'that which is made of probable and credible propositions.'[74] The sophistical syllogism, however, may be 'made of false Propositions, or els of such as seeme probable, and be not in deede, or els of probable premises not rightly concluding'.[75] When he defines the proper matter (*materia propinqua*) of the dialectical syllogism, Blundeville reveals its affinity both to the Aristotelian problem and to the philosophical *thesis*, and establishes what we suspected earlier, that Donne's *Paradoxes and Problems* were collected together not because of their youthful frivolity, but because they were recognized to fall under the same generic heading.[76] Blundeville says that the dialectical syllogism is concerned with a dialectical proposition, a problem or a position. The dialectical proposition raises, as Aristotle had defined, a basically uncontroversial question such as 'whether the mother loueth her childe: which', Blundeville adds, 'is no question in deede, but to him that asketh.'[77] His definition of the problem will remind us of Cicero's and Aphthonius' definition of the *thesis* of thought (*cogitatione* and *contempliva*). 'A Probleme is a doubtfull question uttered with a double Interrogatorie, as whether the least fixed starre in the firmament be greater then the Moone or not? or whether that the Sunne bee bigger then the earth or not.'[78] What Blundeville calls the 'position' is his

translation (from the Greek) of the *thesis* of Aristotle's *Topics*, and as such,

represents one of the two contradictory positions expressed in the 'double

Interrogatorie' of the problem; the position (*thesis*), therefore, is merely a

subcategory of the problem.[79] Moreover, Blundeville's definition of the position

also emphasizes precisely the same quality of paradoxicality, with which Aristotle

invested the *thesis* and which Ramus denied in his interpretation of Aristotle in the

Scholae Dialecticae.

> Position is a wonderfull opinion maintained by some excellent Clearke, as to
> say, that all thinges are but one essence or being, as Melissus affirmed, or
> that all things do continually flowe and change as Heraclitus helde, or that
> the earth moueth and not the heauens, as Copernicus supposeth, onely to find
> out thereby the true motions of the planets, and not for that he thought so in
> deede.[80]

Again, we should recall Donne's advice in his letter to Wotton; his paradoxes, like

the *theses* discussed by Aristotle and Isocrates, and especially the supposedly

insincere *thesis* of Copernicus, only perform their office if they make us find better

reasons against them.[81]

Blundeville's definitions for the three types of syllogism are derived from

Aristotle's list, in the *Topics*, of the three types of deduction, the demonstrative,

dialectical and the contentious.[82] The demonstrative syllogism proceeds by

deduction from premises which are assumed to be 'true and primitive' self-evident

principles.[83] The remaining two definitions in Aristotle's list shed light on the fine

line separating a dialectical from a sophistical argument. A dialectical syllogism

proceeds by deduction from premises which constitute 'reputable opinions', while a

contentious syllogism 'merely seems to reason from opinions that are or seem to be

reputable.'[84] In the *Sophistical Refutations*, Aristotle clarifies the role of the

dialectical syllogism with respect to the disputation of *theses*. There he says that

dialectical syllogisms 'are those that deduce from reputable premises, to the

contradictory of a given thesis'.[85] Bearing in mind that the *thesis* against which the

dialectical argument is directed is paradoxical ('wonderfull'), the role of dialectic, as

Aristotle and Blundeville represent it, is to eliminate the paradoxical, to refute, for the sake of the clarification of the issue under consideration, preposterous views such as Copernicus' heliocentric theory or those expressed in Donne's *Paradoxes*. When Donne directs Wotton in his letter to 'quiet' the 'swaggering' paradoxes by 'resisting' them, he simply suggests that dialectical arguments should be deployed to eliminate the appearance of paradoxicality. The contentious or sophistical argument, however, is deployed precisely to create such an appearance of paradox. As Aristotle had stressed when discussing the virtues of drawing paradoxical statements in disputation, the objective of the sophist is to create the impression that a paradoxical conclusion may follow necessarily from true premises, while that of his opponent, the dialectician privy to the strategies of the sophist, is to show that the paradox results from a fault in the argumentation. Blundeville, borrowing Aristotle's example of the happy yet wretched king, illustrates the manner in which the dialectician may expose the fallacy responsible for the illusion of such a paradox.[86]

> The Sophister will make you grant that a rich and happy king is wretched, by force of argument thus: whosoever is subiect to sinne is wretched: but all rich and happy kinges are subiect to sinne, ergo all rich and happy kinges are wretched and miserable, in this is also a fallax, because that happiness is spoken here in two respectes, for there is worldly happines and heauenlie happines.[87]

The 'fallax' is, of course, the fallacy of four terms, the very same which we observed creating the appearance of copresent contraries which so amazed Marbeck and Dickenson, and which would raise the suspicions of Theodorus in the *Theaetetus* and of readers of Lyly.[88] Significantly, the two respects in which happiness is spoken in Blundeville's sophistical syllogism reflect two contradictory *theses*, the Epicurean, that happiness consists in worldly pleasure and the Socratic/Stoic, that happiness consists in virtue alone (i.e. not subject to sin). Aristotle advises disputants 'to have a collection of the theses of the various schools among [their] propositions' because he recognizes the potential of these *theses* to be marshaled in the interest of drawing paradoxical statements. Not surprisingly, he refers to the

debate between Callicles and Socrates in *Gorgias* as a clear case of one *thesis* (Socrates' that happiness consists in virtue) appearing paradoxical in opposition to another (Callicles' that happiness consists in pleasure) which claims to be representative of the common opinion.[89] For Blundeville and Aristotle, therefore, the difference between the *thesis* and the paradox is really just a matter of proof; a *thesis*, though contrary to common opinion, may attempt to render itself credible by restricting the terms deployed in dialectical syllogisms which purport to prove it, while a paradox that advances exactly the same view as a *thesis* indicates that these terms have not yet been restricted sufficiently to render it amenable to the common opinion. Hence, while Donne's description of *Biathanatos* as both a *thesis* and a paradox reveals his rejection of Ramus' distinction between the paradox and the *thesis*, it simultaneously refers to the fineness of this distinction observed by both Aristotle and Blundeville.

6
Harvey and Nashe on Ramism

Ramus' rejection of the contentiousness of the *thesis* was just another in a series of innovations which contributed to the simplification of dialectical procedure, a simplification that appeared to many in the late sixteenth-century England as an oversimplification. Ramus' influence on the teaching of rhetoric and dialectic at Oxford and Cambridge during the 1580's and early 90's is fully recorded, and so, will not be rehearsed in great detail here.[90] However, as Donne was certainly at Oxford and possibly at Cambridge while the debates between the Harvey brothers and Thomas Nashe over Ramism raged there, it is likely that he was familiar with the various senses in which, we will see, the term 'paradox' was used in the context of these debates.[91] In the introduction to his mock library catalogue, *The Courtier's Library* (1650), Donne referred to Ramus as an inspiration for paradoxists; to discover precisely what type of paradoxist he thought was influenced by Ramus, we must examine the details of the Harvey-Nashe quarrel over Ramus' innovations in both dialectic and rhetoric.[92] In the controversy which emerged between the Harvey

brothers, Gabriel, Richard and John, and the Cambridge wits championed by Nashe and Greene, Ramus' simplifications became a particularly sore point of dispute, the Harveys defending the advantages to oratory which Ramus' orderly rhetoric provided, and Nashe and Greene objecting that such order required intelligent and learned writers to observe puerile distinctions, which were more fitting for grammar school students than university scholars.[93] In the *Ciceronianus* (1577), his companion to the *Rhetorica* (1548) of Ramus' colleague, Omer Talon, Gabriel Harvey writes, '*Discite ab Erasmo rerum copiam cum verborum copia conglutinare: discite a P. Ramo Philosophiam cum eloquentia coniunctam amplexari*'.[94] Though Harvey utilized Ramist principles more to expound rhetorical than philosophical views, it is evident that he recognized the primary and comprehensive role which Ramus had allocated to dialectic.[95] After affirming Ramus' view that the fundamental precepts of any particular art, such as Grammar, are proper to that art once they have been identified, he is careful to note that dialectic, of all the arts, provides the means to distinguish their precepts, just as it was dialectic that distinguished the definitions which Ramus had argued should not be mistakenly confused with paradoxical *theses*. He says, '*Rhetorica a Grammaticis; Dialectica ab vtrisque internoscere.*'[96]

Harvey, however, remains faithful to Cicero by advising students of oratory not to rely solely on dialectic to assist them in their pursuit of eloquence. In the *Topics*, Cicero had urged his orator to avoid the strict observance of logical exposition which rendered Stoic rhetoric so sterile, and to cultivate a knowledge of all the arts and sciences which would make his speeches not only more generally persuasive, but also more reflective of his wisdom and eloquence. Though the distinctions which separate the various spheres of knowledge of the arts and sciences are determined by the analytical procedure of *dispositio*, Cicero maintains that it is by *inventio* that the fullness of true eloquence is achieved.[97] Harvey has Cicero's discussion in the *Topics* in mind when, in *Rhetor* (1577), he explains, '*Nec vero dialecticam solum adiungit eloquentiae, sed velut ad cumulum accedere vult omnium maximarum disciplinarum facultate, scientamque rerum prope innumerabilium*', and then exclaims, '*O artem artium, o doctrinarum doctrinam*

eloquentiam'.[98] In his praise of eloquence, Harvey inverts Cicero's appraisal of

dialectic in *Brutus* and *De Oratore* as *ars omnium artium maxima*, and as a result,

places the analytical applications of dialectic and *dispositio* at the disposal of the

more constructive enterprises of rhetoric and *inventio*.[99] Harvey adopted Ramus'

terms for *dispositio* and *inventio*, analysis and genesis respectively, and emphasized

the necessity of genesis to coherent composition.[100] Once analysis has completed

the deconstructive task of distinguishing definitions and partitions under its

dialectical scrutiny, it remains for genesis to reassemble and apply these various

pieces to the rhetorical end demanded of the orator. '*Sed ecce vobis in altera manu*

Genesin: perpulchrum illud etiam perquam necessarium instrumentum: & sine quo

vetera tantum retexere, nihil noui contexere quisquam potest'.[101] For Harvey the

unraveling process of analysis (*retexere*) is not as fertile as genesis' process of

recombination (*contexere*), the process by which new things are generated by

learned invention.[102] Harvey's attention to the fecundity of invention attainable by

the orator whose knowledge encompasses all disciplines, leads him to conclude his

Ciceronianus with an exhortation to his students to emulate Cicero by incorporating

a knowledge of all the arts and sciences into their oratory, and not just the principles

of the rhetoricians and grammarians.

> *Si vere Ciceroniani, non simulate esse velitis; vt estis Ciceronianae*
> *eloquentiae, prudentiaeque auditores; eo animo ad Ciceronem vestrum;*
> *institutoque venire debetitis, nunquam vt ad illum accedatis quin discedatis*
> *non modo Grammatici, atque rhetores: sed etiam Dialectici, Ethici, Politici,*
> *Historici; interdum etiam Physici, Iuroconsulti, atque adeo Cosmographi in*
> *quibusdam meliores.*[103]

Though the spirit of Harvey's advice to his students is Ciceronian, the

structure and language of his rhetoric are manifestly Ramist, and are, accordingly,

simplified by the application of the dialectical principles of analysis and genesis.[104]

This simplification provoked the criticism of Harvey's young adversary, Nashe, who

would not tolerate any divergence from the authority of Cicero or Aristotle, no

matter how obscurely or inconsistently they sometimes expressed their views.

Nashe attacked Harvey's submission of Cicero's *Orator* to the demands of Ramist

rhetoric, condemning the arrogance of those who would presume to undermine such ancient foundations of learning. Responding to the accusation that his *Pierce Penniliesse* (1592) is impious, Nashe says, 'No more is Pierce Pennilesse to be cald the Deuils Orator for making a supplication to the Deuill, than hee is to bee helde for a Rhetoritian, for setting foorth *Gabrielis Scuruei Rhetor*, wherein he thought to knockt out the brains of poore *Tullies Orator*'.[105] Nashe seldom, if ever, comments on the substance of his disagreement with Harvey's Ramism, and ventures no further in his attack than to denounce him on the charge of innovating. It does not trouble him that Harvey repeatedly accuses him, on an abundance of strong evidence, of like abuses with regard to the verbal novelties which he and his fellow wits produced for their mutual entertainment.[106] In his preface to Greene's *Menaphon* (1589), Nashe asserts the affinity of Greene's 'extemporall...inuention' to the archetype sketched in *Orator* against the sterile and mechanical metrical formulae which Ramist pedants such as Harvey dispense to their students as easy means to eloquence.

> I come (sweet friend) to thy *Arcadian Menaphon*, whose attire (though not so stately, yet comely) doth intitle thee aboue all other to that *temperatum dicendi genus* which *Tully* in his Orator termeth true eloquence...giue me the man whose extemporall veine in any humour will excell our greatest Art-maisters deliberate thoughts; whose inuentions, quicker then his eye, will challenge the prowdest Rhetoritian to the contention of like perfection with like expedition.[107]

Nashe goes on to insist that ready inventions such as Greene's (and his master, Lyly's) are only acquired after years of studying the unabbreviated, uncondensed masters of antiquity. Even such a protracted course of study does not guarantee useful results as Nashe claims the example of 'Peter Ramus sixteene yeeres paines' expended composing 'his petty Logicke' illustrates.[108] Harvey, as we will see, will respond to Nashe's praise of the fullness of Greene's (and his own) invention, by criticizing its neglect of precisely that order which Ramus' logic brought to all the arts and sciences.[109]

7

The Value of the Paradox of Ramism

Though Ramus himself was committed to eliminating paradoxes, which appeared neither able to be proven true nor false, from his logic, the reformulations of Aristotelian principles which he introduced to achieve this elimination were considered by his antagonists to be themselves, paradoxes, in so far as they ran counter to the common opinion that accepted the authority of Aristotle. Had Nashe understood Ramus' explicit argument against the paradoxical *thesis*, he may have wanted to seize the opportunity to comment wittily upon the paradox of Ramus' denial of paradox. However, he betrays his ignorance of this argument when, in his first published work, *The Anatomie of Absurdity* (1589), he associates Ramist dialectic with novel systems of acquiring knowledge, which, he suggests, only appeal because they are uncommon or paradoxical.

> I am not ignorant, that farre more ardent is the desire of knowing vnknowne thinges, then of repeating knowne things: this we see happen in Stageplayers, in Orators, in al things, men hast vnto nouelties, and runne to see new things, so that whatsoever is not vsuall, of the multitude is admired, yet must students wisely prefer renowned antiquitie before newe found toyes, one line of *Alexanders* Maister, before the large inuective *Scolia* of the *Parisian* Kings Professor.[110]

Presumably Nashe would not have needed to be reminded that Aristotle himself praised the virtue of the wonder aroused by strange things to stimulate the pursuit of knowledge.[111] Nevertheless, Nashe has little to say in commendation of the doubtful or paradoxical. Deferring to authority of the most dogmatic of dialecticians and most dialectical of dogmatists, the Stoic logician, Chrysippus, Nashe advises students, 'If thou be desirous to attain to the truth of a thing, first learn determinate conclusions before thou dealest with doubtful controversies: he shall neuer enter into the reason of the trueth, who beginneth to be taught by doubts.'[112] Despite the startling resemblance of this sentiment to the views of Ramist pedagogues such as Fraunce, Nashe persists in his associations of paradox and Ramism. In his typically

Ramist rejection of the exposure of infinite regress by the sceptical critique of axiomatic judgement, Fraunce tacitly approves the use of syllogisms, which employ axioms as their major premises, for the clarification of students' doubts, and the elimination of the possibility of paradox.

> But if these axiomes bee not playne inough of themselves, they must bee sent to syllogisme, there to bee discussed, and to methode, there to bee ordered. So that, whatsoever is eyther by syllogisme, or methode iudged, it is all iudged by the helpe of this first and axiomaticall iudgement. For if the premisses [sic] in a syllogisme bee not sometimes certayne and so iudged by axiomaticall iudgement, and graunted; there will bee no ende of making syllogismes: when still wee call the groundes thereof into controversie, for want of axiomaticall iudgement.[113]

Again, Nashe seems unaware of the similarity in logical practice between his 'determinate conclusions' and Ramus' and Fraunce's axioms. In his criticism of Anthony Chute's contribution of verses to Harvey's *Pierce's Supererogation* (1593), Nashe writes, 'He was such a peruerse Ramisticall heretike, a busie reprouer of the principles of all Arts, and sower of seditious Paradoxes amongst kitchen boys.'[114] Both Richard and Gabriel Harvey, Nashe maintains, are as guilty as Chute of spreading the paradoxes of Ramism. In *Pierce Peniliesse His Svpplication to the Divell* (1592), to which Harvey's *Pierce's Supererogation* was a response, Nashe refers to the reprimand which Richard Harvey received while a student at Cambridge for advocating Ramus' alterations of Aristotle. He says addressing Richard, 'Thou that hadst thy hood turnd ouer thy eares when thou wert a Batchelor, for abusing of Aristotle, & setting him vp on the Schoole gates, painted with Asses eares on his head'.[115]

While himself a batchelor at Cambridge (1573), Gabriel was denied his degree for, among other reasons, maintaining paradoxes against the authority of Aristotle. Harvey responded in his letter of complaint to the Master of Pembroke Hall, John Young, that the positions which he chose to argue in the academic disputations in question were not so strange that they had no precedent advocates of generally accepted authority, and therefore, were not rightly termed paradoxes if such a term connoted dangerously innovative opinions. He is careful to assert that

though he has been accused of being 'a great and continual patron of paradoxis and a main defender of straung opinions, and that comunly against Aristotle', the term 'paradoxis' had been attributed to his positions by his accuser, Thomas Nevil.[116] He says defending the lack of originality of his so-called paradoxes, 'I never yit tooke uppon me the defenc of ani quaestion which I culd not shew with a wet fingar out of sum excellent late writer or other; and especially out of Melanchthon, Ramus, Valerius and Foxius'.[117] To the charge that he was excessively critical of his fellows, he answered similarly that he had 'never...discommendid ani of those, that haue in the most and best mens iudgements bene thout commendable.'[118] As we will see, Harvey was as suspicious of contentiousness and its expression in paradox as Nashe, yet he was still able to recognize that respected and influential scholars such as Ramus had raised legitimate objections to established principles which resulted in genuine controversy, and that such objections argued in the context of formal disputation are strictly speaking, paradoxes. Such paradoxes may be argued cogently on reputable authority, though neither they nor their opposing more orthodox positions emerge definitively and unanimously approved. Hence, while Harvey is speaking ironically when he refers to his own informed objections as 'nu fresh paradoxis', he is serious when he recommends that 'it were more fruteful for us and commodius for our auditors to handle sum sad and witti controversi' than the 'stale quaestions' of 'popular and plausible theams, de nobilitate, de amore, de gloria, de liberalititate' and the like.[119] Writing twenty years later in response to Nashe's repeated accusations of 'paradoxisme', Harvey continues to defend the virtues of the learned debate of problems and their sister disputations, paradoxes.[120]

> I could yet take pleasure, and proffite in canuassing some Problems of naturall Philosophy, of the Mathematiques, of Geography, and Hydrography...and I would vppon my owne charges, trauaile into any part of Europe, to heare some pregnant Paradoxes, and certain singular questions in the highest professions of Learning, in Physic, in Law, in Diuinity, effectually and thoroughly disputed *pro & contra*...What conferences, or disputations, what Parliaments, or Councels, like those, that deliberate vpon the best gouerment of Commonwealthes, and the best discipline of churches; the dubble anchor of the mighty shipp, and the two great Luminaries of the world?[121]

As Cicero, Aphthonius and sixteenth-century commentators such as Lorich had recognized in their characterization of the *thesis*, Harvey recognizes the value of constructing arguments for and against the preferabililty of certain ethical positions, which the disputation of serious paradoxes occasions.

8
Vain Contention and Frivolous Paradoxes

Harvey also recognizes that the disputation of paradoxes may promote frivolity and needless contention however. Immediately following his praise of 'pregnant Paradoxes', he warns that 'other extravagent discourses, not materiall, or quarrelous contentions, not auailable, are but wastinge of winde, or blotting of paper.'[122] Even more disconcerting are the controversies which have arisen out of the religious differences of the day, controversies whose respective partisans have deployed paradox as a term of censure. Harvey, himself, uses the term in this pejorative sense when he advises the various factions to reconcile their differences in recognition of the common principles on which they all can agree, and which, being more universal, should marginalize disagreement upon particulars. Nashe, as Harvey repeatedly indicates, resembles these schismatics in his ceaseless contentiousness, and uses paradox accordingly, as a term to discredit Harvey's opinions as well as those of his other adversaries. Warning against the dangers of stubborn disputation, Harvey says:

> Serious matters would be handeled seriously, not vpon simplicity, but vppon choice; nor to flesh, or animate, but to disgrace, and shame Leuity. A glicking *Pro*, and a frumping *Contra*, shall haue much-adoe to shake handes in the *Ergo*. There is no ende of girdes, & bobbes: it is sound Argumentes and grounded Authorities, that must strike the definitive stroke, and decide the controuersy, with mutuall satisfaction.[123]

Harvey's complaints against the levity of disputations which neglect 'sound Arguments' and 'grounded Authorities' could easily have been directed at Donne's

Paradoxes, which effect their levity precisely by advancing fallacious arguments and questioning grounded authorities. We have already seen and will see further how Donne exploits ambiguity to create fallacious arguments which draw paradoxical conclusions. In his third paradox, 'That old Men are more Fantastique then younge', he attacks the reliability of purported authorities. 'So are these uncertaine elders, which both call them fantastique which follow others inventions, and them allso which are led by ther owne humors suggestion, more fantastique than eyther.'[124] Here, we are reminded of the serious concern which Donne expresses in his third satire when he reiterates Moses' demand to 'Ask your father, he will inform you, / Your elders, they will tell you'.[125] Donne's demand betrays his lack of confidence in the divisive elders of the modern church, and echoes the foreboding with which Moses uttered his own demand. God had warned Moses that '[this] people will...go astray after the alien gods in their midst...; they will forsake Me and break My covenant that I made with them.'[126] As we will see, Harvey, Nashe and Donne will complain that the vogue for the development of novel doctrines has given rise to vain contentions and frivolous paradoxes which have unnecessarily caused division in the affairs of both church and state. Such unnecessary disputation leads to schism, which both Augustine and Aquinas explain, is a willful breach of God's demand for a church united by the principle of love (*charitas*).[127] Donne's response in his third satire to those who blindly follow their partisan authorities into religious controversy reflects the insistence with which he will assert the authority of the conscience in *Biathanatos* and *Pseudo-Martyr*. 'Or will it then boot thee / To say a Philip, or a Gregory, / A Harry, or a Martin taught thee this? / Is not this excuse for mere contraries, / Equally strong; cannot both sides say so?'[128]

Though Harvey admitted that the argumentativeness with which he was charged while a student justly needed correction, his scholarly, civic and religious opinions never sought to stray from an orthodoxy rooted in accepted authorities.[129] Harvey's deference to authority and contempt of vain controversy produced in him a wariness of the dangers of paradox, which Donne would also recognize in his criticisms of the Jesuits in *Ignatius His Conclave* (1610), Catholics generally in

Pseudo-Martyr, mystical neoplatonists in the *Essays in Divinity* and casuists in *Biathanatos*.[130] Harvey writes:

> It is a bold subject, that attempteth to binde the handes of sacred maiesty: and they loue controuersies well, I trow, that call their Princes proceedinges into Controuersie. Altercations, and Paradoxes, aswell in Discipline, as in Doctrine, were neuer so curiously curious, or so infinitely infinite: but when all is done, and when Inouation hath sett the best countenance of proofe, or persuasion, vpon the matter.[131]

Nashe, remembering both Richard's and Gabriel's charges of paradoxism for supporting Ramus against Aristotle, does not find a profitable place for paradox as an exercise in disputation as Harvey (Gabriel) had. For Nashe, to argue a paradox belies a superficially learned mind which seeks either to make a pretense to knowledge or to create new doctrines by which it may justify its heretical combativeness. In his preface to Greene's *Menaphon*, he complains that the novel opinions of divinity, which plague both church and state, are constructed of faulty argumentation by controversialists who have been tempted to dispute the contested issues of religion before they have acquired the rudiments of logic. In academic exercises such negligent disputants, 'that spit *ergo* in the mouth of euery one they meete', deserve to be answered in kind, their fallaciously and hastily drawn paradoxical conclusions met with equally brief and dismissive rebuttals.[132] However, when these innovators, with their faulty logic, begin to debate issues of genuine gravity such as the improvement of the commonwealth, the paradoxist will cease to appear a marvel because his uncommon opinions will have escaped the confines of the university and become regular public policy.

> I will not deny but in scholler-like matters of controuersie a quicker stile may passe as commendable, and that a quip to an Asse is as good as a goad to an Oxe: but when the irregular Ideot, that was vp to the eares in diuinity before euer he met with *probabile* in the Vniversitie, shall leaue *pro & contra* before hee can scarcely pronounce it, and come to correct common-weales, that neuer heard of the name of Magistrate before hee came to *Cambridge*, it is no maruaile if euery Alehouse vaunt the table of the world turned vpside downe, since the child beateth his father, and the Asse whippeth his Master.[133]

It is apparent that Nashe could not approve those 'pregnant Paradoxes...vpon the best gouerment of Commonwealthes, and the best discipline of churches' which Harvey had distinguished from the vain paradoxes and innovations of the 'bold subject, that attempteth to bind the hands of sacred Majesty'. Nor could he approve the novel opinions of 'reformers of the Arts' such as Ramus, Talon, and their disciple, Harvey who, like the sophists of *Gorgias* and *Euthydemus*, he claims, 'respect not so much the indagation of the truth, as the ayme of their pride'.[134] Again, the threat to truth issues from the pursuit of novelty and paradox.

> Coveting to haue newe opinions passe under their names, they spende whole yeeres in shaping of sects. Which their pudled opinions are no sooner published, but straight way some proude spirited princocks, desirous to differ from the common sort, gets him a liuerie Coate of their cloth, / and slaues it in the seruile sutes, enlarging the wilful errors of their arrogancie.[135]

As he had noted when he distinguished the paradoxical encomium from the paradox in *Lenten Stuffe*, Nashe maintains that the manufacture of paradoxes is, and has always been, a specifically philosophical process which functions according to corrupt dialectic. In the *Anatomie of Absurditie*, he attacks the vain *theses* of philosophers upon the metaphysical and ontological condition of the soul, which, he says, are of no benefit to virtue, and thus dispenses with paradoxes of the sort recorded by Aristotle in the *Topics*, taught by Pythagoras and argued unprofitably by scholastics ever since.[136]

> Innumerable such vnnecessary questions, according to Philosophy, are made as touching the soule, as whence it is, what maner of one it is, when it doth begin to be, how long it may bee, whether it passeth not from his first mansion els where, and so alter his abiding, or shift into other formes of brute Beastes...What do al these / things auaile vnto virtue?[137]

We may wonder what Nashe would have thought of the interest which Donne took in Pythagorean doctrine in his *Metempsychosis* (1601).[138]

9

The Syllogistic Structure of Paradox in Harvey, Nashe and Donne

Whatever he thought of its treatment in poetry, Nashe viewed such paradoxes
as sophistical abuses of philosophy, abuses which are manifest most evidently in the
syllogistic arguments of formal disputation. In his parodic account of Harvey's
early education in *Have with Yov to Saffron-Walden* (1596), Nashe clearly associates
the young Harvey's supposed skill in constructing and applying syllogisms with his
ability to defend paradoxes. Nashe explains that Harvey's school master, impressed
by his promise, 'cryde out *O acumen Carneadum*! *O decus addite diuis*! and swore
by *Susenbrotus* and *Taleus* that he would prooue another *Philo Iudeaus* for
knowledge and deep judgement, who in Philosophie was preferd aboue *Plato*'.[139]
Nashe's comparison of Harvey to Carneades recalls Cicero's advocacy of the
synthesis of the respective techniques of dialectic and rhetoric in *De Oratore*.
There, Cicero argued that the ideal orator must embrace 'either the modern dialectic
of Carneades or the earlier method of Aristotle'; both methods, we have seen, teach
the deductive procedures necessary either to prove or to refute paradoxes.[140]
Nashe's reference to Susenbrotus and Talon is ironic here and employed
sarcastically to suggest that Harvey was taught not out of the full texts of Cicero and
Aristotle, as his school master's comparison of his pupil to Carneades at first
implies, but out of grammar school rhetorical manuals such as Susenbrotus'
Epitome, and abbreviated and simplified rhetorical treatises such as Talon's
Rhetorica (1548).[141] Moreover, to recommend the eloquence of Carneades or
Aristotle on the authority of Talon is contradictory, especially in light of Cicero's
passage from *De Oratore*. Ramus had imposed a division between dialectic and
rhetoric, separating the five traditional elements of oratory precisely where Cicero
had insisted synthesis was lacking. Ramus' dialectic was comprised of *inventio*,
dispositio and *memoria*, and his rhetoric of *elocutio* and *pronuntiatio* alone. Talon's
Rhetorica provided the simplified companion rhetoric to Ramus' simplified
dialectic, and therefore, taught a manner of speaking and writing which was not
explicitly informed by the rigors of dialectic. If Harvey had learned his oratory from

Susenbrotus and Talon, he would not have learned anything about formal argumentation. When Harvey undertakes his study of logic at Cambridge, Nashe claims, his comprehension is correspondingly superficial, as is evidenced by his ridiculously pedantic application of the syllogism.

> *So vpon his first manumission in the mysterie of Logique, because he obseru'd* Ergo *was the deadly clap of the peece, or driu'n home stab of the Syllogisme, hee accustomed to make it the Faburden to anie thing hee spake; As, if anie of his companions complained hee was hungrie, hee would straight conclude* Ergo *you must goe to dinner; or if the clock had stroke or bell towld,* Ergo *you must goe to such a Lecture; or if anie stranger said he came to seeke such a one, and desir'd him he would shew him which was his chamber, he would foorthwith come vpon him with* Ergo *he must go vp such a paire of staires: whereupon (for a great while) he was cald nothing but* Gabriell Ergo *up and downe the Colledge.* [142]

Nashe goes on to suggest ironically that this introduction to the syllogism prepared Harvey to defend the 'pregnant' academic paradoxes which he had praised in *Pierce's Supererogation*. Nashe recalls one such paradox which he imagines Harvey was required to defend.

> *But a scoffe which longer dwelt with him than the rest, though it argued his extreame pregnancie of capacitie and argute transpersing dexteritie of Paradoxisme, was that once he would needs defend a Rat to be* Animal rationale, *that is, to haue as reasonable a soule as anie Academick, because she eate and gnawd his bookes, and, except she carried a braine with her, she could neuer digest or be so capable of learning.*[143]

The syllogism underlying this obviously fallacious argument is worth extracting and comparing to a similar syllogism constructed by Donne to support the claim of his eleventh paradox, 'A Defence of Womens Inconstancy', that women have more reason than men. There, Donne says, 'Soe in Men they that have the most reasonn are the most alterable in there dessignes, and the darkest and most Ignorant do seldomest change. Therfore Women changing more then menn have alsoe more reason'.[144] It is important to recognize that both Nashe's and Donne's

syllogisms proceed by making relative propositions (i.e. rats are as reasonable as academics; women are more reasonable than men), and thus, employ the predicament of relation described by Aristotle in the *Categories*, and by every logician thereafter who adopted his conceptual framework, even Ramus. Because the conclusions of Nashe's and Donne's syllogisms make relative statements, the arguments claim to prove that the compared terms (i.e. rats and academics, women and men) may be described by a common predicate (i.e. reasonable). In the *Categories*, Aristotle explains that relative terms derive their significance from the natures of things known definitely and in themselves. 'It is plain, therefore, that anyone who knows any relative definitely must know definitely that also in relation to which it is spoken of.'[145] Definite knowledge differs from relative knowledge in that the former may be known 'without necessarily knowing definitely that in relation to which it is spoken of' as it is not necessary to know 'whose this head is, or whose the hand' to know definitely what a hand is.[146]

The term which informs the middle terms of both Nashe's and Donne's syllogisms is 'reasonable'. It is by the standard of this term that the related terms are compared; and therefore, according to Aristotle's explanation, the nature of 'reasonable' must be asserted definitely in order to inform the relative statements which predicate it of the related terms. Nashe's syllogism relies on his definition of reasonable as the ability to 'digest' or learn the information contained in books. His identification of his middle term, 'digest', with reasonable, in turn, explicitly betrays the equivocal deployment of the middle term which ultimately invalidates the syllogism. By claiming Harvey's failure to notice the equivocal use of 'digest', Nashe ridicules both Harvey's knowledge of dialectic and implies that paradoxes generally are the result of equivocal use of middle terms in syllogism. In the syllogism of his eleventh paradox, Donne's definition of reasonable is the ability to be 'alterable in...dessignes'.[147] Unlike Nashe, Donne does not provide the term with which 'alterable in design' will be identified to render the middle term, 'change', equivocal, though it is always evident that it is something like 'unpredictable'. Nashe's syllogism reads:

Those who digest most books are most reasonable.
Rats and academics digest the same amount of books.
Therefore, Rats are as reasonable as academics.

Donne's reads:

Those who change most are most reasonable.
Women change more than men (i.e. women change most).
Therefore, women have more reason than men (i.e. women are most
reasonable).[148]

The conflation of contraries, rats and women with reason, is here demonstrated in
the form of a syllogism. To reach a conclusion which asserts such a conflation is to
propose a paradox, as we have sufficiently illustrated above. Nashe's description of
Harvey's generation of a paradox by deploying the middle term of a syllogism
equivocally, however, makes explicit the relation of the paradox and the syllogism, a
relation which governs the generation of the paradoxical conclusions of both
Donne's *Paradoxes* and *Biathanatos*. Furthermore, by locating the fallacy
responsible for the invalidity of their syllogisms in the attempt to establish a
univocal middle term, Nashe and Donne raise the epistemological problem of the
criterion of truth to which both Academic and Pyrrhonist applications of Sextus' two
general modes of sceptical dissent (infinite regress and reciprocity) led, and as a
solution to which, Aristotle, the Stoics, Ramus and his followers offered their
purportedly reliable methods of verification and definition.[149]

Despite Nashe's account of Harvey's failure to notice the equivocation of his
syllogism of the rat (or perhaps as a response to it), Harvey is concerned to
distinguish between vain paradoxes which rely on restricted or unusual senses of
terms and profitable paradoxes which indicate issues of justifiable scholarly
contention. Harvey, like many who had written against the excessive verbal subtlety
of the schoolmen's syllogisms, followed Ramus in the view that the controversies
arising from religious disputes could be resolved if both parties employed simple
fundamental definitions which were not rhetorically distorted to serve their
respective polemical agendas. Unlike the sceptical critics of scholastic syllogistic,

however, Harvey merely advocates Ramus' simplification of Aristotelian dialectic by promoting the uncritical utilization of axioms and definitions in the construction of deductive arguments; he is not interested in undermining the ability of syllogism to generate true statements.[150] He recommends that:

> Reconciliation settle itselfe to examine matters barely, without their veales, or habiliments, according to the counsell of Marcus Aurelius: and to define things simply, without any colours, or embellishments, according to the precepts of Aristotle and the examples of Ramus: and the most-endlesse altercations; being generally rather verball, then reall, and more circumstantiall, then substantiall; will soon grow to an ende.[151]

It is no accident that his call for a return to reliable first principles and definitions cites the authority of three opponents of scepticism, the Stoic emperor, Marcus Aurelius, Aristotle and Ramus. Such a return to first principles also explains his submission of the individual conscience to the universal and irrefutable demands of Ramus' method of judgement. According to these demands, individuals could be assured that their ethical choices were taken upon sound and objective reasons which were verifiable in the clear light of the axioms and definitions from which they were deduced. Ramus' simplified Aristotelian logic provided the basis for such a doctrine, a doctrine which Donne would question implicitly in his defense of the individual conscience in *Biathanatos*. Harvey describes the Ramistic basis of his doctrine of conscience, and warns against the dangers of exercising a 'priuate conscience', which, he suggests, can only lead to the lawless libertinism with which John Adams had charged Donne in *Biathanatos*. When the conscience encounters a problem, the agent must attempt to resolve it by analyzing it according to the principles which most properly govern it. He must be 'in diuinitie ruled by Diuinitie, in law, by Law, in art, by Art, in reason, by Reason, in experience, by Experience.'[152] This Ramist approach to the resolution of ethical problems reveals how syllogistic judgement operates in the exercise of what Harvey calls the 'publique Conscience'. The necessary point of departure for this operation is the uncritical acceptance of the primary definitions governing particular ethical decisions, which may, in turn, be resolved by referring the action in question to its

relevant definition in the manner of a minor premise to a major in a syllogistic analysis. This process of syllogistic analysis in ethical decisions is not to be employed for the destruction or qualification of these primary definitions; for Harvey, we will see, such attempts bear the mark of the libertine, the innovator and the vain paradoxist.

Notes to Chapter III

[1] See Ong, 1958; and Howell, 1961.

[2] Ramus, 1964, p. 51

[3] The *Scholae Dialecticae* were published as *Animadversionum Aristotelicarum libri viginti* in 1548 and were collected with Ramus' other *scholae* on rhetoric, grammar, physics and mathematics in 1569.

[4] Ramus, 1970a, p. 21

[5] Richard H. Popkin has noted Giordano Bruno's reference to the 'efettici' in his *Ash Wednesday Supper* (1584), and discusses the characterizations of the *zeteteci* and *ephectici* in Sextus, *Outlines* I; and Diogenes, *Lives*, I. See Popkin, 1960, pp. 35, 259, n. 88.

[6] Ramus, 1970a, p. 11

[7] For a discussion of the role of philosophical disagreement as grounds for sceptical dissent in Sextus, see Barnes, 1990, pp. 1-35.

[8] On Ramus' rejection of Aristotle's distinction between the logic of knowledge (demonstration) and of opinion (dialectic), see Reiss, 1991, pp.132-133.

[9] Ramus, 1970b, p. 261. Ramus is commenting on *De Oratore* II, 133.

[10] See Quintilian, *Institutio* II, xxi, 13.

[11] See Ramus, 1970b, p. 341. '*Ita se Quintilianus in dialecticis valde rude profitetur, qui de judicandi parte, de tot enuntiationum generibus, de tam multis syllogismorum & simplicium & conjunctorum modis, de methodo, neque quidquam vel audierit, vel egerit, qui non meminerit a Cicerone de Stoicis ita dici, quod in altera dialecticae parte duntaxat elaborarint, inveniendi artes non attigerint, judicandi vias diligenter persecuti sint*'. See also *Topics* (Cicero) 6-7.

[12] Ramus, 1970b, pp. 339-340

[13] In later editions of Ramus' *Dialectic*, the 'Method of Prudence' was no longer distinguished from the 'Method of Nature', and both were contained under the single heading of Method. It is interesting to note that the Method of Prudence was a type of proof by induction, which did not claim to establish universals by particulars as Aristotle's inductive process prescribed, but merely illustrated by particulars universal principles which (Ramus believed) were established by the clear light of first judgement. For a discussion Ramist method, and the example of the mixed-up definitions and distributions, see Ong, 1958, pp. 245-252.

[14] Ramus, 1964, p. 146

[15] Ibid., p. 147

[16] On the Platonic influence on Ramist Method's use of analogy as a means to discover the spiritual through the physical, see Sharrat, 1972, pp. 19-32.

[17] See Ramus, 1964, p. 125. This quotation is from the 1576 edition of Ramus' *Dialectique*. This passage did not appear in the *Dialectique* of 1555.

[18] Ramus, 1970a, p. 11. See also Sextus, *Outlines* I, 165 where the five Modes of Agrippa are enumerated.

[19] On the use of Wilson's *Arte of Rhetorique* and Fraunce's *Lawier's Logike* in the Inns of Court, see Watson, 1908, pp. 87-89; Schoek, 1957, pp. 498-508; and Schoek, 1983, pp. 274-291. On Fraunce's *Lawier's Logike* and its relation to other legal textbooks, see Prest, 1972, pp. 145-146.

[20] Fraunce, 1588, sig. ¶¶ 3. See also the discusion of this passage in Howell, 1961, pp. 224-225.

[21] Donne, 1980, p. 18, ll. 21-24

[22] For the debate over the relation of Donne's apparent scepticism to Ramist method, see Tuve, 1942, pp. 365-400; Tuve, 1947, pp. 331-381; Empson, 1949, pp. 571-587; and Nelly, 1969, pp. 40-46. Claudia Brodsky, following Tuve's view that Donne's logical images were derived from Ramus, argues that Donne used logic in his poetry to illustrate its inability to reveal the truth. Her conclusion is indebted also to Stanley Fish's view that Donne's notion of truth (especially as represented in *Satire* III) was neoplatonic. See Fish, 1972, pp. 43-77. See Brodsky, 1982, pp. 829-848. For an application of Fish's theory of Donne's 'self-consuming artifacts' to the *Songs and Sonnets*, which mistakes (as Malloch and Colie had) Donne's understanding of the relation between dialectic and paradox, see Rajan, 1982, pp. 805-828. Alison R. Rieke continues to associate Donne's use of paradox with the neoplatonic tradition (as had Colie and Fish). Her position is tenable, however, because she restricts her conclusions to Donne's strictly poetic use of traditional riddles which he would have known from his copy of Nicholas Reusner's encyclopedia of riddling, *Aenigmatographia* (1599). See Rieke, 1984, pp. 1-20.

[23] Michael McCanles argues that the paradoxes of the *Songs and Sonnets* were 'alarums' to the truth of the lack of correspondence between terms and the concepts they represent. He claims that Donne is objecting both to Ramistic realism and Platonic idealism, and concludes that Donne denied scepticism by an appeal to the analogical correspondence which Aquinas believed confirmed the mind's accurate perception of external reality. See McCanles, 1966, pp. 266-287. James S. Baumlin does not believe that Donne was serious when he asserted that his *Paradoxes* were 'alarums to truth' and claims that to read the paradoxes of Donne's prose or poetry as such 'is too facile an account of the reading experience' (p. 242). Baumlin would have been well served had he attempted to observe the distinction which McCanles' adopts for his article's reading of the *Song and Sonnets*. As we will see below, Aquinas' realism, though it is derived from a doctrine of analogical correspondence, attributed to natural reason an ability to discern the truth which Augustine's neoplatonic epistemology could not support. Baumlin radically over-estimates Donne's scepticism in his reading of the *Paradoxes*, and argues that Donne is raising a Pyrrhonist 'alarum' to the hopeless intractability of truth. See Baumlin, 1991, pp. 236-250. In a later analysis of Donne and paradox, however, McCanles himself is unwilling to acknowledge Donne's regard for natural reason's ability to apprehend truth through the use of dialectic. See McCanles, 1975, pp. 54-117.

[24] Ramus, 1970b, p. 282. Ramus' failure to acknowledge Cicero's comment is particularly surprising because the first part of the *Scholae Rhetoricae* is derived from an earlier commentary on Cicero's *Brutus*, *Brutinae quaestiones*. The *Scholae Rhetoricae* of 1569 also included Ramus' commentary on Quintilian, *Rhetoricae distinctiones in Quintilianum*. For more on the composition of the 1569 *Scholae*, see Walter J. Ong's introduction to his edition of *Petrus Ramus Scholae in Liberales Artes* (Hildesheim, New York, 1970).

[25] For further discussion of this process, see Ong, 1958, pp. 182-183.

[26] Fraunce, 1588, p. 8

[27] Ramus, 1574a, sig. Hiij

[28] *Topics* (Cicero) 8

[29] In his examination of Ramus' similarity to Peter of Spain, Walter J. Ong has observed that Peter 'upgrades [the Ciceronian and Aristotelian sense of] *fides* by treating it as though it referred to certain truth', and that Ramus would follow Peter's high estimate of the power of logic to demonstrate its conclusions with certainty (p. 61). See Ong, 1958, pp. 59-63; and above p. 102, n. 110.

[30] See *Prior Analytics* 24b18.

[31] Both MacIlmaine's Latin and English translations were printed by the Hugenot exile, Thomas Vautrollier.

[32] Ramus, 1574b, sig. F

[33] Fenner, 1584, sig. C2

[34] Ramus, 1572, p. 71. Wechelus' editions of Ramus were introduced to England by Philip Sidney, who had stayed with the printer in Frankfort on the Main while on a tour of the Continent between the years 1572 and 1575. Wechelus, like Vautrollier, was a Huguenot exile. For an account of Wechelus' and Vautrollier's influence on the transmission of Ramism in England, see Ong, 1958, pp. 301-302.

[35] In the posthumous French edition of the *Dialectique* (1576), the sense of Wechelus' and MacIlmaine's Latin is retained. 'Car quand l'axiome n'est points manifeste de soymesme ains

douteaux et incertain (comme sont infinies contentions et procès entre les hommes) il est converti en question, et pour la preuve d'icelle est besoin de quelque moyen et tiers argument disposé avecques elles'. See Ramus, 1964, p. 125.

[36] See *Posterior Analytics* 72a15-24.

[37] Ramus, 1964, p. 124

[38] Ibid., p. 125

[39] Donne, 1982, l. 2409

[40] Ramus, 1964, p. 124

[41] *Posterior Analytics* 97b29. John Stuart Mill recognized that the inductive basis of universal principles could not be eliminated, and therefore, rejected the self-evidency of Aristotelian first principles. For a discussion of Mill's objections, see Hamblin, 1970, pp. 224-252.

[42] Walter J. Ong has noted Ramus' aversion to the probabilism and empiricism associated with induction, and also reveals his knowledge of the use of *theses* and *hypotheses* in rhetoric. Unfortunately, he appears to be unaware of the philosophical tradition of the paradoxical *thesis*, and consequently, fails to acknowledge Ramus' rejection of the investigative value of this traditon. See Ong, 1958, pp. 186-187, 268-267; and p. 368, n. 138.

[43] Ramus, 1964, p. 124

[44] See Ramus, 1970a, p. 347. '*Methodus analytica jubet ab generalibus, & absolute notioribus ads specialia progredi*'. It was against the threat which this sort of deductive procedure posed to scientific discovery that Bacon was reacting when he insisted on the primacy of induction in investigations into uncertain matters. He identifies Ramus specifically as 'introducing the canker of epitomes' which masquerade as the *a priori* axioms of the sciences, but bestows some limited praise on him for simplifying deductive procedure. See Bacon, 1605, xvii, 12. To Ramus' axioms, Bacon preferred aphorisms which succinctly expressed the conclusions of inductive inquiry, and which did not make claims to certainty. See Bacon, 1605, xvii, 7. Not surprisingly, Bacon only considered paradoxes wondrous when their improbability had to be accepted, as in the case of the Christian paradoxes of faith. A paradox in the body of scientific inquiry, however, merely indicated an unlikely position supported by scant evidence. See for example Bacon, 1605, xvii, 10. For further discussion of Bacon on paradox and aphorism, see Pagliaro, 1964, pp. 42-50; for discussion of Bacon's scientific aphorisms and their relation to Ramus' axioms, see Clucas, 1997, pp. 147-172.

[45] *Posterior Analytics* 72a15-18. See also *Metaphysics* 1005b14-17.

[46] Ramus, 1964, p. 124

[47] See Ramus, 1970a, pp. 343-344. He says at the beginning of the section in which he will restrict the meaning of the term '*thesis*', '*Digressiuncula adhuc fuit lubrica valde (ut dixi) & erroris postea manifesti causa*' (p. 343).

[48] See ibid., p. 344.

[49] *Posterior Analytics* 72a19-21. Jonathan Barnes offers an illuminating account of how Aristotle's distinctions between *hypotheses*, definitions and axioms became less distinct in later Aristotelians' use of these terms (pp. 93-95). He notes that it is not evident that this 'broad Aristotelian use', which makes *hypotheses* signify '*all* first principles, and not merely a subgroup of them' and which renders them as certain as axioms, was 'to be found in Aristotle himself' (p. 93, Barnes' emphasis). In his discussion of Sextus' critique of this 'broad Aristotelian use', Barnes argues that the hypothetical mode of the sceptic deploys two contradictory and 'equipollent' *hypotheses* in order to demonstrate that 'the arguments for the one exactly match the arguments for the other' (p. 108). Aristotle himself recommeded a form of the hypothetical mode of arguing *pro* and *contra* a given *thesis*, when, at *Sophistical Refutations* 172b32-34, he advised the disputant to prepare for his debates by having a 'collection of the theses of the various schools' at his disposal. In light of this recommendation, it would appear that Barnes was right to suspect that Aristotle himself did not have the confidence in the certainty of *theses*, *hypotheses* or definitions with which later Aristotelian commentators credited him. Barnes may also have recalled Aristotle's statement, at *Topics* 152b22, that a *hypothesis* 'may be true or false'. See Barnes, 1990, pp. 90-112.

[50] See *Posterior Analytics* 72a21-23.

[51] See ibid., 72b5-18. For a discussion of Aristotle's implicit response to the Pyrrhonist critique, see Barnes, 1990, pp. 120-122.

[52] See Ramus, 1970a, p. 344. '*Causa conclusionis demonstrari non potest: non est discipulo tamen...per se probabilis & nota, sed aliquot exemplorum inductione a magistro exponenda est.*'

[53] Donne, 1980, p. 22, ll. 29-31

[54] Donne, 1982, ll. 3906-7

[55] Donne never changed his opinion of the relation between example and rule. In a 1629 sermon, he said, 'Good Examples are good Assistances; but no Example of man is sufficient to constitute a rule.' See Donne, 1953, IX, p. 158. Both John Adams and Charles Moore criticized Donne for his destructive use of examples in their responses to *Biathanatos*. See Moore, 1790, Part VI, pp. 19-21; and John Adams, 1700, pp. 133-144. For a discussion of Gianfrancesco Pico's view that principles from which deductions are drawn may be shown to be derived from inductive proofs by merely providing examples which contradict those principles, see Schmitt, 1968, pp. 113-121, and his citation of Pico, *Examen Vanitatis* (1520) II, 22 and V, 13. For more on the sources for Donne's examples of suicides in *Biathanatos*, see Allen, 1941, pp. 129-133.

[56] Donne, 1982, ll. 3932-38. George Williamson reads this passage as a reflection of the anxiety which characterized Donne's concern (in 'The First Anniversary') over the uncertainty introduced by 'new philosophy'. He concludes that this anxiety served as a prelude to his fideism, a conclusion, which we will see, is unfounded. See Williamson, 1932, pp. 121-150.

[57] See *De Memoria* 449b31-450a1 and *De Anima*, 428a11-12.

[58] See Ramus, 1964, p. 124. 'Toutfois, commes les couleurs par soy visibles, ainsi les principes par soy intelligibles sont plus clers les uns que les autres, qui a esté cause à Aristote de faire deux espèces de principes: Axiome et Thèse.'

[59] See Ramus, 1970a, p. 345. '*Definitionem non esse propositionem, in qua attributum insit in subjecto, sed de subjecto dicatur*'. The distinction which Ramus claims is falsely observed here is between an attribute which is inserted into the subject and one which is merely said of the subject. The mistaken scholastic commentators (Themistius and Philoponus) argue that the former is characteristic of the proposition, enunciated *thesis* or *hypothesis*, and the latter of the definition. In his manual of Aristotelian logic, *Systema Systemata* (1613), Bartholomäus Keckermann had also complained of the divergence of 'the interpretations of commentators, scholastics or Sorbonnists...from the intention of the author [Aristotle], the collation of the texts and the agreement and harmony of the whole Peripatetic Philosophy.' Quoted in Costello, 1958, p. 46. For more on Keckermann in the context of seventeenth-century Ramism, see Ong, 1958, pp. 299-301.

[60] See *Posterior Analytics* 72a21-24.

[61] For a brief comment on this feature of Ramus' *thesis*, see Reiss, 1991, p. 142.

[62] Ramus, 1970a, p. 346. Ramus' view that definitions are true allows him also to collapse Aristotle's distinction between demonstrative and dialectical syllogisms. Demonstrative syllogisms start from true premises (i.e. axioms), while dialectical syllogisms start from opinions that may or may not be true (i.e. *theses*). As we will see, Thomas Blundeville continued to observe Aristotle's distinction between the demonstrative and dialectical syllogism as well as that between the axiom and the *thesis*.

[63] Ibid., p. 347

[64] Fraunce, 1588, p. 61

[65] Ibid., p. 61. See also Cicero, *Paradoxa* 24-25.

[66] Blundeville, 1599, sig. A4

[67] On Blundeville's Aristotelianism and anatgonism to Ramist logic, see Howell, 1961, pp. 285-288. On the revival of Aristotelian logic at the end of the sixteenth century, see Schmitt, 1983a, pp. 38-40.

[68] Blundeville, 1599, p. 73

[69] Ibid., p. 115

[70] See Sextus, *Against the Mathematicians* VII, 87.

[71] Blundeville, 1599, p. 115

[72] Ibid., p. 143

[73] Ibid., p. 141

[74] Ibid., p. 146. See *Topics* (Aristotle) 105b30-31. In *Prior Analytics*, Aristotle had distinguished the demonstrative from the dialectical proposition in a somewhat weaker form claiming that the demonstrative proposition assumes one of two contradictory positions to be true, while the dialectical proposition chooses one or the other contradictory position without assuming its truth. The

difference, he points out, rests only in the strength of the assertion made in the major premise, and not in the deduction which follows. See *Prior Analytics* 24a21-24b15.

[75] Ibid., p. 148. Blundeville derives his discussion of the sophistical syllogism from *Sophistical Refutations* 165b7-9.

[76] In his *Full Satisfaction Concerning a Double Romish Iniquitie* (London, 1606), Donne's friend and fellow Anglican apologist, Thomas Morton, had observed the problem's similarity to the paradox in its sophistical argumentation and philosophical subject matter. Giving an example of sophistry, Morton says, 'A presumptuous Gorgias and Sophister in Cambridge undertook the defence of this Probleme, *Virtus est vitium, vertue is vice*'. See Morton, 1606, p. 57. On the tradition of the pseudo-Aristotelian *Problems*, see Lawn, 1963, pp. 2-3, 92-113, 129-155. It is worth noting that despite its author's neoplatonic views, the *Quattro libri de dubbi* (1552) of the popular Italian paradoxist, Ortensio Lando, draws freely on material contained in the *Omnes homines* collection of pseudo-Aristotelian *Problems*. See Lawn, 1963, pp. 100-101.

[77] Blundeville, 1599, p. 147

[78] Ibid., pp. 147-148. In a sermon preached at White-Hall, Donne also describes the problem with reference to its non-assertoric and investigative procedure, and also notes its relation to subversive paradoxes and schismatical opinions. There, he warns against the skillful rhetorician who defends these opinions. Such a rhetorician is to be condemned if 'because he is able to make any thing seem probable and likely to the people, by his eloquence, he come to infuse paradoxicall opinions, or schismaticall, or (which may be believed either way) problematicall opinions, for certain and constant truths.' As we will see when we examine Donne's views on schism and paradox, opinions, whether they be orthodox or paradoxical, must be presented as doubtful points and not as necessary and known truths. See Donne, 1953, X, p. 148.

[79] In his *Summale Logicales*, Peter of Spain recognized the derivation of the Latin *positio* from the Greek, *thesis*. In his discussion of the hypothetical proposition, Peter says, 'Et dicitur *ypotetica* ab "*ypos*", quod est *sub*, et "*thesis*", quod est *positio*, quasi *suppositiva*, quia una pars supponitur alteri.' See Peter of Spain, *Summale Logicales*, I, 16. R. J. Henle has shown that Aquinas also recognized the *positio* as an opinion which represented the conclusion of contestable syllogistic argument. According to Henle, Aquinas disputed the various *positiones* of Platonism by attacking the premises which comprised the argumentation (*via*) on which they were based. Aquinas analyzed this argumentation according to the method of dialectical disputation which Blundeville would outline in his discussion of the 'position'. See Henle, 1956, pp. 294-312.

[80] Blundeville, 1599, p. 148. See *Topics* (Aristotle) 10419-28.

[81] In his *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), Robert Burton refers to the question 'of the Earth's motion' as the 'main paradox' which lies behind controversies over the motions of the heavens. Later he observes the deductive fertility of these novel opinions as Donne had in his warning to Wotton 'to take heed of allowing them least you make another'. Burton says that the 'prodigious Paradoxes' of the earth's motion are 'insolent and bold attempts' which 'once...granted...inferences must need follow', but later bewails the fact that efforts 'to avoide these Paradoxes of the Earth's motion' have spawned new and equally unlikely hypotheses. See Burton, 1990, pp. 50-54.

[82] See *Topics* (Aristotle) 100a25-101a3. In the *Sophistical Refutations* 165a38-165b1, Aristotle lists a fourth type of syllogism which he calls the examinational. Blundeville's omission of this type of deduction suggests that he was following Aristotle's threefold classification in the *Topics*. Aristotle's characterization of these three arguments in *Sophistical Refutations* is consistent with his characterization in the *Topics*, however. William of Sherwood follows Aristotle's inconsistency in his *Introduction to Logic*. For a brief discussion of William on Aristotle's classifications of syllogisms, see Hamblin, 1970, p. 117.

[83] *Topics* (Aristotle) 100a27-28, 30-31

[84] Ibid., 100a30, 100b24-25

[85] *Sophistical Refutations* 165b3-4

[86] See ibid., 173a25-27.

[87] Blundeville, 1599, p. 163

[88] W. T. Costello has noted that, in the context of academic disputations, the attempt to expose the fallacy of four terms was 'by far the commonest...reply' to the assertion of a disputant's syllogism. See Costello, 1958, pp. 20-21.

[89] See *Sophistical Refutations* 173a8-12.

[90] For accounts of the influence of Ramus at both English universities in the late sixteenth century as well as on Harvey and Nashe in particular, see Curtis, 1959, pp. 118-119, 251-255; Howell, 1961, pp. 173-281; Ong, 1958, pp. 302-303; Schmitt, 1983a, pp. 50-52; Jardine, 1986, pp. 36-48; and Reiss, 1997, p. 80.

[91] In his *Life of Dr. John Donne*, (1640), Izaak Walton had said that Donne had transferred from Oxford to Cambridge when he was fourteen. See Walton, 1928, p. 6. For discussion of the problem of Walton's account and of Donne's matriculation from Cambridge generally, see Bald, 1970, pp. 46-48; Whitlock, 1962, pp. 1-20. Whitlock also records the views of Edmund Gosse and John Sparrow. See Donne, 1899, I, p. 19; and Sparrow, 1931, pp. 121-152.

[92] Donne, 1930, p. 40

[93] For more on the Harvey/Nashe quarrel with regard to Ramism, see Howell, 1961, pp. 196-199.

[94] Harvey, 1577a, p. 44. See also Harvey, 1577b, pp. 39-42.

[95] For contending theories on the pedagogical ends to which Harvey applied the principles of Ramist dialectic, see Jardine, 1986, pp. 36-48; and John Charles Adams, 1990, pp. 551-569.

[96] Harvey, 1577a, pp. 56-57. Harvey had just asked, '*Si Grammaticum Praeceptorum voluit, non Rhetoricum, non Dialecticam informare (sic cum defendet fortasse quispiam, & iampridem ille sermo increbuit) quid illi tandem rei cum translatis; quid cum modificatis synonymis, quae Rhetorica sunt? quid cum diuersis, atque contrariis, quae sunt dialectica?*'

[97] See *Topics* (Cicero) 6-7.

[98] Harvey, 1577b, pp. 50-51

[99] See *Brutus* 152-153; *De Oratore* I, 186-188.

[100] For a description of the procedure of analysis and genesis in Ramus, see Ong, 1958, pp. 263-267.

[101] Harvey, 1577b, p. 104

[102] See Harvey, 1577b, p. 88 on the fertility of genesis. For a discussion of the unraveling process of analysis in Ramus, see Ong, 1958, pp. 190-193.

[103] Harvey, 1577a, p. 65

[104] Lisa Jardine has argued that because Harvey's rhetorical principles were governed by the principles of Ramist dialectic, he abandoned Cicero's and Quintilian's notion of the philosophically wise and virtuous orator for a pragmatic eloquence devoted principally to affecting the impression of learning for the sake of social and political advancement. Jardine bases her position on her reading of Harvey's marginal comments in his copy of Quintilian's *Institutio* in light of Ramus' rejection of the ideal of the virtuous orator in his *Scholae Rhetoricae* (Basle, 1569, fol., O2v). It is not clear from the quotations of Harvey which she brings in support of her thesis, however, that precisely the opposite position might not be supported by them. See Jardine, 1986, pp. 36-48.

[105] Nashe, 1910, v. 2, pp. 267-268

[106] See Harvey, 1593, p. 11.

[107] Nashe, 1910, v. 3, p. 312

[108] Ibid., v. 3, p. 313

[109] See Harvey, 1593, pp. 21-22.

[110] Nashe, 1910, v. 1, p. 43

[111] See *Metaphysics* 982b11-28. Much has been written about Aristotle's account of wonder in the *Metaphysics*, but little attempt has been made to reconcile it with his much more extensive discussion of paradox. It should be clear, in light of this study's examination of the function of paradox in Aristotle, that the *theses* of the philosophers perform a similarly provocative role. On Aristotle's notion of wonder and its relation to the sixteenth-century, see Bishop, 1996; Altman, 1978; Biester, 1997; Klause, 1987, pp. 41-66; and Quinn, 1969, pp. 626-647.

[112] Nashe, 1910, v. 1, p. 43

[113] Fraunce, 1588, p. 98

[114] Nashe, 1910, v. 3, p. 136

[115] Ibid., v. 1, pp. 195-196

[116] Harvey, 1884, p. 10

[117] Ibid., p. 10

[118] Ibid., p. 7

[119] Ibid., p. 11. See Helen Peters discussion of this passage in Donne, 1980, p. xxx. Peters does not acknowledge Harvey's irony, nor the seriousness of the charge of defending paradoxes. Harvey indicates this seriousness when he explicitly suspects that his accusers 'are aferd les I proove sum noble heretick like Arrius or Pelagius: and so disturb and disquiet the Church as I now do the Chappel' (*Letter-Book*, p. 11). Harvey may be thinking of Roger Ascham's caveat against maintaining paradoxes contradicting the authority of Aristotle and Cicero as, Ascham claims, Quintilian, Ramus and Talon have done. Ascham says that ' such singularity in dissenting from the best men's judgements, in liking only their own opinions, is much misliked of them that join with learning discretion and wisdom. For he that can neither like Aristotle in logic and philosophy nor Tully in rhetoric and eloquence will, from these steps, likely enough presume by like pride to mount higher to the misliking of greater matters; that is, either in religion to have a dissentious head or in the commonwealth to have a factious heart'. See Ascham, 1967, p. 84. Also quoted in Howell, 1961, p. 177. Harvey's dissension from Ascham on the value of Ramus' innovations is recorded in *Ciceronianus* when Ramus is explicitly preferred to Ascham. For discussion of this passage in *Ciceronianus*, see Skinner, 1996, p. 61.

[120] For an account of the role of the problem in the medieval academic disputations upon which the scholastic disputations of the sixteenth century would be modeled, see Lawn, 1963, pp. 81-91. For a discussion of sixteenth and seventeenth-century problem literature, see Lawn, 1963, pp. 113-155.

[121] Harvey, 1593, pp. 5-6. For a mention of this passage and an acknowledgement of its relevance to the *thesis*, see Vickers, 1968, p. 306.

[122] Harvey, 1593, p. 6

[123] Ibid., p. 75

[124] Donne, 1980, p. 6, ll. 33-36

[125] *Satire* III, ll. 71-72; see Deuteronomy 32:7.

[126] Deuteronomy 31:16

[127] Coleridge recognized Donne's unbiased criticism of the 'constant Disputes' of protestant reformers. See Coburn, 1957, v. 3, entry 4152 (quoted in Harding, 1994, p. 217). Dennis Flynn has concluded from Donne's *Courtier's Library* inclusion of the Protestant controversialists, Edward Hoby, Stephen Egerton, William Barlow, Matthew Sutcliffe and Henry Robinson, that he was dissatisfied with the reformed churchs' apparent disregard for a unified and 'catholic' church. Flynn goes on to to note Donne's concern for such unity in his discussion of the 1609 letter to Henry Goodyere, in which Donne urges that actively religious people 'must endeavour this unity in religion'. See Donne, 1977, p. 163; and Flynn, 1975-1976b, pp. 185-187.

[128] *Satire* III, ll. 95-99. For the view that Donne's expression of doubt in his third satire was a pragmatic decision to withold assent in order to obscure his Catholic sympathies, see Robert S. Jackson, 1968, pp. 39-45. For the view that *Satire* III reflects Donne's anticipation of the probabiliorism of seventeenth-century Anglican casuistry, see Camille Welles Slights, 1972, pp. 85-101. For the relation of Donne's *Satires* to the casuistical tradition in general, see Camille Welles Slights, 1981, pp. 149-182.

[129] See Harvey, 1593, pp. 151-152.

[130] For a discussion of the date of composition of the *Essays in Divinity*, see Hughes, 1968, pp. 130-132; Donne, 1967a, pp. x-xxii; and Simpson, 1948, pp. 203-215.

[131] Harvey, 1593, p. 82

[132] Nashe, 1910, v. 3, p. 314

[133] Ibid., v. 3, p. 315

[134] Ibid., v. 1, p. 44

[135] Ibid., v. 1, p. 44

[136] On the Pythagorean view of the soul see *De Anima* 407b21-26; and Diogenes, *Lives* VIII, 14.

[137] Nashe, 1910, v. 1, p. 45

[138] For a discussion of *Metempsychosis* in light of A. E. Malloch's and Rosalie Colie's representations of the function of paradox, see Corthell, 1981, pp. 97-110.

[139] Nashe, 1910, v. 3, p. 64

[140] See *De Oratore* III, 70-72.

[141] For a discussion of the impact of Talon's *Rhetorica* on the teaching of rhetoric in the sixteenth century, see Ong, 1958, pp. 270-292; and Howell, 1961, pp. 165-166.

[142] Nashe, 1910, v. 3, pp. 66-67. These arguments are technically enthymemes as they are missing their major premises. When Harvey concludes that the person complaining of hunger must go to dinner, the major premise, all hungry people must go to dinner, is understood.

[143] Ibid., v. 3, p. 67

[144] Donne, 1980, p. 51, ll. 9-12

[145] *Categories* 8b13-15

[146] Ibid., 8b17-19. For a discussion of the operation of relative statements in Plato's *Sophist*, and the equivocal use of definite and relative terms, see Ferg, 1976, pp. 336-342.

[147] Donne, 1980, p. 51, l. 10

[148] A. E. Malloch claims that Donne's middle term, 'change', is undistributed. Helen Peters' agrees and summarizes the syllogism as follows:

> Reasonable men are changeable.
> Women are changeable.
> Therefore women are reasonable.

In this form, the middle term 'changeable' is undistributed. Had Donne commited this fallacy, however, his syllogism would have been invalid on formal grounds which would have rendered his equivocal use of 'change' neither epistemologically interesting as a sceptical critique nor witty as a piece of clever word-play. In its correct form, Donne's syllogism does not commit the fallacy of undistributed middle, but equivocates, thus, insuring its epistemological interest if not its wit. What Malloch, and Peters after him, fails to recognize is that Donne'e argument seeks to make a relative statement, as is charactertistic of the arguments of paradoxes and *theses*. Hence, his conclusion is not 'women are reasonable', but 'women are most reasonable'. This conclusion, in turn, relies on a definite and universal statement about the relation between 'change' and 'reason' (as Aristotle had prescribed in the *Categories*), which is stated in his major premise; hence, 'Those who change most are most reasonable'. It is important that we recognize that the relation between 'most reason' and 'change most' is one of identity in Donne's major premise, and is therefore reciprocal and mutually necessary. If this relation were not reciprocal and mutually necessary, it would not be possible to convert Donne's original assertion 'they that have the most reason are the most alterable in there dessignes, and the darkest and most Ignorant do seldomest change' (i.e. those who are most reasonable change most), into the assertion that 'those who change most, have most reason'. In the *Prior Analytics*, Aristotle gives the rule (conversion *per accidens*) that prevents the conversion of an undistributed predicate, such as 'changeable', into a distributed subject. He says that 'the terms of the affirmative must be convertible, not however universally, but in part, e.g. if every pleasure is good, some good must be pleasure...' (*Prior Analytics* 25a7-10). The conversion of Donne's original assertion becomes possible when we recognize that the stated middle term of Donne's syllogism is 'change most' and not simply 'change'. The group of those that change most is denoted in its entirety (universally) by adding the superlative to change. Therefore, if those with most reason change most, it is a necessary condition of changing most that one have most reason. The middle term, 'change', is thus distributed in the conversion of Donne's original assertion. I am indebted to Dr. Stephen Read for his assistance in helping me to recognize this feature of the superlative. See Malloch, 1956, p. 194; and Donne, 1980, p. 129. J. B. Leishman has also argued that Donne commits the fallacy of undistributed middle in 'The Anagram' (ll. 25-26), but also fails to notice the formal validity of Donne's syllogism in those lines. See Leishman, 1951, p. 74. As in his poem entitled, 'The Paradox', Donne may equivocate in his use of middle terms (e.g. die and love), but the construction of his argument may still be formally valid. On this conventional Elizabethan equivocation in 'The Paradox', see Jones-Davies, 1982, pp. 105-123, esp. 119.

[149] For a discussion of Donne's use of metaphor as a basis for the middle terms of syllogisms in his poetry, and the relation of this use to his generation of 'admiration' which arises from an observation of the wondrous connection of the extreme terms of his conceits, see Van Hook, 1986, pp. 24-38.

[150] For a discussion of the agreement of Ramism and Aristotelianism, see Schmitt, 1972, p. 91; and 1983a, pp. 50-51.

[151] Harvey, 1593, p. 96

[152] Ibid., p. 117

Chapter IV

The Epistemological Limits of Paradox

1

Harvey's Defense of the Profitable Paradox

As we have seen, Harvey is careful to distinguish between the profitable and the contentious paradox; the bulk of his attack on Nashe in *Pierce's Supererogation* is comprised of accusations of the latter. Even less tolerant of contentious paradoxes than Harvey, Nashe denied the apparent clarification which the dialectical method of Ramistic analysis claimed to provide not only in its application to the arts and sciences, but also to the more serious ethical disputations concerning right government. While Harvey could praise the *pro* and *contra* debate of serious paradoxes of the 'best gouernment of Commonwealthes', Nashe condemned any debate conducted according to the principles of Ramistic analysis for being misleadingly simplistic and unable to yield the 'determinate conclusions' which only the unabridged and faithful use of Aristotelian logic could discover. Again, Nashe gives no example of how such use of Aristotelian logic functions, and as a result, his uncritical confidence in the truth of its proofs draws a striking, and certainly unwelcome, resemblance to Ramus himself. As we have seen, it was left to traditional Aristotelians such as Thomas Blundeville to reassert the principles of such a logic in the wake of Ramus'critique. After criticizing the 'Epitomes' and 'abbreuiations of Arts' from which he would claim Harvey had been taught in *Have with Yov to Saffron-Walden*, Nashe attacks those who submit the arts, sciences and ethics to Ramus' facile analytical method.

> Even so these men, oppressed with a greater penurie of Art, doe pound their
> capacitie in barren compendiums, and bound their base humours in the

> beggarlie straites of a hungry *Analysis*...How is it then such bungling
> practitioners in principles should euer profit the Common-wealth by their
> negligent paines, who haue no more cunning in Logicke or dialogue / Latine
> then appertaines to the literall construction of either?[1]

Harvey found Nashe's presumption to a fuller knowledge of the complexities of

disputation than such influential and scholarly controversialists as Talon and Ramus

objectionable, and voiced his objections in his ironic commendation of Nashe's

acumen in debate. After cataloguing the players in the great philosophical conflicts

from the 'Old Philosophers' to Aristotle to Ramus, and admitting sarcastically that

before he had seen Nashe, he had vainly 'floted in a sea of encountring waues; and

deuoured many famous confutations', Harvey suggests the source of his adversary's

power to expose the triviality of these once revered conflicts.

> But alas silly men, simple Aristotle, more simple Ramus, most simple the
> rest, either ye neuer knew, what a sharpe-edged, & cutting Confutation
> meant: or the date of your stale oppositions is expired, by this braue
> Columbus of tearmes, and this onely marchant venturer of quarrels; that
> detecteth new Indies of Inuention, & [like Odysseus] hath the winds of
> Aeolus at commaundment.[2]

Nashe's power both to dispense with the 'stale oppositions' of the philosophers and

to succeed in his own dispute with Harvey relies on a utilization of the resources of

invention which is unbridled by the principles of its partner in dialectic, *dispositio*.

Without this governance, consistent usage of terms cannot be determined and

paradoxical arguments which parody proper syllogistic procedure, such as Nashe's

of the reasonable rat and Donne's of the reasonable woman, may be shamelessly

advanced.

Echoing Isocrates' complaints in the *Helen* against the vanity of the sophists,

Harvey continues to attribute Nashe's contentiousness to an invention unchastened

by the rigorous judgement of *dispositio*. 'The Arte of figges, had euer a dapper witt,

a deft conceite, a flick forhead, a smugg countenaunce; a stinginge tongue; a nipping

hande; a bytinge penne; and a bottomlesse pitt of Inuention, stoared with neuer-

fayling shiftes of counterfeite crankes'.[3] Isocrates had said that 'on trifling and insignificant topics whatever the speaker may chance to say is entirely original'. The sophists believe that 'if they can speak ably on ignoble subjects, it follows that in dealing with subjects of real worth they would easily find abundance of arguments.'[4] Harvey's association of Nashe and the sophists not only places Nashe in the company of Isocrates 'verbal quibblers' who argue paradoxical *theses* such as Gorgias' in *On What is Not*, but also distinguishes him from those 'vniversallest schollars' who, in their recognition of the elusiveness of demonstrable truth, have humbly praised the ignorance of the ass.[5] Harvey promises throughout *Pierce's Supererogation* that he, himself, will formally undertake to praise the ass, and write an encomium of Nashe, but he will defer the project to give point to his final affront, that only Nashe himself, the 'Autor of Asses' and the 'Asse of Autors' is competent to execute the task adequately.[6] The joke is, of course, that Nashe's competence consists in his ignorance. Not only is Nashe ignorant of those subjects of which he professes to be expert, but in his arrogant profession of knowledge, he betrays his ignorance even of his own ignorance. He is like 'the Greeke Sophisters [who] knowing nothing in comparison [to Aesop], (knowledge is dry water) professed a skill in all things' and unlike 'Socrates [who] in a manner knew all things, (Socrates was a springing rocke) professed a skill in nothinge', like 'Lullius, and his sectaryes, [who] haue the signet of Hermes, and the admirable Arte of disputinge infinitly *de omni scibili*' and unlike 'Agrippa, one of the vniversallest schollars, that Europe hath yeelded'.[7]

It is important to recognize that Harvey is not advocating the virtues of the scepticism traditionally associated with Socrates and with Cornelius Agrippa's *Vanity of the Arts and Sciences* (1526). His defense of his intention to praise the ignorance of Nashe by citing the examples of famous wise men who have also praised ignorance is designed to emphasize the genuine knowledge of those who recognize the limits of their understanding and the genuine ignorance of those who claim a knowledge of all things. Hence, Socrates is said to know 'in a manner all things' and Agrippa is called the 'Omniscious Doctour'. The sophists and the

Lullists represent perversions of the legitimate pursuit of knowledge, the sophists by preparing the way for the abject scepticism of the Pyrrhonists and the followers of Raymond Lull by claiming to realize a rational certitude in spiritual inquiries which threatened the necessity of faith. Harvey's Ramism would not permit him to recognize the extensiveness of Socrates' sceptical critique as Cicero had, nor the attack of Agrippa's *Vanity* upon scholastic syllogistic. Though he takes comfort in the knowledge that a scholar as renowned as Agrippa could 'penneth the Apology of the Asse' as an epilogue to his learned *Vanity*, he will ignore its denial of syllogistic proof. Agrippa had said of the Schoolmen that 'they suppose that they can find out the truth, and falsehood of al things, by a certain infallible Demonstration (as they think,) that is, with a Syllogism, that is, a perfect argumente'.[8] The principles from which these syllogisms proceed must either be accepted upon the 'forepassed authority of the wise...or els with experience we allowe them by the senses.'[9] As Agrippa's own use of the views and examples of prominent figures from the past illustrates, a consensus of historical opinion could be found to support any assertion and could easily be manipulated to serve specific polemical ends. As evidence for the universal truth of a first principle, the wisdom of the ancients was insufficient, a point which we have seen Harvey would have been reluctant to concede. Needless to say, sceptical objections to inductively grounded first principles would have been abundantly familiar to Harvey, but he does not marshal these objections in behalf of his discussion of the virtues of ignorance because his interest lies not in showing that sceptical forms such as paradox further the ends of sceptical or dogmatic epistemologies, but in showing that they may assist in the clarification of genuinely contestable issues.

2

'Sawcie' Paradoxes and Occult Methods

Despite his admiration for Ramus' scholarship, Harvey's position with regard to paradox is akin to Donne's. Donne can as easily disparage the proud rationalist who asserts the power of the human mind to know all with certainty as

Harvey; and, as we will see when we examine *Biathanatos* in detail, he can also acknowledge the benefit of arguing the 'pregnant paradoxes' which Harvey valued so highly. In his praise of the 'right *Asse*', which is so termed to distinguish it from the type of ignorance represented by Nashe's asininity, Harvey locates himself on the middle ground between the fideist scepticism of fellow advocates of ignorance such as Agrippa, Erasmus, and Lando, and the logical dogmatism of the Stoics, Lullists and the Schoolmen. He can suggest the wondrous combination of contraries characteristic of the mystical paradoxes when he claims that he 'that can play the right *Asse*, ...in pouerty [will find] wealth, in displeasure fauour, in ieoperdy security, in bondage freedome, in warre peace, in misery felicity.' But before all else, Harvey maintains, 'the right *Asse*, in ignorance will finde knowledge'.[10] Donne describes this middle ground between omniscience and abject ignorance in the preface of *The Courtier's Library*, and as Nashe had in his description of Harvey's tutelage, explicitly associates the epitome and the paradox.

> Our lot is cast in an age in which open illiteracy is supremely disgraceful, full knowledge supremely rare; every one has a smattering of letters, no one a complete mastery of them. For the most part, then, men move along a middle way, and in their efforts to shun the disgrace of ignorance and to save themselves the tedium of reading they all use one art that they may keep up the appearance of knowing the rest of the arts. Hence the taste for epitomes and paradoxes and for the itchy outbreaks of far-fetched wit.[11]

We will learn little about Donne's views on the issues debated by Harvey and Nashe from the low regard with which he held the epitome. As we have seen, Nashe had criticized such abbreviated methods of learning, but so had Fraunce in his *Lawier's Logike* and the Earl of Essex in a letter to Fulke Greville.[12] Despite his appreciation for Ramus' contribution to scholarship, and Nashe's association of Ramism and epitomes, Harvey's undeniable erudition scarcely supports the suggestion that he approved the use of epitomes as a means of creating the appearance of learning.[13]

But like Donne, he recognized that paradoxes (as well as paradoxical encomia) are often composed to exhibit the apparent fullness of their author's

knowledge, a pretense which Harvey had condemned in the spirit of Isocrates' attack on the sophists.[14] Furthermore, both Donne and Harvey identify authors who have attempted comprehensive treatments of the various arts and sciences as either paradoxists themselves or as the inspiration for other paradoxists. Such comprehensive treatments naturally expose the incompatibilities of the various disciplines, incompatibilities which inevitably raise questions about the possibility of knowledge in the face of equally valid contradictory claims. As we have seen, questions of this type are implicit in any defense of a paradox as such, whether it seeks to show the impossibility (as with Gorgias' *On What is Not* and sophistical dialectic in general) or the possibility of certain proof (as with Stoic, scholastic, Lullist or Ramist syllogistic). Only moderate epistemological positions, such as Cicero's sceptical probabilism, recognize that 'paradox' is a relative term intrinsically bound to the realm of opinion. In this realm, where logic cannot absolutely and necessarily discriminate the true and the false, the paradox may appear orthodox, and vice versa; it is precisely this relativity that Cicero illustrates in his rhetorical transformation of the Stoic *paradoxa*. Harvey is warning against the invidiousness of such relativity, and the temptation to eradicate it through innovative methods of inquiry, when he says:

> Agrippa, Cardan, Trithemius, Erasmus, and diuers other notable Schollar, affecting to shew the variety of their reading, and the omnisufficiencie of their learning, haue bene boulder in quoting such reuerend examples, vpon as light, or lighter occasion: but humanitie must not be too-sawcie with diuinitie: & enough is better then a Feast.[15]

The 'reuerend examples' to which Harvey refers are authors, such as the neoplatonist and reputed Latin translator of Hermes Trismegistus, Apuleius, who have written in praise of the admirable ignorance of the simple ass.[16] Such ambitious humanists such as Cornelius Agrippa, Girolamo Cardano, Johannes Trithemius and Erasmus, must be wary of upsetting the sensitive balance between Christian faith and reason when, in their critiques of learning, they expose the incompatibilities of the disparate faculties of human knowledge. They threaten the necessity of faith if they seek to

reconcile these incompatibilities according to a general logic discernible to human reason, and they threaten the rational powers required to furnish the conscience with the necessary ethical knowledge if they conclude, with Sextus, that such incompatibilities betray the inability of human reason to know anything whatsoever.

Though Erasmus praises those who openly declare the failure of Aristotelian cognitive theory to conduce to knowledge of the divine because it makes the conceptual powers of the soul dependent upon the senses, he does not openly advocate the use of a novel cognitive system to acquire such knowledge. When he praises ignorance, he praises the Platonist who seeks with Augustine a knowledge of the divine through a contemplation of the purity of God's nature. Such knowledge, however, will be indemonstrable by the Aristotelian methods of the Schoolmen, and will consequently make those who claim to possess it appear mad to those stubborn rationalists who reject the power of faith to conduce to knowledge. In the *Praise of Folly*, he maintains that the 'pious strive with all their hearts to reach God himself, who is purest and simplest of all; this world takes second place, and even here they place most stress on what comes closest to him, namely the mind; they pay no attention to the body'.[17] After condemning any manifestation of the corporeal affections (in the same spirit which would inform his neoplatonic disparagement of the material world in *De Contemptu Mundi* [1521]), which Aristotle had argued in the *Nicomachean Ethics* were merely to be moderated in the soul by the virtuous man, Erasmus asserts that if the pious 'are forced to deal with such [wordly] things, they do so with reluctance and aversion.'[18] Erasmus' position with regard to the syllogistic demonstrations of the scholastics was clearly hostile, as we will see shortly, but in spite of his criticisms, he did not advocate a novel alternate method of demonstration.

It is precisely this claim to have introduced an innovation in learning which led Nashe to reject 'upstart reformers of Arts' such as Ramus who seek no more than 'to haue newe opinions passe under their names'.[19] As we have seen, the debate between Harvey and Nashe over the utility of paradox centered on the legitimacy of contention. In *Christ's Tears Over Jerusalem* (1593), which was a warning against

the mounting irreligiousness of the age, Nashe had called contention 'the fift Sonne of Pryde'. He then proceeds to attribute to this son of pride the same sophistical techniques against which Aristotle and English Aristotelians such as Wilson, Lever and Blundeville wrote in their respective logics' sections on sophistical refutations. 'On words, amphibologies, aequivocations, quiddities and quantities, he stands. Hee hunteth not aftertruth but strife.'[20] These contentious sophists, Nashe complains, are ever at work in the interest of paradox. Some seek only novelty, to 'be different in paradoxism from all the world...[by arguing] philosophicall probabilities of the Trinities unexistence'; but there are others, much more dangerous than these mere quibblers, who, on the authority of 'prophane Authors', maintain that 'damnable paradoxe', that God does not exist.[21] For Nashe, the paradoxist could never aspire to more than the illusory subtlety and vain novelty for which Isocrates had condemned Gorgias, Melissus, Zeno (of Elea), Antisthenes and Protagoras.[22] Their *theses*, as Aristotle had stated in the *Topics*, were specifically philosophical undertakings, which Nashe, translating Cicero's Latin for *theses*, *quaestiones*, had complained were of no use to virtue. Speaking specifically of *theses* regarding the soul, he says, 'Innumerable such unnecessary questions, according to Philosophy, are made as touching the soul, as whence it is, what maner of one it is, when it doth begin to be...what do al these things auaile unto virtue?'[23] As we have seen, while Harvey valued the utility of paradoxes argued upon genuinely controversial issues, he also recognized the danger of unnecessary contention. Despite Nashe's complaints against innovators, Harvey singles him out as both an innovator ('brave Columbus of tearmes') and a vain quibbler ('marchant venturer of quarrels').[24] In the context of such a bitter quarrel, it is not surprising that each side describes the arguments of the other as paradoxical; what must recognized, however, is the consistent association of the dangerous innovator and the paradox.[25] The other three names in Harvey's list of 'notable Schollar[s]', Agrippa, Cardano and Trithemius, had, like Erasmus, earned the esteem of their contemporaries for the breadth of their learning. They exceeded Erasmus' pious neoplatonism and his humanist confidence in the perfectability of the Christian awakened to the harmony of God's creation through faithful

contemplation and grace, however. Each had advocated the use of alternative, occult methods of discovering the truths which had eluded the traditional scholastic demonstrations so widely criticized in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.

In his *Commentaries on the Four Books of Ptolemy's 'Books Concerning judgements of the Stars'* (1555), Cardano had asserted the reliability of astrological divination; so confident was he that such divination could provide the key to understanding the natures of earthly creatures that he provided a horoscope of Christ. Needless to say, to subject the divine nature of Christ to astrological influence was for Harvey to 'be too-sawcie with diuinitie', despite Cardano's disclaimer stating that he would not be understood 'to say that either the divinity in Christ, or His Miracles, or the sanctity of His life, or His promulgation of the law depends on the stars'.[26] The renowned humanist monk, Johannes Trithemius, had also earned a reputation for innovation when he approved the conjuration of spirits in his work on steganography, *Steganographia* (1499). Though Trithemius, as Cardano had in his defense of astrology, maintained that the art of steganography (a form of cryptic writing) was a natural process, which involved none of the instruments of black magic, his work on the subject was condemned for providing a guide to the acquisition of forbidden knowledge.[27] Describing his reaction after reading a manuscript of the *Steganographia* in a visit to Trithemius in 1503 or 1504, the French philosopher, Charles de Bouelles, said, 'I instantly cast it away out of my sight, because such wonders and unintelligible and unaccustomed names of spirits (should I not rather say demons?) began to terrify me.'[28] Bouelles, who had devoted himself to the reclamation of Aristotelian logic from the muddled and sophistical abuse of the scholastics, uses terms which we have by now become accustomed to hearing attributed to paradoxists; not only was Bouelles accusing Trithemius of new and dangerous doctrine, as Nashe was accusing Ramus, but more fundamentally, he was accusing him of claiming access to a knowledge of startling truths by a means hidden from natural reason. Bouelle's intention to rid the pursuit of knowledge from the confusion into which scholastic logic had led it, and his subsequent mistrust of wondrous and unintelligible names with correspondingly mysterious

significations, did not, however, exclude Trithemius from criticizing scholastic logicians for precisely the same reason. Despite his admiration for the 'simple eloquence' of medieval scholastics such as Nicholas of Lyra, which he contrasts to the merely rhetorical eloquence of the neociceronians, Trithemius can still object to Peter Abelard's introduction of 'curious novelty of words and meanings' into theological discourse.[29] The source of both Trithemius' and Bouelle's criticisms is the same dissatisfaction with the rational instruments currently utilized by philosophers and theologians alike. Trithemius' sought a solution in the logic of magical arts such as steganography, a logic akin to the Cabalistic logic practiced by his contemporaries, Pico, Paracelsus, Francis George and his teacher of Hebrew, Johann Reuchlin.[30] Bouelles' implication of the demonic paradox of Trithemius' epistemological innovations issues from his preference for the neoaristotelian logic of Raymond Lull, of whom he wrote the first biography in 1511.[31] As we will see shortly, Lull's own innovations in his new logic focus on the same issue with which paradoxists since Gorgias had been concerned, the demonstrability of knowledge.

3

The Paradoxist as Innovator

In *The Courtier's Library*, Donne cites authors who have exposed the contradictions and inconsistencies of the body of human learning as the inspirations for those frivolous paradoxists who represent the 'mentally lazy [who] think they know enough if they can show credibly that other people's knowledge is imperfect.'[32] He cites Lull, Frisius Gemma, Raimond Sebond, Sextus Empiricus, Trithemius, Agrippa, Erasmus and Ramus, all of whom have attempted either to exalt (Lull, Gemma, Sebond, Trithemius, Ramus) or to deprecate (Sextus) the powers of human reason, or in some cases both (Erasmus, Agrippa). What distinguishes these authors is not that they have written paradoxes (though Erasmus' *Praise of Folly* and Agrippa's 'Digression in Praise of the Ass' have been described as such), but that they have advocated innovative positions which, in the spirit of

Nashe's criticism of Ramus, could be condemned for their paradoxicality.[33] Donne's satire against the Jesuits, *Ignatius His Conclave* (1610), made innovation the chief criterion for entrance into hell; 'the entrance into this place may be decreed to none, but to Innovators'.[34] Copernicus, whose heliocentric theory was described by Blundeville as a paradoxical 'position' (*thesis*), was denied access to hell because he has no response to Ignatius' question, 'what new thing have you invented?'[35] So too is Paracelsus dismissed because he does not 'truly deserve the name of *Innovator*'.[36] In his description of Harvey's imagined innovative and paradoxical studies while at Saffron-Walden, Nashe places Copernicus in the tradition of those philosophers who have hampered the progress of learning with their 'unnecessary questions' using, significantly, the same verb which Donne used to describe the exposure of his own paradoxes in his letter accompanying the copies of them which he sent to Wotton. Harvey, says Nashe, may be spending his time 'hatching such another Paradoxe as that of Nicholaus Copernicus was, who held that the Sun remains immoueable in the center of the World & that the Earth is moou'd about the Sunne'.[37] It is Nashe's conservative Aristotelianism which places him at odds both with Ramus and with Copernicus. Though a rejection of the heliocentric theory naturally implies a preference for Ptolemy, neoplatonists such as Giordano Bruno defended Copernican theory as evidence for a divinely ordered universe which Aristotelian philosophy was not equipped to explain. As we have seen, Nashe was not sympathetic to Ramus' innovations to Aristotle despite his presence in Cambridge at a time when interest in Ramus was thriving. His conservatism would have been more welcome at the Oxford condemned in Bruno's *Ash Wednesday Supper* (1584), the Oxford concerned to salvage Aristotle from the obscurity into which scholastic theology had led it, and the Oxford from which Donne had matriculated in 1584.[38] Though Donne's own spiritual allegiances may still have been Catholic at this early stage of his education, there can be little doubt that his Protestant teachers' insistence on a regimen of disputation, which placed authority in Aristotle alone, at the expense of his countless scholastic commentators, would have left its impression. In *The History and Antiquities of the University of Oxford* (1661-1668), Anthony à Wood

records a decree issued on March 12, 1585-6, which illustrates the commitment of

Donne's instructors to restricting the *theses* (questions) to be disputed to matters

which could be defended out of Aristotle or his conservative advocates.

> The 12 of the said month it was ordered for the future that all Bachelaurs and
> Undergraduats in their Disputations should lay aside their various Authors,
> such that caused many dissensions and strifes in the Schools, and only follow
> Aristotle and those that defend him, and take their Questions from him, and
> they exclude from the Schools all sterile and inane Questions, disagreeing
> from the antient and true Philosophy.[39]

Just as Harvey had praised those paradoxes the disputation of which may benefit

both commonwealth and church, so these Oxford dons condemn those detractors of

Aristotle who unnecessarily obscure matters with 'sterile...Questions' upon issues

which are not recognized to be genuinely disputable by Aristotle.[40] Even at

Cambridge, Harvey's Ramism was criticized because Ramus was perceived to be

undermining the authority of Aristotle. But neither Ramus nor Harvey intended to

displace Aristotle. As we have seen in Ramus' argument against the paradoxical

tradition deriving from Aristotle, and from Harvey's defense against the charge of

maintaining a paradox against Aristotle, both insist upon their compliance with an

orthodox Aristotelianism which has become obscured, not by the 'pregnant

paradoxes' proposed by scholars such as Ramus as corrections to errors in the

interpretation of Aristotle, but by the 'sterile Questions' of the sophistical and

contentious Schoolmen who seek to secure their own authority by creating technical

difficulties in logic which they claim are only soluble by them.

Erasmus' view that divine knowledge could be acquired through the

contemplation of the higher forms reflected in the individual soul betrayed a

neoplatonic epistemology which could tolerate neither the irrelevant uncertainties

nor the unsubstantiated certainties with which scholastic theology was occupied.

Regarding the former, Erasmus anticipated the complaints of Nashe against the fifth

son of pride, contention, its philosophers' 'unnecesary questions', and the dangers of

paradox. The theologians, says Erasmus, armed with '<magistral definitions,>

conclusions, corollaries, explicit and implicit propositions...many new terms [and] monstrous jargon', manufacture the same sort of unnecessary questions and then claim to be the only ones learned enough to resolve them.[41]

> Moreover, they explicate sacred mysteries just as arbitrarily as they please, explaining by what method the world was established and arranged, by what channels original sin is transmitted to Adam's posterity, by what means, by what proportion, in how short a time Christ was fully formed in the virgin's womb, how accidents subsist in the eucharist without any domicile. But such questions are run-of-the-mill. There are others which they think worthy of great and 'illuminated' theologians, as they say...Whether there is any instant in the generation of the divine persons? Whether there is more than one filial relationship in Christ?[42]

Regarding the unsubstantiated certainties which they offer as solutions to these questions, Erasmus accuses the schoolmen of concocting paradoxes as startling as the Stoic paradoxes rendered commonsensical by Cicero in the *Paradoxa Stoicorum*. To illustrate this similarity, he chooses a paradoxical principle common both to the Stoics and to the scholastic theologians.

> Also throw in those *sententiae* of theirs, so *paradoxical* that those oracular sayings which the Stoics called paradoxes seem downright crude and commonplace by comparison-such as this, for example: it is a less serious crime to murder a thousand men than to fix one shoe for a poor man on the Lord's day; or it would be better to let the whole world be destroyed...than to tell just one, tiny, little white lie.[43]

As we have seen, Donne manipulated the senses of good and evil in his sixth and eighth paradoxes in a way which indicated his knowledge of the Stoic paradoxes of good and evil elaborated by Cicero.[44] Erasmus dismisses the Stoic and scholastic paradox, that all transgressions are equal, on the grounds that it is a conclusion reached from fallacious premises which claim to have achieved a univocity in their critical terms by restricting the various possible senses of these terms. This apparent univocity is achieved through the 'new terms [and] monstrous jargon' in which Erasmus claims 'the supersubtleties of our doctors of theology' consist.[45] We are

reminded, not accidentally, of Cicero's complaints in *Tusculan Disputations* and *De Oratoria* against the unusual senses of critical terms deployed in order to secure univocity in the demonstrations of the Stoic *paradoxa*.[46] The association of Stoic and scholastic syllogistic, especially with respect to ethical choice, is significant in the context of Donne's argument against laws forbidding suicide which ground their universality and absoluteness in syllogistic demonstrations, as we will see when we examine his critique of the terms 'nature' and 'reason' in *Biathanatos*.

In the heat of his condemnation of the scholastic theologians, Erasmus specifies this process of generating laws out of the conclusions of syllogistic demonstrations.

> At the same time, while they are talking nonsense in the schools, they think they are supporting the universal church, which otherwise would collapse, with their syllogistic props in much the same way that Atlas in the mythology of the poets, holds up the world on his shoulders. You can imagine how happy a life they lead while they distort and reshape Holy Scripture however they like (just as if it were a lump of wax), while they demand that their conclusions (to which some schoolmen have subscribed) should be more revered than the laws of Solon and more binding than papal decretals.[47]

Donne shares Erasmus' distaste for those who misapply and misinterpret the scriptures to support their unusual theological opinions.[48] In *Biathanatos*, Donne devotes himself not only to a faithful, and therefore, accurate interpretation of the scripture's pronouncements concerning suicide, but more broadly, to elaborating the fundamental epistemological principles according to which the rectified Christian conscience was to operate in order to be assured that its ethical decisions were taken in charity. We will examine the essential role which knowledge plays in securing the charitableness of moral choices in the final sections of this study; for the present, however, it will suffice to say that Donne, like Erasmus, explicitly condemns the deployment of improbable interpretations of scripture in the service of contentious theological positions. In *Biathanatos*, Donne says:

> If any small place of Scripture misappear to them to be of use for justifying
> any opinion of theirs, then (as the word of God hath that precious nature of
> gold, that a little quantity thereof, by reason of a faithful tenacity and
> ductileness, will be brought to cover ten thousand times as much of any other
> metal), they extend it so far, and labor and beat it to such a thinness as it is
> scarce any longer the word of God, only to give their other reasons a little
> tincture of gold, though they have lost all the weight and estimation.[49]

It is significant that Donne condemns the practice of misapplying evidence in the
defense of a disputed opinion in the context of his own defense of the disputed
opinion, that suicide is not always a sin; in so doing, he declares that the purpose of
his paradox is neither to advance innovations designed to obscure the truth, which he
denounced in *Ignatius His Conclave*, nor to 'show credibly that other people's
knowledge is imperfect', which he rejected in his *Courtier's Library*. The purpose
of his paradox, therefore, corresponds to that which Harvey had praised in *Pierces
Supererogation* as beneficial both to the commonwealth and the church.

In the preface to *Biathanatos*, Donne stated the principle which informs this
purpose, the same principle, we have seen, which he claimed informed the benefits
of discord in his ninth paradox.[50] 'As in the pool of Bethsaida there was no health
till the water was troubled, so the best way to find the truth in this matter was to
debate and vex it-for we must as well dispute *de veritate* as *pro veritate*.'[51] The
'multiplicity of not necessary citations', which Donne admits that he has included in
Biathanatos, is employed because he intends his *thesis* to reflect the learning upon
which 'scholastic and artificial men' have typically grounded their own contested
opinions.[52] To these men, Donne opposes 'natural men' who he claims 'are
inclinable of themselves' to his position. We must be wary of suspecting Donne's
sincerity in advocating the use of scholastic methods of disputation, especially in
light of its survival in the curricula of both Cambridge and Oxford after humanists
such as Valla, Ficino, Pico, Erasmus, and Agrippa had insisted on an
epistemological system manifestly indebted to Christian neoplatonic idealism, which
sought to expose the fallibility of the Aristotelian dialectic upon which scholastic
epistemology was so firmly grounded.[53] A glance at the divisions, distinctions and

parts (the trademark organizational features of scholastic argument) of the *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*, the *Essays in Divinity*, *Pseudo-Martyr* and the *Sermons*, remind us that, though Donne exhibited the influence of Platonic and Augustinian traditions in some areas of his thought (particularly those areas which lay outside what he believed to be the boundaries of human knowledge), his method of argumentation, and the confidence in the possibility of human reason's attainment to knowledge which attended it, remained decidedly Aristotelian.[54] This allegiance to Aristotelian logic, particularly in the exercise of reason in ethics, is evident specifically in his preference for a Thomist rather than an Augustinian approach to the problem of knowledge and action in *Biathanatos*, but, as we have seen, it is also generally present in the sophistical manipulation of Aristotelian dialectic in the *Paradoxes*.[55] Before we examine this preference in the *thesis* and paradox, *Biathanatos*, it remains to sketch the relevant logical and epistemological positions with which Donne associated the innovative and sceptical paradoxists which he condemned in *Ignatius His Conclave* and *The Courtier's Library*.

4
Donne and the Necessity of First Principles

Donne included Ramus in his list of sources for paradoxists in *The Courtier's Library* because of his attempt to systematize all of the arts and sciences according to the general governing principles of his dialectical method. Had Harvey not been so impressed with Ramus' modifications, particularly with respect to the teaching of Ciceronian rhetoric and Aristotelian dialectic, he might have included him with Erasmus, Trithemius, Cardano and Agrippa in his list of those who have been 'too-sawcie with diuinitie'. But despite the innovations reviled by Nashe, Ramus' dialectical method remained fundamentally Aristotelian, particularly with respect to the distinction he believed existed between the principles, definitions and distinctions of the various arts and sciences, and the particular objects over which they presided. Like Aristotle, Ramus' confidence in the certainty of his logic

remained restricted to its theoretical applications and therefore reserved an epistemological place for faith in the cognizance of the mysteries of both divine and earthly reality.[56] Two and half centuries before him, Raymond Lull (c. 1233-c. 1315), another of Donne's sources for those paradoxists who seek to 'show credibly that other people's knowledge is imperfect', made a similar attempt to modify Aristotelian logic's demonstrative power. As we will see, however, his innovations made substantially more comprehensive claims for the ability of the human mind to attain knowledge of the divine through a process of syllogistic reason alone. Harvey recognized the excesses of Lull's ambitions and associated it with the similarly excessive ambitions of the early sixteenth-century neoplatonic physician and alchemist, Paracelsus (1493-1541). In an apostrophe intended simultaneously to affirm the orthodoxy of his humility with respect to the limits of human knowledge and the dangerous heterodoxy of those (i.e. Lull and Paracelsus) who propose an epistemological system which promises a knowledge of the divine, Harvey declares, 'O Humanity, my Lullius, or O Divinitie, my Paracelsus.'[57] Keen as he is to associate Harvey with paradoxical doctrines such as Ramus', Nashe does not miss the opportunity to invert the intention of Harvey's apostrophe by paraphrasing it as a declaration of his allegiance to Lull and Paracelsus. Nashe says, '*O Humanitie, my Lullius, and Diuinitie, my* Paracelsus...As much to say as all the humanitie he [Harvey] hath is gathered out of *Lullius*, and all his diuinitie or religion out of *Paracelsus.*'[58] As we have seen, Donne made Paracelsus, along with Copernicus and Machiavelli, plead for a place in deepest hell with Ignatius Loyola on the grounds that he was a genuine innovator intent on obscuring, rather than illuminating, the truth. And though his ultimate dismissal from hell may indicate some sympathy with his ideas, Donne's epistemological position with regard to the rational accessibility of the divine mysteries remained faithful to an Aristotelianism which his model in ethics, Aquinas, would insist provides only for a rationally based knowledge of the first principles of nature, and valid deductions from them.[59]

Paracelsus embraced a mystical epistemology which claimed that our knowledge of the natural world relied on our knowledge of ourselves as organic

participants in the natural world as a whole, and similarly, that our knowledge of God relied on our knowledge of ourselves as organic participants in the divine world as a whole. An individual's knowledge, therefore, increases with his ability to recognize the general forms of nature and of the divine as reflected in himself. Paracelsus' account of the way in which humans acquire knowledge is typically neoplatonic in its utilization of the doctrine of Ideas and typically mystical in its affirmation of rational access to the divine. As we will see when we examine Erasmus' and Ortensio Lando's insistence on the individual's contemplation of its soul's divine qualities as the means through which to gain access to mystical knowledge, neoplatonic epistemology's attempt to establish intercourse between the separated Ideas and the human mind does not include the development of a logic designed to adjudicate absolutely between contradictory claims. Platonic dialectic, as Archesilaus, Carneades and Cicero had developed it, was a means to demonstrate the uncertainty of Stoic syllogistic by attacking its first principles. Because these first principles could not, themselves, be known, no particular deductions from them could ever be absolutely affirmed or denied. The solution to this problem for Christian neoplatonists was to adapt Plato's theory of Ideas, which provided a mechanism by which the mind could perceive (though not perfectly according to Plato) absolutes corresponding to the first principles of both Stoic and Aristotelian dialectic, to the notion of a divinely imposed natural order revealed in its shadowy and figurative manifestation in the phenomenal world.[60] Such an adaptation could be dangerous, however, because the source and content of human knowledge acquired in this way is ultimately divine, and as Aristotle knew, not confirmable with reference to the laws of the natural world alone.[61] In the natural world, confirmation is achieved through the logical process of definition and deduction; recalling Aristotle's acknowledgement of the uncertainty and indemonstrability of definitions in the *Posterior Analytics*, it is not surprising that he identifies as the source of Plato's mistaken theory of Ideas his 'inquiries in the region of definitory formulae'.[62]

If it is necessary to have knowledge of the definitions from which we derive knowledge of the particular things which fall under those definitions, it is essential,

Aristotle argues, that our minds can gain access to these definitions. Because Aristotle places the source of knowledge of the universal *genera* and *species* in the particular sensible objects of which they are predicable, he explains that the debate over Platonic Ideas must ultimately focus on how they can be both separated from the sensible world and yet permit the participation of sensible objects in them, a participation, it must be said, which defines what the perceived sensible object is. In the introduction to his rejection of the theory of Ideas in the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle says:

> Above all one might discuss the question what on earth the Forms contribute to sensible things, either to those that are eternal or to those that come into being and cease to be. For they cause neither movement nor any change in them. But again they help in no way towards the *knowledge* of the other things (for they are not even the substance of these, else they would have been in them), nor towards their being, if they are not *in* the particulars which share in them...[63]

For Aristotle, the definition of a *genus* or *species* must be derived from our observation of its causal influence on the function or nature of various particular substances united in kind under it; a definition derived in this way cannot exist separate from the substances in which it is recognized. It is this separation which necessitates the explanation that substances 'share' in the Ideas as particular sensible manifestations of imperceptible patterns. Aristotle rejects this explanation in much the same terms in which Donne will reject the interpretive practices of allegorists who take liberties with the literal meaning of a scriptural text in search of what they imagine to be its hidden, spiritual meaning. Aristotle says, 'And to say that they [the Ideas] are the patterns and the other things share in them is to use empty words and poetical metaphors.'[64] Summarizing the Socratic basis of Plato's theory of Ideas, Aristotle confirms that Plato's mistake was the separation of definitions from their particulars.

> And Socrates gave the impulse to this theory [that sensible particulars were in a state of flux and that the universal was apart from these and different], as

we said before, by means of his definitions, but he did not separate them from the particulars; and in this he thought rightly, in not separating them. This is plain from the results; for without the universal it is not possible to get knowledge, but the separation is the cause of the objections that arise with regard to the Ideas.[65]

Though Donne is referring specifically to Paracelsus' brutal medical experiments, his condemnation of the Paracelsian art, an art which does not operate according to first principles which are accepted as certain and proper to it, reminds us of Ramus' insistence upon the certainty of the definitions of the first principles of the arts and sciences. Defending his fitness for acceptance into deepest hell, Paracelsus explains, 'This also was ever my principal purpose, that no certain new Art, nor fixed rules [*canones certos*] might be established, but that al remedies might be dangerously drawne from my uncertaine, ragged, and unperfect experiments'.[66] As we have seen, Ramus had eliminated the potential for uncertainty in Aristotle's notion of the definition, rendering it as certain as the axiom. Nonetheless, his desire to establish the certainty of the first principles of the arts and sciences was a particularly Aristotelian impulse, and one which traditional, pre-Ramist Aristotelians such as Ralph Lever, shared.[67] The threat, as usual, is vain contention and scepticism. Lever explains as would the Ramist, Abraham Fraunce, nearly forty years later:

> Ther are rules in euery arte, which authors use as groundes and sure principles, not to be denyed or doubted of.
> For if nothing shoulde be cleare and certaine of it selfe: then should we be driuen by wranglers from point to point, to make reason uppon reason infinitely, and neuer come to issue of any matter.
> Therefore hath God appoynted some things to be euident and certaine of themselves, that they mighte be as stayes to mans wit, and as helpes to fynde out and to discusse things that are not so euident as they are.[68]

Paracelsus' obstruction of the establishment of first principles in the art of medicine created the uncertain atmosphere necessary for him to introduce his alchemical innovations, his paradoxes. It is this obstruction which Donne condemns; and it is this condemnation which places him in the company of those Aristotelians who

sought to establish first principles from which valid deductions could confidently be drawn, but which did not promise rational access, either Platonic or syllogistic, to divine mysteries.[69]

5
Lull's Neoplatonic First Principles

Raymond Lull also recognized the importance of establishing first principles from which valid deductions concerning the various arts and sciences could be drawn. He sought, as did his scholastic contemporaries Duns Scotus (c.1266-1308) and William of Ockham (c.1285-1349), a solution to the problem of correspondence between universals (i.e. Ideas, *genus*, *species*) and the particular objects of which they are predicable.[70] Unlike neoplatonist critics of Aristotelian logic such as Agrippa, Lull's attempt to establish a real correspondence between the universals constituting the divine order conceived in the infinite, eternal and immutable intellect of God, and their manifestation in the particulars which we perceive in sensible substances, did not dispense with Aristotle's logical distinctions. Thus, when Lull describes the principles on which the various arts and sciences are organized, he can do so in the same Aristotelian terms in which Ramus, Lever and Donne conceived them. He says:

> Chaque science a ses principes propres qui diffèrent des principes des autres sciences; aussi l'intelligence désire-t-elle et réclame-t-elle la constitution d'une science qui soit général à l'ègard de toutes les autres sciences, d'une science dotée de principes généraux en lesquels les principes des autres sciences particulières soient impliqués et contenus comme le particulier l'est en l'universel.[71]

Lull's project, like Ramus', was to establish a syllogistic which could proceed from first principles to particular conclusions without having to admit the possibility that its first principles may not be self-evident, and therefore, in need of demonstration. Though the method which Lull introduced in his extensive writing on his new logic

and its application to all other disciplines, verified its first principles in a way specifically indebted to Anselm's ontological argument, its position on the status of fundamental definitions is no different than the Stoics' on their unprovables, the Aristotelian schoolmen on their first principles, and Ramus on his definitions and distributions; none will allow the possibility of a *thesis* to be advanced which may validly contradict these fundamental truths. As always, the concern is to eliminate the invidious doubt which spreads as the sceptical critique inspects the purported certainty of undemonstrated principles from which necessary conclusions are supposed to be inferred.[72]

As all sixteenth-century defenders of Aristotelian dialectic knew, the exposure of such doubt was the special aim of those paradoxists who sought to expose the fallibility of logic by attempting to construct a syllogism which reaches a conclusion which appears to contradict one or both of its premises, or which may be validly contradicted by another syllogism. As we will see, Harvey considered the supposed French paradox *The Mirrour of Madness* to be just such a paradox, and describes it, in terms reminiscent of Wilson's description of 'the libertines reason', as 'stuffed with geere homely enough, fit for a Libertine & frantique Theame'.[73] The Stoic paradoxes, as well as those Christian paradoxes which must be accepted as certain on faith, pose no such threat to the power of syllogistic reasoning to generate certain knowledge. The threat is only introduced when the sceptic begins the process of regress or reciprocity in his investigation of the grounds upon which the Stoic paradoxes are based or when the excessively rational Christian apologist attempts to provide logical demonstrations of the Christian paradoxes. Lull's *Ars generalis ultima* (1308), like the rest of his vast writings on his *logica nova* and its wondrous applications, made such an attempt to provide logical demonstrations for the mysteries of the Christian paradoxes.[74] Like Ramus, Lull denied the possibility of insoluble contradiction and attributed the existence of apparent paradoxes to the failure of the current scholastic use of Aristotelian logic. He explains:

> Si quelqu'un dit: Les objections que l'on peut faire contre la foi peuvent être résolues par raisons nécessaires, et les preuves que l'on puet donner en faveur de la foi peuvent être également brisées par raisons necessaires, nous réprondrons: Cela implique une contradiction qui ne saurait tenir sur le même sujet, deux conclusions contraires ne peuvent tenir en même temps.[75]

With his new logic, all such contradictions could be resolved, thereby rendering all formerly inaccessible knowledge accessible to human reason.

Like Ramus' dialectic, Lull's new logic represented the general organizing principles underlying all of the other arts and sciences, including most significantly, divinity. In divinity, the new logic conveyed its practitioner out of the realm of opinion (*doxa*), and therefore of paradox, by providing him with a new mode of syllogistic demonstration with which the mere verisimilitudes, which traditionally occupied the middle terms of syllogistic demonstrations, could be predicated of their corresponding extreme terms with absolute certainty. In the *Ars generalis ultima*, Lull says, '*Logicus* [traditional logic] *non potest inuenire ueram legem; generalis autem artista cum ista Arte inuenit. Nam illa lex est uera, quam principia et regulae huius / Artis intrare possunt.*'[76] The principles and rules of the grand art could be utilized to discover the truth (in this case of a law, but generally of any proposition) through a type of syllogistic demonstration which claimed the power to convert its extreme terms with its middle term. Lull was aware of the problem of paradox discussed by Aristotle in the *Topics*, and that the *theses* argued by Gorgias, Melissus and Parmenides could equally be proven or refuted using traditional syllogistic. In response to this problem, he sought to replace such demonstrations, which result only in mutable opinions (*scientia instabilis siue labilis*), with what he called the *demonstratio per aequiparantiam*, or the demonstration by equality.[77] The demonstration by equality operates within the normal three-term structure of a syllogism, but, as we have said, claims to achieve an absolute identification of the extreme terms through the middle term rather than a simple attribution of a common predicate (middle term) to the extreme terms. Lull claims that such attributions are always susceptible to doubt because the middle term in which the likeness is supposed to be contained is not itself clearly and absolutely known. The doubt

arising from this hazy perception of the middle term permits the possibility of a conflation of contrary or contradictory senses which result in paradoxes such as Wilson's libertine paradox (that sin is natural), as well as Lyly's and Donne's of constancy. Like Ramus, Lull prevents the possibility of paradox by restricting the meanings of his eighteen most fundamental principles through which all questions of the arts and sciences can be resolved. The result is a definition of each principle which can be deployed in a demonstration by equality that shows the essential interrelatedness of all inquiry and the subsequent certainty with which questions may be resolved according to Lull's first principles.

As Ramus eliminates the potentially uncertain definitions which Aristotle retained in his discussion of *theses* in the *Posterior Analystics*, Lull similarly restricts definitions to clear and certain statements. In the *Logica Nova* (1303), Lull says of the definition, *'Definitio est oratio, Esse proprietatum definiti aperiens, rectis brevibus, ac dilucidis verbis.'*[78] From the definitions of the fundamental principles of the two figures, a demonstration by equality may proceed. Though there are three modes according to which such a demonstration may operate, they all insist on an equality of the terms of the fundamental principles, which results ultimately in an identification of all the fundamental terms. In Lull's examples of how the *demonstratio per aequiparantiam* functions, the fundamental principle which occupies the major premise of the syllogism defines the middle term absolutely by restricting its denotation to its superlative class. Hence, when Lull proposes as a first premise, *'Ubicumque sit infinita bonitas et infinitus intellectus est infinita aequalitas'*, he not only identifies goodness with understanding, but restricts this identification to the supreme forms of goodness and understanding, thus insuring an equality of degree in the terms compared.[79] This equality of degree is expressed in the extreme term of the first premise, infinite equality. Following the principles of Anselm's ontological argument which asserts the reality of God as that 'than which nothing greater can be conceived', Lull may then proceed to his minor premise, which states, *'Sed in Deus est infinita bonitas et infinitus intellectus.'*[80] From the two premises his conclusion that infinite equality is in God follows.

Though the syllogistic form of Lull's argument betrays the scholastic context in which he conceived his new logic, his utilization of a metaphysical scheme which makes the divine attributes (what he called the Dignities) convertible reveals his preference for the neoplatonic epistemology which will inform the cognitive systems of fifteenth and sixteenth-century humanists such as Ficino, Pico, Erasmus and Agrippa, as well as the critic of the sterile Aristotelian logic of Donne's Oxford, Giordano Bruno.[81] For Lull, the acquisition of knowledge consists in recognizing the degree of the divine attributes (e.g. goodness, understanding) in the objects of both the natural and the supernatural world, and then reasoning according to the degree in the manner of his syllogism concerning God's goodness, understanding and equality. What verifies such demonstrations are not the Aristotelian definitions which have given rise to contention and paradox, but a vision of Platonic unity which provides a knowledge of the essences of the divine attributes, a knowledge so absolute that Lullian syllogisms, like their Ramist counterparts, can claim the means to establish clear and certain connections between their middle and extreme terms. With such connections established, the ambiguity necessary to allow Donne to conclude in his eleventh paradox that women have most reason is eliminated, and with it, the possibility of paradox.

6

Donne's Parody of the Superlative

Though it is impossible to say whether Donne was referring specifically to Lull's *demonstratio per aequiparantiam* or generally to Aristotle's principles of relatives and conversion, it should be recognized that Donne's use of the superlative to create the illusion of a distributed and univocal middle term in the *Paradoxes* is not limited to his eleventh paradox. In his first paradox, 'That all things kill themselves', Donne manipulates Aristotle's notions of the final cause and the golden mean to create a valid syllogism which purports to demonstrate that it is, in some

sense, natural that 'all travaile to ther owne Death'.[82] In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle establishes the role of the final cause as the defining principle of the end toward which a thing strives. Arguing that actuality is prior to potentiality in substance, terms which Lull believes express the reciprocal, and therefore convertible, relationship of cause and effect, Aristotle explains:

> Because everything that comes to be moves towards a principle, i.e. an end. For that for the sake of which a thing is, is its principle, and the becoming is for the sake of the end; and the actuality is the end, and it is for the sake of this that the potentiality is acquired.[83]

Later in the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle describes the ultimate end to which a thing strives as its good.[84] As Cicero acknowledges in the *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, Aristotle observes that what actually constitutes the good both with respect to individuals and to the universal order of all things is an issue upon which many have held divergent views. Significantly, Aristotle calls those views which maintain that the good is not to be identified with the final end of things 'paradoxical'.[85] Bearing in mind Aristotle's description of these divergent views as paradoxical, Donne's utilization of Aristotle's identification of the final end with the good to argue for the paradox, that all things kill themselves, appears all the more paradoxical. The argument of Donne's first paradox does not proceed by questioning the authority of the law of self-preservation, upon which both Augustine and Aquinas will base their objections to suicide, but by translating the superlative form of good from best to perfect. The point of Donne's paradox is achieved only with reference to Aristotle's doctrine of the final cause and the good, for he makes no attempt to argue that things kill themselves out of a desire for the cessation of life as we will see he does in his defense of suicide in *Biathanatos*.[86] Moreover, Donne's argument in *Biathanatos* will declare its conformity with the Aristotelian basis of Aquinas' first principle of human action, 'fly evil, seek good'; the basis of this principle is Aristotle's view that 'the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim.'[87] Donne's argument in his first paradox, on the other hand, imagines the actualization of the

final end of various things, and maintains that because the final end of all things is the good, such an actualization must represent the most good, or the perfection of the being. Even the least potent of animated creatures, plants, move of their own natures to this perfection. He says, 'Plants quickened and inhabited by the most unworthy Soule, which therfore neyther will, nor work, affect an end, a perfection, a Death.'[88] The identification of death with perfection is asserted in the next sentence and is defended, in this instance, on the grounds that plants begin to die as soon as they have reached the apex of their efflorescence. 'This [perfection/death] they spend their Spirits to attaine; this attained, they languish and wither.'[89] Later in the paradox, Donne constructs a syllogism which is informed by the identification of the final cause of a thing, understood as the principle which determines the end toward which it strives, with the definition of the essence of that thing. As we have seen, Aristotle makes this identification himself when he equates the final cause with the governing principle.

To illustrate this identification, however, Donne introduces Aristotle's doctrine of the mean and combines it with his translation of the actualized good of a thing, its perfection.

> Of our Powers, remembering kills our Memory. Of affections, Lusting our Lust. Of Virtues, giving kills Liberality. And if these things kill themselves, they do it in ther best and supreme perfection: for after perfection immediately follows exces: which changes the natures and the names, and makes them not the same things.[90]

This combination of Aristotelian doctrines results in the contradiction by which Donne's paradox claims to be proven, that the actualization of a thing's final end is simultaneous with its death as defined by the principle of its nature. Hence, in the case of the plant, the persistence of its existence after its perfection represents an excess because, as Donne claims, 'no perfection indures'.[91] Donne's claim that no perfection indures, however, is only true for perishable things according to Aristotle. These perishable things (i.e. plants, animals, etc.) may actualize their final ends and, therefore, become what the principle of their nature declares that they should. A

perishable thing may also, on the other hand, exist in an imperfect state, which Aristotle says is 'the privation of its positive state and the corruption of it contrary to its nature'.[92] Aristotle never suggests that a being which is actualized, such as a living man, exists in this state in an instant which is simultaneous with its transformation into an essentially different being as Donne argues. On the contrary, as long as the living man is alive, he is the actualization, or to use Donne's term, the perfection, of a potentially living man. Moreover, the principle which expresses the final cause or nature of the man does not perish when the man perishes, but merely the matter.

> It is...hard to say why wine is not said to be the matter of vinegar nor potentially vinegar (though vinegar is produced from it), and why the living man is not said to be potentially dead. In fact they are not, but the corruptions in question are accidental, and it is the matter of the animal that is in virtue of its corruption the potency and matter of the corpse, and it is water that is the matter of vinegar.[93]

When Donne claims that no perfection indures, therefore, he is referring specifically to Aristotle's ethical theory of the golden mean, which states that virtues such as liberality are only realized at the mean between their corresponding extremes.[94] Aristotle says, 'With regard to giving and taking money the mean is liberality, the excess and the defect prodigality and meanness.'[95] With respect to this definition of liberality, Donne's claim that no perfection indures assumes that the actualization of this virtue, its perfection, is accomplished only by some degree of giving. If liberality were a perishable thing such as a man, 'the privation of its positive state and the corruption of it contrary to its nature' would ensue whenever giving ceased. On the other hand, if one persisted in giving continuously, excess would soon follow. The state of perfection achieved in the actualization of the principle of liberality demands the satisfaction of a mean of giving which, once satisfied, is impossible to continue to satisfy. According to the same logic of the mean, Donne may draw similar conclusions regarding powers such as memory and affections such as lust. Donne's combination of Aristotle's doctrines of the mean and the final cause

allow him, though invalidly, to produce the following syllogism. 'If then the best things kill themselves soonest (for no perfection indures) and all things labor to this perfection, all travaile to ther owne Death.'[96] The best things are those things which have achieved the golden means of their powers, affections and virtues. Those powers, affections or virtues which are actualized first are best because they have been most actively utilized in accordance with the demands of the principles which define their natures. Having actualized these principles by reaching the mean, any cessation or continuation of action in accordance with the demands of the principles of their natures results in the corruption and death of the corresponding powers, affections or virtues. It would, therefore, be contrary to their natures for the best things not to kill themselves. Condensed, the syllogism reads:

> The best things (those which have achieved their perfection) kill themselves.
> All things strive to this perfection (to be the best thing).
> All things strive to kill themselves.

We have seen that Aristotle would not have approved Donne's claim that all perishable things, such as plants, begin the process of corruption and death as soon as they have actualized their natures. Aristotle would also have objected to Donne's characterization of powers, affections and virtues as perishable things, but as imperishable things, they begin to resemble the Ideas which are implicit in Lull's nine divine attributes (e.g. goodness, understanding).[97] Aristotle's solution to this problem is to insist that actualization is achieved in the operation of the principle which expresses the nature of a thing, not in the result of that operation. He says, 'For the action is the end, and the actuality is the action. Therefore, even the *word* "actuality" is derived from "action", and points to the fulfillment.'[98] The virtue of liberality, therefore, does not have an ideal value outside of the ethical world; its perfection is achieved only in the continuous activity of the moral agent.[99] For the sake of creating a middle term, which is restricted in its denotation, Donne transforms the continuous activity of Aristotle's virtues, which are ever seeking a vacillating good, into the stasis of Platonic Ideas, which Aristotle condemned for

their inability to 'help...towards the *knowledge* of other things'.[100] This stasis is expressed in his middle term, perfection, a term which corresponds with Lull's Anselmian characterization of the divine attributes. Lull's *demonstratio per aequiparantiam* depends on its user's ability to recognize the degree to which the objects under scrutiny participate in the static and ideal divine attributes; without this recognition, the denotation of his middle term cannot be restricted with certainty, which in turn leaves the convertibility of the extreme terms of his syllogism also in doubt. As we have seen, Aristotle's estimation of the possibility of such a perception of degree by comparison to the Ideas was not high.[101] Whether Donne was attacking Platonists such as Agrippa and Paracelsus for their claims to be able to perceive these divine forms in the phenomenal world or reformers of Aristotle such as Lull and Ramus for their attempts to rid dialectic of the uncertainty which gave rise to the contentions of the scholastics is difficult to say; what is clear is that he was using the paradox as a vehicle to discuss precisely those epistemological problems which the sixteenth-century critique of Aristotelian syllogistic had raised.[102]

7

Donne's Critique of Neoplatonic Mysticism

In his consideration of rational accounts of the existence and nature of God in the *Essays in Divinity*, Donne refers to attempts to render a definition of God which will accommodate use in logical demonstration, and therefore, provide reason with access to the divine. One of these accounts summarizes Lull's new logic and its utilization of the Anselmian formula for the supremacy of God's nature in the *demonstratio per aequiparantiam*. He says:

> Can it give thee any satisfaction to hear God called by concrete names, *Good*, *Just*, *Wise*; since these words can never be without confessing *better*, *wiser*, and *more just*? Or if he be called *Best*, etc. or in such phrase, the highest degree respects some lower, and mean one: and are those in God?[103]

Though Donne' *Essays* were the statement of his preparation for ordination and were likely completed twenty years after the composition of *Paradoxes*, his suspicion of syllogistic demonstrations which restrict the denotation of terms through the use of comparatives and superlatives continued to remain as lively as it had when he was a student of such dialectical techniques at Lincoln's Inn.[104] Lullian syllogistic, though in form following Aristotle, sought a certainty, particularly with respect to the nature of God, which Aristotle would not have countenanced.[105] Donne's unfavorable reference to Lull and Ramus in *The Courtier's Library* and his tacit rejection of Lull's *demonstratio per aequiparantiam* constitute his recognition of the epistemological limits within which Aristotle believed his logic to be contained. On the other hand, those who dispense with Aristotle in their rational meditations upon the divine, such as Sebond, Paracelsus, Agrippa and Erasmus, and claim to arrive at a knowledge of God through the perception of the divine forms in creatures, are unable to answer Aristotle's objections to the use of the notions of metaphor and participation in the establishment of a real correspondence between the universal and the particular. Though Donne does not specify the advocates of this allegorical method of contemplating universals, nor their sources in Plato, Plotinus and Augustine, he completes his opposition of Platonist and Aristotelian methods of divinity asking of those Platonists:

> Or is there any Creature, any Degree of that *Best*, by which we should call God? Or art thou got any neerer, by hearing him called Abstractly, *Goodness*; since that, and such, are communicable, and daily applied to Princes? Art thou delighted with Arguments arising from Order, and Subordination of Creatures, which must at last end in some one, which ends in none?[106]

Donne may have had Sebond's idea that we come to know God by our recognition of the degree to which we are like God (or in Paracelsus' view, the degree to which we are God) when he asked what creature could claim such a degree of perfection.[107] More likely, however, he was simply referring to Christian neoplatonists'

appropriation of the idea of the great chain of being imposed by God on all the elemental matter of the universe.[108] At the head of this chain is God himself, or in the terms of the neoplatonic tradition from which the concept of the chain of being is derived, the Plotinian One, which Donne says 'ends in none'. In the search for God through reason, Donne asserts that both neoplatonists, who 'contemplate him onely in his Creatures' and Aristotelians, who seek him in 'seeming Demonstration', must recognize the limits of their enterprize and the necessity of faith in the comprehension of the divine.[109] Again we are reminded of Harvey's rebuke to Agrippa, Cardano, Trithemius and Erasmus, and of Donne's list of sources for the paradoxist in *The Courtier's Library*. Rational efforts to eliminate the necessity of faith by attempting to prove the existence and nature of the divine are just as dangerous as rational efforts to prove that the existence and nature of the divine are wholly inaccessible to reason. Both Harvey and Donne implicitly recommend a middle way.

In his appraisal of Raymond Sebond's *Liber creaturarum* in the *Essays in Divinity*, Donne reveals why he believed him to be a popular source for the destructive arguments of paradoxists. Though the Platonic epistemology underlying Sebond's view that the recognition of the order of nature leads to the recognition of the divine truths of scripture is perfectly manifest to Donne, it is not this aspect of Sebond's work that he finds dangerous. For he says of this method of perceiving the divine:

> Certainly, every Creature shewes God as a glass, but glimmeringly and transitorily, by the frailty both of the receiver and the beholder: Our selves have his Image, as Medals, permanently, and preciously delivered. But by these meditations we get no further, then to know what he *doth*, not what he *is*.[110]

It is Sebond's claim that the method expounded in his book is 'an Art, which teaches al things, presupposes no other, is soon learned, cannot be forgotten, requires no books, needs no witnesses, and in this, is safer then the Bible it self, that it cannot be falsified by Hereticks,' and his even bolder claim that 'because his book is made

according to the Order of Creatures, which express fully the will of God, whosoever doth according to his booke, fulfils the will of God.'[111] Not only does Sebond promise a perfect guide to the will of God, he also insures that the knowledge gained from his book will be so certain that it will not be possible to raise any question regarding its conclusions, an assurance that no paradox may be argued which could undermine the truth of this knowledge. He says, '*non possit dubitare quaestionem in ista scientia. Et ista scientia potest solui omnis quaestio*'.[112] In the moderately sceptical fashion which we will find characteristic of his view of the universal and the particular in *Biathanatos*, Donne expresses his unwillingness to assent to an epistemology which promises perfect knowledge of both the first principles of ethics as well as the countless particular situations in which these principles are relevant. However, Donne is careful to recognize that some knowledge of universal principles is natural to all men, Christian or otherwise; this recognition is fundamental to his argument against the absolute sinfulness of suicide in *Biathanatos* because it entails, as Aristotle and Aquinas taught, that human reason be contained within definite epistemological limits, neither boasting access to hidden knowledge as Sebond and Lull promised, nor despairing of its powers to discern any truth whatever as Sextus had argued. Citing both the supposed author of the pagan handbook to the occult arts, Hermes Trismegistus, and St. Paul, Donne expresses his objection to the comprehensiveness of Sebond's system:

> Howsoever, he [Sebond] may be too abundant in affirming, that *in libro creaturarum* there is enough to teach us all the particularities of Christian Religion, (for *Trismegistus* going farr, extends not his proofs to particulars;) yet St. Paul clears it thus far, that there is enough to make us inexcusable, if we search not further.[113]

Even Trismegistus, who provided the ancient model of mysticism for those neoplatonists seeking knowledge of God in the divine reflection of his creatures, does not go so far as to describe the particulars of such a pursuit; those who with Sebond and Lull make such audacious claims should be read with suspicion, just as Augustine had advised in his condemnation of both Trismegistus and his supposed

Latin translator, Apuleius the Platonist.[114] Donne's citation of Paul in defense of his

reluctance to admit access to hidden knowledge through observation of what he

considers to be the dim reflection of the divine in creatures is marshaled, in this

instance, against the more tentative claims of Trismegistus. Paul says in Romans,

'*Deus enim illis manifestavit invisibilia enim ipsius a creatura mundi per ea quae

facta sunt intellecta conspiciuntur sempiterna quoque eius virtus et divinitas.*'[115]

Donne concludes from this passage, and in accordance with Paul's exhortation to

seek salvation through the cultivation of faith in the teachings of Christ, that

Sebond's estimation of the revelatory power of the book of creatures eliminates the

necessity of faith.[116] As we will see, in *Biathanatos*, Donne refers to the same

passage in Romans to advance his position that there are some universal moral

principles that are intuitively known to everyone, pagan and Christian alike, and

therefore, uses the same Pauline doctrine of inexcusable ignorance to demarcate the

boundary separating faith and reason.[117] All are bound by their recognition of the

divine imposition of order in creation to seek the truth of the scriptures assisted by

the light of faith, but also, all are bound to recognize that certain behaviors (e.g.

prostitution and homosexuality) are forbidden by natural law alone irrespective of

any perception of the divine.[118]

8

Opinion and the Mean between Certainty and Ignorance

Harvey had warned against the Pyrrhonism of the sophists who 'professed a

skill in all thinges' and of the rationalism of the Lullists who claimed to possess the

'admirable Art of disputinge infinitly *de omni scibili*' as a contrast to the genuine

knowledge attained through the sceptical inquiries of Socrates and Agrippa.[119]

Though he includes Agrippa in his list of those who have been 'too-sawcie with

diuinitie', Harvey's intention in this opposition of the sophists and the Lullists is to

recommend a moderately sceptical epistemology which can maintain rational access

to some but not all knowledge. Agrippa is to be praised, therefore, because, in the

Vanity, he ably illustrated the manifold inconsistencies and contradictions which undermine the certainty of the principles of the arts and sciences. Ramus is to be praised because he attempted, on the authority of Aristotle, to salvage these principles from the doubt raised by so many centuries of contention and misinterpretation. Agrippa must be suspected, however, of attempting to formulate a cognitive system to replace that which has been founded on the principles of Aristotelian syllogistic. In his *De Occulta Philosophia* (1533), which he dedicated to Trithemius in gratitude for his tutelage in '*mirabilium effectuum et plenas mysteriorum operationes*', Agrippa stated that the magical principles outlined in his book would comprehend all other objects of knowledge in much the same spirit as Ramus had asserted the precedence of his dialectic.[120]

> *Magica facultas, potestatis plurimae compos, altissimis plena mysteriis,*
> *profundissimam rerum secretissimarum contemplationem...totiusque naturae*
> *cogitationem complectitur...Nam, cum omnis philosophia regulativa divisa*
> *sit in physicam, mathematicam et theologiam...has tres imperiosissimas*
> *facultates magia ipsa complectitur, unit atque actuat.*[121]

Though Agrippa insists that such comprehensive magic can only be wielded by the virtuous man, made so by faith, his neoplatonic explanation of this mystical process was bound to provoke the contempt of Aristotelians such as Harvey and Donne. '*Est enim fides omnium miraculorum radix, qua sola (ut Platonici testantur) ad Deum accedimus divinamque adsequimur protectionem virtutemque.*'[122] Hence, Harvey condemns the 'sawciness' of Agrippa for the same reason that Donne condemns the 'abundance' of Sebond.[123]

But like Harvey, Donne would also condemn the Pyrrhonist who would prove all knowledge to be inaccessible to reason. Citing Sextus, another of his sources for paradoxists seeking merely to discredit the knowledge of others, he dismisses the Pyrrhonist argument against the creation of the world from nothing.

> For, Omitting the quarelsome contending of *Sextus Empiricus* the
> *Pyrrhonian*, (of the Author of which sect *Laertius* says, that he handled

> Philosophy bravely, having invented a way by which a man should determine
> nothing of every thing) who with his Ordinary weapon, a two-edged sword,
> thinks he cuts off all Arguments against production of Nothing, by this, *Non
> fit quod jam est, Nec quod non est; nam non patitur mutationem quod non
> est.*[124]

Though Donne does not mention Gorgias' *On What is Not* in connection with
Sextus' arguments against the creation from nothing, we should remember that it
was Gorgias' manipulation of the concept of nothing in his proof of the paradox that
nothing is, which led Sextus to observe its potential to eliminate the 'criterion of
truth'.[125] Donne uses conventional language to describe the Pyrrhonist strategies of
sophists. Their 'quarelsome contending' is dismissed on the same grounds which
every Aristotelian we have examined thus far, Ramist or otherwise, dismissed it; it
obscures the distinctions between the true and the false by which dialectic proceeds
toward knowledge, or at least, probable opinion. In his third paradox, 'That old Men
are more Fantastique then younge', Donne referred to the Pyrrhonists as the most
contentious of the philosophers of antiquity. He says, 'Truly, as amongst
Philosophers, the Sceptique which doubts all is more contentious then eyther the
Dogmatique which affirmes, or the Academique which denies all'.[126] Despite the
awareness of the ambiguities of definition which the equivocal syllogisms of his
Paradoxes raised, Donne was not interested in demonstrating the inability of
Aristotelian syllogistic to act as a reliable guide to truth or likelihood. When he
advised his readers to resist the sophistry of his arguments in his letter to Wotton, he
suggested no more than Wilson, Lever or Blundeville had when they provided their
Aristotelian guidelines to the refutation of sophistical argumentation. The principal
objective for those who would resist Donne's *Paradoxes* is to recognize the fallacy
of four terms hidden within the equivocally identified middle terms.[127] Such
recognition requires the sort of dialectical inquiry inspired by Socrates' attack on
Gorgias' sophistical rhetoric, and which resulted in the Socratic/Stoic paradoxes
defended by Cicero in the *Paradoxa Stoicorum*. There, as we have seen, it is the
discrimination and amplification of the terms of the syllogisms by which the Stoics
prove their paradoxes which renders their conclusions amenable to the common

opinion, the opinion which is content with probability. While neither Donne nor
Harvey would deny, as Cicero does, the power of the syllogism to demonstrate truth
with certainty, both recognize epistemological limits which the aspirations of
Ramus, Lull, Agrippa and Sebond would not. For Donne and Harvey, as for most
traditional Aristotelians, there remains a realm of uncertainty in which reason cannot
hope to discover any more than likelihoods; this realm, as Aristotle taught, is the
domain of opinion (*doxa*), both orthodox and paradox.

It is because of the inevitability of such uncertainty, in both ethics and
metaphysics, that Harvey can praise the value of the paradox disputed *pro* and
contra according to the presiding method of argumentation, Aristotelian dialectic.
Similarly, Donne can describe his *Paradoxes* as 'alarums to truth', not because the
exposure of their fallacies by the resistance of the reader clearly indicates the truth of
the matter, but because such exposure reveals the genuinely doubtful nature of
Aristotelian dialectic, metaphysics and ethics. His reader may recognize (as we
have) his conflation of Aristotle's doctrines of the final cause and of the golden
mean in his first paradox in the equivocal middle term of the syllogism, which
concludes 'all travaile to ther owne Death', but such recognition by no means
guarantees the certainty of these doctrines as conventionally understood. In his letter
to Wotton, Donne never promises that the truth will emerge clearly once his
paradoxes are 'hatcht', nor does he expect his reader to refute them with any position
more certain than a counter-*thesis*, which, as we have seen, aspires only to achieve a
degree of probability; 'if they make you to find better reasons against them they do
there office'. As we approach our analysis of the *thesis* of *Biathanatos*, 'That Self-
Homicide is not so naturally Sin that it may never be otherwise', we must keep this
description of the office of paradox in mind, because it will prepare us for an
argument which seeks not to demonstrate the applicability of a universal ethical
principle to particular circumstances, as in the practice of casuistry, but for one
which seeks to reveal the uncertainty of such a universal principle by exposing those
circumstances which countermand its authority. It is a common mistake to classify
Biathanatos as a work of casuistry, and one which cannot but obscure its

significance as a paradox; the objectives of the two types of argumentation are diametrically opposed, casuistry aiming to establish at least the probability of the universal, and paradox aiming to declare the limits of this probability.[128] We must remember as we examine Donne's paradoxical argumentation in *Biathanatos*, that he consistently describes casuists as a group to which he does not belong. Further, we must remember that the 'little book of Cases' and the 'Cases of conscience' to which he refers in two letters of October 1621, to Thomas Lucy and Henry Goodyear respectively, represent his only ostensibly casuistical exercises, and, unfortunately, are both lost to scholarship.[129]

Notes to Chapter IV

[1] Nashe, 1910, v. 3, p. 318
[2] Harvey, 1593, p. 11. See Homer, *Odyssey* X, 1, 73.
[3] Harvey, 1593, pp. 21-22
[4] Isocrates, *Helen*, 8-9, 13
[5] Neil Rhodes analyzes the Harvey/Nashe controversy over the use of rhetoric, and notes Harvey's criticism of Nashe's unconstrained invention. See Rhodes, 1992, pp. 118-137.
[6] Harvey, 1593, p. 172
[7] Ibid., p. 29
[8] Agrippa, 1569, sig. G
[9] Ibid., sig. G
[10] Harvey, 1593, p. 166
[11] Donne, 1930, pp. 39-40
[12] See Fraunce, 1588, p. 61; and Donne, 1930, p. 54.
[13] In *The Advancement of Learning*, Bacon critcized Ramus for 'introducing the canker of epitomes', but for reasons diametrically opposed to those underlying Nashe's call for a denial of Ramism and a return to Aristotelian first principles. See Bacon, 1605, xvii, 12.
[14] Agrippa was the notoriously popular source for those who sought material for contention and who sought to create the impression of learnedness. In his *Allarme to England* (London, 1578), Barnaby Rich says that students of Agrippa desire 'to be curious in cauilling, propounding captious questions, thereby to shewe a singularitie of their wisedomes'. Quoted in Nashe, 1910, v. 5, p. 118, n. 8. In his epistle to the reader of his 1569 translation of the *Vanity of the Arts and Sciences*, James Sandford said that Agrippa himself had written the work 'for a shewe of Learning'. See Agrippa, 1569, sig. iii.
[15] Harvey, 1593, p. 161. Perhaps because he had confused Gianfrancesco Pico with his uncle, Giovanni, who had written against the vanities of astrology in his *Disputationes adversus astrologiam divinatricem* (1495), Harvey overlooks what Donne would describe in his *Essays in Divinity* as Gianfrancesco's 'concupiscence of inaccessible knowledges and transcendencies', when he praised the younger Pico's 'singularitie in al kind of knowledge' in a letter to Edmund Spenser. See Donne, 1967a, p. 13; and Harvey, 1580 (quoted in Schmitt, 1964, p. 119).
[16] Lucius Apuleius (c. 150 A.D.) was a Platonist who was believed to have prepared a Latin edition of the *Corpus Hermeticum* ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus. His praise of the ass in *The Golden Ass* is an affirmation of the benefits of the recognition of human ignorance. In the *City of God* (VIII, 14-27; IX), Augustine denied his doctrine of mediating 'demons' between man and god.
[17] Erasmus, 1979, p. 134

[18] Ibid., p. 134. In the commentary of his edition of the *Praise*, A. H. T. Levi notes that Erasmus' claim that the affections are functions of the body, and not of the soul as Aristotle believed, is Plotinian. He also notes that Erasmus' neoplatonic praise of the holy madness which results from a habitual neglect of the senses and devotion to contemplation of the divine is informed by Ficino's exposition of divine *furor* in his commentary of the *Symposium* (1469). See Erasmus, 1971, pp, 203-204, nn. 138, 139. Erasmus may have made use of Ficino's commentary in his neoplatonic exposition of the Christianized Silenus figure in the *Adages* (3. 3. 1). In the *Symposium*, Alcibiades compares Socrates to the statues of Silenus, which have a deformed exterior, but when opened, contain 'godlike', 'golden' and 'beautiful' images (215a-217b). For a discussion of the Silenus figure as a symbol of the wisdom and beauty which remains unapparent to sense and reason until they are illuminated by divine *furor*, see Screech, 1980, pp. 28-36, 225-226.

[19] Nashe, 1910, v. 1, p. 44. We recall Duke Vicentio's complaint in Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* that 'novelty only is in request'. See Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure* III, ii, 1. 224.

[20] Nashe, 1910, v. 2, p. 132

[21] Nashe, 1910, v. 2, pp. 115, 121

[22] In his discussion of the function of wit in the evocation of wonder, James Biester notes Roger Ascham's complaint in *The Scholemaster* (1570) against 'quick wits' who are too fond of novelty. Biester does not, however, attempt to discuss the relation of wit and novelty to the negative characterization of paradox. See Biester, 1997, pp. 71-80.

[23] Nashe, 1910, v. 1, p. 45

[24] See Harvey, 1593, p. 11.

[25] See McPherson, 1969, pp. 1551-1558, for a discussion of the unyielding partisanship of the dispute.

[26] Cardano, 1982, p. 70

[27] Steganography may simply signify cryptology, but Trithemius' work on the subject combined the composition and interpretation of encrypted messages with the communication of them through an occult medium.

[28] Quoted in Brann, 1981, p. 29

[29] See Brann, 1981, pp. 206-207. Trithemius' praise for Nicholas of Lyra also reflects their shared belief in scriptural interpretation informed by a knowledge of the original Hebrew and Greek. For a discussion of Abelard's terminological and logical innovations, see Copleston, 1972, pp. 80-85.

[30] For a discussion of the practice of Cabalistic logic, see W. Shumaker's commentary in Cardano, 1982, p. 93.

[31] On Bouelles' advocacy of the certitude promised by Lullist philosophy, see Reiss, 1991, p. 84.

[32] Donne, 1930, p. 40

[33] For the view that *The Praise of Folly* is a paradox, see Kahn, 1985, pp. 89-114, esp. 89-90; and Colie, 1969, pp. 95-96. For a discussion of both the *Praise* and Agrippa's 'Digression' as paradoxes, see Geraldine, 1964, pp. 41-44.

[34] Donne, 1969, p. 29. On Donne's view of innovation in *Ignatius His Conclave*, see Coffin, 1937, pp. 206-213; and Hassel, 1970-1971, pp. 329-337.

[35] Donne, 1969, p. 17

[36] Ibid., p. 25 (Donne's emphasis)

[37] Nashe, 1910, v. 3, p. 94

[38] For a discussion of Bruno's disagreement with the Oxford dons, see Yates, 1982, pp. 134-150.

[39] à Wood, 1790, vol. II, part I, p. 108 (quoted in Yates, 1982, pp. 137-138)

[40] For the view that the 'questions' into which Oxford scholars were inquiring in the 1580's and 90's were not as strictly limited by Aristotelian orthodoxy as the university statutes would lead us to believe, see Schmitt, 1983a, pp. 54-55. See also Mark H. Curtis' rejection of Sears Jaynes' conclusion that 'the catalogues [of the libraries of both universities] reflect beautifully the contrast between conservative, scholastic Oxford and reforming, humanist Cambridge'. See Curtis, 1958, pp. 111-120; and Jaynes, 1956, p. 51.

[41] Erasmus, 1979, pp. 87-88. Explicit propositions were to be accepted on faith by all Christians, while belief in implicit propositions was only required of the learned. See *Summa* II ii, q. 1, aa. 5-6; and Erasmus, 1979, p. 87, n. 1.

[42] Erasmus, 1979, p. 88. For a list of the scholastic theologians who have discussed these questions, and to whom Erasmus is directing his criticisms, see Erasmus, 1979, pp. 88-89, nn. 5-8.

[43] Erasmus, 1979, pp. 89-90. In the 1522 edition of *Moriae Encomium*, the *sententiae* of the scholastic theologians are described using the Greek term for paradoxical. See Erasmus, 1522, p. 271.

[44] See above pp. 50, 58-60.

[45] Erasmus, 1979, p. 93

[46] See *Tusculan Disputations* II, 30; *De Oratore* III, 66-68.

[47] Erasmus, 1979, p. 95

[48] In *Pseudo-Martyr*, Donne refers to Erasmus' dictum '*Syllogismi nunc sustinent Ecclesiam*' to support his complaint that the 'Doctrine of temporall jurisdiction is sustained but by Syllogismes, and those weake, and impotent, and deceivable'. See Donne, 1610, sig. D3. Joan Webber has selected this passage as evidence that Donne distrusted syllogistic argumentation and parodied it in *Biathanatos*. See Webber, 1963, p. 7. Terry Sherwood, however, has disproven Webber's view by cataloguing a number of quotations from Donne's sermons in which the syllogism is recommended in the consideration of ethical questions. See Sherwood, 1984, pp. 38-42. Sherwood's catalogue, though it does not address itself to his view, also discredits Dwight Cathcart's opinion that cases of conscience 'do not employ the syllogism, either Ramistic or Peripatetic' (p. 111). Cathcart's characterization of Ramists and Aristotelians on the use of syllogism is simplistic and mistaken. See Cathcart, 1975, pp. 106-113.

[49] Donne, 1982, ll. 4111-4120

[50] See above pp. 1-2, 19, 30, 53, 129.

[51] Donne, 1982, ll. 1147-1151

[52] Ibid., ll. 1221, 1226

[53] For an overview of the scholastic curriculum of Donne's Cambridge, see Costello, 1958. There, Costello observes the importance of consulting all scholastic authorities, particularly upon theological questions, 'even if some of them were proscribed' (p. 121). Charles M. Coffin also recognized that Donne was not acting contrary to Protestant controversial practice in consulting Jesuit authorities. See Coffin, 1937, pp. 75-76, 216. More recently, James F. Keenan has observed the importance of Jesuit casuists in the formation of British casuistry in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He has noted that both William Ames, in his *De Conscientia* (1632), and Jeremy Taylor, in his *Ductor Dubitantium*, remarked on the Protestant casuists' regular and frequent consultation of Jesuit ('Philistine') casuistry. See Keenan, 1995, pp. 105-130, esp. 109-110. We need only compare the authorities cited by the Jesuit, Robert Persons, in his apology for the doctrine of equivocation addressed to Donne's Anglican associate, Thomas Morton, as a response to his *A Full Satisfaction Concerning a Double Romish Iniquitie* (1606) to Donne's citations in *Biathanatos* to see that Jesuits and Anglicans drew on a common body of moral authorities. See for instance, Persons, 1607, pp. 355-357, 428-429. For more on Donne's continuous familiarity with Jesuit scholarship, see Chanoff, 1979-1981, pp. 154-167; and Donne, 1969, pp. xxxv-xli.

[54] The tendency to locate the entirety of Donne's thought within the neoplatonic and Augustinian tradition has led to an almost total neglect of the Aristotelian and scholastic influences on Donne's ethics. This neglect has further led to a misunderstanding of Donne's appreciation of the value of the paradox as a class of philosophical disputation. Though Donne was familiar with neoplatonic Christian paradoxes of faith, and used them in his poetry and sermons to express the difficulty with which reason approached some of the articles of faith, he did not consider his *Paradoxes* or *Biathanatos* to be paradoxes of this kind. Nor was the complex dialectic of the *Paradoxes* and *Biathanatos* merely a parodic demonstration of the vanity of scholastic logic, which ironically recommended a neoplatonic or Augustinian epistemology. For examples of those who have misunderstood Donne's scholastic use of the paradox, see Malloch, 1958, pp. 128-129; Webber, 1963, pp. 3-15; Colie, 1966, pp. 96-141, 497-507; Hughes, 1968, pp. 60-66, 147-157; Roston, 1974,

pp. 82-100, 116, 130-141, 169, 211; and Sherwood, 1984, p. 155. Mary Paton Ramsay may be responsible for part of the confusion. She has argued for the Plotinian influence on Donne's thought by examining some of Donne's poems and sermons in which Plotinian/neoplatonic images of the ecstatic soul are used. Despite her ackowledgement that as a theologian, Donne denied such ecstasies (p. 235), she continues to attribute to Donne a mystical epistemology inherited from Augustine. Even more problematic is her failure to distinguish the fundamental difference between the mystical element in Augustine's doctrine of illumination and the naturalist arrangement of Aquinas' epistemology. As a result of this failure, she simultaneously concludes that Donne's thought is 'fortement imprégnée de plotinisme' and that he is 'un disciple de St. Thomas' (pp. 258-259). See Ramsay, 1924, esp. pp. 224-270. In a later article, Ramsay places greater emphasis on the influence of Aquinas on Donne's philosophical views, and usefully contrasts his poetic method to the neoplatonic method of Spenser. Nevertheless, she still does not distinguish the mystical element in Augustine's doctrine of illumination and the naturalist arrangement of Aquinas' epistemology. See Ramsay, 1931, pp. 99-120. In a review of her *Les Doctrines Médiévales Chez Donne*, François Picavet notes, without objection, Ramsay's conclusion that Donne's religious thought 'is above all medieval and Plotinian' (p. 392). See Picavet, 1917, pp. 385-392. For an account of the influence of Plotinus on Augustine's doctrine of illumination and his metaphysics, see Gilson, 1961, pp. 105-111, 199-202, 233-235.

[55] For the view that the scholastic method of *Biathanatos* was serious and reflected the influence of Aquinas, see Moore, 1790, VI, I, pp. 6, 10, 36; Stephen, 1899, pp. 595-613 (excerpted in Smith, 1996, v. 2, pp. 161-170, esp 168-169); Sherwood, 1969, 40-153; and Donne, 1982, pp. xx-xxv.

[56] On this aspect of Ramus' thought, see Reiss, 1991, pp. 118-119.

[57] Harvey, 1593, p. 193

[58] Nashe, 1910, v. 3, pp. 51-52

[59] In *Biathanatos*, Donne refers to Paracelsus as an 'excellent chirurgeon', but notes also that the practice of curing diseases by touch, which Paracelsus advocated, is justly 'forbidden by diverse laws'. Donne goes on to argue that if kings are excused for using such methods in curing diseases because they do it 'to the glory of God', so should his desire to advance the glory of God be his excuse for writing his paradoxical *thesis* in support of suicide. See Donne, 1982, ll. 5458-5469. On affinities between Donne and Paracelsus, see Ramsay, 1924, pp. 250-257; Carey, 1981, pp. 147, 170, 252; Sherwood, 1984, pp. 137-142. On Donne's possible sympathy with Copernicus' ideas, see Coffin, 1937, pp. 207-212. For a rebuttal of Coffin's view, see Hassel, 1970-1971, pp. 332-335.

[60] See *Timaeus* 51c-52c.

[61] See *Metaphysics* 1072a19-1073b3.

[62] Ibid., 987b31-32

[63] Ibid., 991a9-14 (translator's emphasis); repeated at 1079b11-18

[64] Ibid., 991a21-21, repeated at 1079b25-26

[65] Ibid., 1086a37-b7

[66] Donne, 1969, p. 21

[67] On Lever and Ramus, see Howell, 1961, pp. 57-63. It should be noted that Lever's *Art of Reason* was completed between 1549-1551, but was not published until 1573.

[68] Lever, 1573, p. 5. See also Fraunce, 1588, p. 98.

[69] In a 1607 letter to Thomas Lucy, Donne had said that 'if a man dig a pit, and cover it not, he must recompense those which are damnified by it: which is often interpreted of such as shake old opinions, and do not establish new as certain, but leave consciences in a worse danger than they found them in'. See Donne, 1977, p. 18.

[70] Scotus' theory of individuation and the cognitive distinctions between all individual substances in respect of their *haecceitas* ('thisness') maintained that perfect knowledge could not be attained through the knowledge of an individual substance's generic (i.e. genus, species) qualities alone. See for example Scotus, 1966, pp. 105-106. Unlike Ockham, whose theory of supposition argued against the reality of universals outside the concepts of the mind, Scotus reserved a place for universals which existed independently of the mind's recognition of them as such. See Scotus, 1966, pp. 329-

330. For an overview of the place of Lull, Scotus and Ockham in the scholastic tradition, see Copleston, 1972, pp. 172-175, 213-256.

[71] Quoted in Duhem, 1913, v. 6, p. 514. Timothy Reiss has noted Ramus' debt to Lull. His aim, however, is to emphasize against Ong that Lull's visual aids to the mastery of his new dialectic (e.g. knowledge trees) served the same pedagogical function as Ramus' visual aids (e.g. dichotomies) to his dialectical innovations. See Reiss, 1991, p. 31 n. 28, and p. 107.

[72] Gilian R Evans has argued that Anselm's confidence in the solubility of paradoxes (*insolubilia*) should be contrasted to Cicero's sceptical recognition of their inability to achieve more than probability. Like Lull after him, Anselm believed that the threat which paradoxes posed to knowledge could be avoided by conceiving of the problem in more specific (and perhaps unnatural) terms. Evans has shown that Anselm owes much to Augustine's studies in signification in *The Teacher* and *On the Trinity*. See Evans, 1975-1976, pp. 1-21.

[73] Harvey, 1593, p. 139. No French author of the *Mirror* is ever named by the English translator, James Sandford, and it is possible that he wrote the work himself and attributed it to another in order to avoid responsibility for the sophistry displayed in its argumentation.

[74] The ninth-century philosopher, John Scotus Erigena discussed the Christian paradox of God's creation *ex nihilo* and describes it as Harvey had the mysterious knowledge of the 'right asse' and as Marbeck had the wondrous paradox of Psalm 24 (23). '*Per generationem quippe Dei ex Deo principio facta sunt. Audi divinum et ineffabile paradoxum, irreserabilie secretum, invisibile, profundum, incomprehensibile mysterium. Per non factum, sed genitum, omnia facta, sed non genita.*' See Erigena, 1853, cap. 1, 1-14. On Lull's debt to Erigena, see Yates, 1982, pp. 81-83.

[75] Quoted in Duhem, 1913, v. 6, p. 514

[76] Lull, *Ars generalis ultima*, 10, ll. 1705-1707

[77] Ibid., 10, l. 1700. For a brief account of the manner in which Lull believed his *demonstratio per aequiparantiam* resolved the logical impasses inevitably reached by both the sophists and the schoolmen, see Hillgarth, 1971, pp. 235-237.

[78] Lull, *Logica Nova* V, ii

[79] Ibid., V, ll. 7-8

[80] Ibid., V, l. 9. See Anselm, *Proslogion II*. On Lull's debt to Anselm, see Yates, 1982, pp. 62-66. For an overview of Anselm's ontological argument and Aquinas' rejection of it, see Copleston, 1972, pp. 72-79, 192-196.

[81] On the neoplatonism of Bruno's *Ash Wednesday Supper* (1584), see Yates, 1982, pp. 158-161.

[82] Donne, 1980, p. 2, ll. 32-33. Rosemond Tuve claims that Donne's compass image in 'A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning' is based on three of the four Aristotelian causes (final, efficient and formal). See Tuve, 1942, pp. 365-400, esp. p. 374. Una Nelly has noted the influence of both Aristotle and Aquinas on Donne's notion of the mean. See Nelly, 1969, pp. 83-88. Terence Cave has noted Ronsard's manipulation of the doctrine of the golden mean in the *Hymne de l'Or* (1555). Cave rightly locates the poem in the tradition of paradoxical encomia, but indicates, albeit tentatively, that its function is integrally related to the defense of uncommon opinion. Though the two types obviously share some relation, his unwillingness to refine the distinction any further, and his referral of the question to Colie's *Paradoxia Epidemica*, indicates the need for the clarification on this question that this study provides. See Cave, 1979, pp. 233-239, on Colie, p. 233n.

[83] *Metaphysics* 1050a6-9. See *Physics* 194a29, 198b10-199b32 on nature and its disposition toward ends. Lull makes the reciprocal relationship of actuality and potentiality the basis of the second and third modes of his *demonstratio per aequiparantiam*. '*Secundus modus est, quando fit demonstratio per aequalitatem potentiae et per suum effectum. Tertius modus est, quando fit demonstratio per aequalitatem actuum potentiarum*'. See Lull, *Logica Nova* V, ll. 3-6. For further explanation of the relationship between potentiality and actuality, see *Logica Nova* V, ll. 251-266.

[84] *Metaphysics* 1075a11-18

[85] Ibid., 1075a25, b3, b6, b11

[86] For the view that this paradox reveals Donne's early fascination with suicide, and discussion of psychological issues relating to *Biathanatos*, see Simpson, 1931, pp. 21-49, esp. 36-39; Roberts, 1947, pp. 958-976; Bullough, 1972, p. 67; Keynes, 1972, p. 111; Donne, 1980, pp. 70-71; and Carey,

1981, pp. 190-191. William W. E. Slights claims that Donne was merely 'showing off his skill at paradoxy' in *Biathanatos*, and likens this display to Truewit's advice to Morose to kill himself rather than to marry in Jonson's *Epicoene* (II, ii). Slights mistakenly assumes that Donne was no more serious in *Biathanatos* than he was in the paradoxes on suicide in the *Paradoxes and Problems* (I and V). See William W. E. Slights, 1970, pp. 178-187. L. C. Knights has argued that Donne was serious in *Biathanatos*, and that his seriousness reflects his personal desire for death. See Knights, 1974, pp. 109-116. S. E. Sprott has shown that the debate on suicide was lively and current while Donne was writing *Biathanatos* and should not, therefore, be viewed as an anomolous production of a 'melancholy poet' obsessed with thoughts of suicide. See Sprott, 1961, p. 25-27. Jonathan Dollimore has continued in the erroneous view that Donne's first paradox reveals his morbid attraction to suicide. He also mistakes the way in which Donne was manipulating Aristotle's doctrine of the golden mean in that paradox. See Dollimore, 1998, pp. 71-77, esp. 73. Most recently, Jeffrey Johnson has correctly emphasized Donne's piety and orthodoxy in his reflections on his death in 'A Hymne to Christ'. See Johnson, 1999, pp. 115-123. It is worth recalling on this point, that in his comments on a 1630 letter to George Garret, in which Donne expressed a pious desire to 'die in the pulpit', Coleridge remarked that Donne's desire was consistent with the position which he argued in *Biathanatos*, that suicide in is justifiable 'in certain cases.' It is apparent that Coleridge did not believe that *Biathanatos* exhibited a sinful attraction to suicide or an ironic treatment of the issue. See Donne, 1977, p. 243; and Brinkley, 1955, p. 431.

[87] *Nicomachean Ethics* 1094a2-3

[88] Donne, 1980, p. 1, ll. 3-6

[89] Ibid., p. 1, ll. 6-7. In the first sequence of his *Sonnets* (1-18), Shakespeare makes considerable use of this identification of death and perfection in his attempt to warn the young man of his imminent decay. See Shakespeare, *Sonnets*, 1, l. 3; 6, l. 4; 12, ll. 11-12; and 15, ll. 1-2.

[90] Donne, 1980, p. 2, ll. 24-30. See Nashe, 1910, v. 2, p. 274. The inscription on the furniture of the Knight of the Owl's horse reads '*Liberalitas liberalitate perit*'. McKerrow notes that this motto derives from St. Jerome, *Epist.* 58.7 and was also mentioned in Justus Lipsius' *Politica* (1589), ii, 17. See Nashe, 1910, v. 4, p. 281. See also Quintilian, *Institutio* IV, ii, 7; VIII, vi, 36 on the variability of the term 'liberality'.

[91] Donne, 1980, p. 2, l. 31

[92] *Metaphysics* 1044b33-34

[93] Ibid., 1044b34-1045a2. Aristotle thought that wine had to be reduced into its primary matter, water, before it could become vinegar. Aristotle thought similarly of the affection (emotion) of anger as a form (principle) which may or may not be manifest materially. Hence, just as it would be absurd to argue that the principle of a man perishes with its material manifestation, so is it absurd to argue that the principle of anger ceases to exist whenever anger ceases to be manifest. See *De Anima* 403a26-403b13.

[94] Donne mentions the golden mean explicitly in his fifth paradox, 'That only Cowards dare dye'. See Donne, 1980, p. 9, ll. 1-3. See also *Eudemian Ethics* 1220b21-1221a13.

[95] *Nicomachean Ethics* 1107b9-10. Aristotle gives the example of liberality again at *Eudemian Ethics* 1221a5.

[96] Donne, 1980, p. 2, ll. 30-33. Donne modifies this view in his fourth paradox, when he says that 'all deathes proceede of the defect of that, which nature made perfect and would preserve, and therfore are all against Nature.' See Donne, 1980, p. 8, ll. 54-56.

[97] For Aristotle's description of the power of memory, see *De Memoria* 451a15-19.

[98] *Metaphysics* 1050a21-23 (translator's emphasis)

[99] In his attempt to describe Aristotle's doctrine of the mean as a kind of idealism, Sean Kane misrepresents both Aristotle's divergence from Plato, and Spenser's dramatization of the ethical problems facing Guyon in Book Two of the *Faerie Queene*. This misrepresentation is responsible for what Kane interprets as a 'paradox of idealism'. See Kane, 1983, pp. 81-109.

[100] *Metaphysics* 991a12; repeated at 1079b25-26 (translator's emphasis)

[101] See *Metaphysics* 991a21-21, repeated at 1079b16. 'And to say that they [the Ideas] are patterns and the other things share in them is to use empty words and poetical metaphors.'

[102] Michael McCanles has noted that the thirteenth-century author of the *Summule Logicales*, Peter of Spain, noted that terms could become distributed 'by adding such qualifiers as "every," "none," "such a kind," and "such a size". McCanles claims that this technique of achieving distribution added to nominalist terminology, but fails to recognize that Peter was a realist. See McCanles, 1964, p. 96. On Peter of Spain, distribution and the realist/nominalist debate, see Kneale and Kneale, 1962, pp. 234, 263-274. For a discussion of the problem of distribution treated in some medieval *sophismata*, see Kretzmann, 1982, pp. 211-245. For a reading of Donne's first paradox, which notices its reference to Aristotle's doctrine of the mean, and which hints at the epistemological problems its manipulation of terms raises, see Lota Brown, 1995, pp. 66-72.

[103] Donne, 1967a, p. 21

[104] See also Donne, 1953, VI, pp. 174-175; I, pp. 210-211; and X, p. 201 on the use of the superlative to describe God. Quoted in Stanwood and Asals, 1986, pp. 94-95.

[105] In the *Theologia naturalis* or *Liber creaturarum*, Raymond Sebond employs the same Anselmian reasoning to assert the intelligibility of God to man. He explains that '*deus est totus intellectualis et spiritualis immo non est visibilis oculo corporali...Et cum intellectus hominis sit factum ad videndum intellectualia et invisibilia*'. This vision is available to the mind of man through his definition of the nature of God in the superlative. '*Deus est maxim quia non possum cogitare maius nec plus. ideo deus est tale esse. Et sic est infinitus et habet esse infintus*. See Sebond, 1502, sig. Bv, Cv.

[106] Donne, 1967a, p. 21

[107] In the *Liber creaturarum*, Sebond says, '*Nam dum homo comparat seipsum ad alias creaturas inferiores tunc cognoscit se esse nobiliorem creaturam et suam naturam esse digniorem et meliorem omnium aliarum rerum*'. See Sebond, 1502, sig. Dv.

[108] See *Timaeus* 27d-29b, 52d-53c. For a reading of 'The Extasie' in light of this neoplatonic idea, see Thomason, 1982, pp. 91-105.

[109] Donne, 1967a, p. 20

[110] Ibid., p. 20 (Donne's emphasis). This passage illustrates the limits of Donne's neoplatonism neatly. He may imagine the participation of the created world in the nature of the creator, and see man as a microcosm of this process, but he will not go so far as to assert that we gain any knowledge of the nature of the cause of creation, God. His claim that we may know what the effects of this creative activity are ('what he doth') corresponds with an Aristotelian epistemology which maintains that we become aware of the nature of causes (i.e. final and formal causes expressed in the universal definitions of *genus* and *species*) through our observation of their effects.

[111] Ibid., pp. 7-8

[112] Sebond, 1502, sig. Av

[113] Donne, 1967a, p. 8. Hermes Trismegistus, the legendary Egyptian mystic and magician, was credited with the authorship of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, a collection of opinions on the nature of the divine and man's relation to it. A Latin edition, supposedly translated by Apuleius, *Hermetis Trismegisti Asclepius sive de Natura Deorum Dialogus*, was the source of Donne's knowledge of Trismegistus. Not surprisingly, the *Corpus Hermeticum* is likely to be the work not of the mythical ancient Egyptian, but of an anonymous third or fourth-century Platonist.

[114] Significantly, Augustine derives his rejection of Apuleius from Plato himself. He notes that in the *Symposium*, Plato says that 'gods never mix with men', and therefore, would deny the view that there are 'man-made gods [*daemones*]' which act as 'intermediaries and intercessors between the gods created by God [i.e. angels] and men' (*City of God* VIII, 24). Plato says that 'the divine will not mingle directly with the human' to emphasize the need for the intercession of mediating spirits between man and god (*Symposium* 202e-203a). Augustine will admit no mediating force between God and man but faith, and uses Plato only to deny the possibility of 'man-made gods' (*City of God* VIII, 25). In his rejection of Apuleius on these Platonic grounds, we should detect his doctrines of divine illumination and of the inner teacher, doctrines which we will see Donne implicitly denies in *Biathanatos*. For Augustine on Apuleius see, *City of God* VIII, 14-27; IX; and Plato, *Symposium* 202e-203a. Unlike Augustine, Aquinas thought that Apuleius derived the doctrine of mediating spirits (*daemones*) from Plato himself. See Henle, 1956, pp. 417-419.

[115] Romans 1:19-20

[116] See Romans 3:21-31.

[117] Not surprsingly, Donne also thought that the existence of God was known to all through their recognition of the causal necessity of a creator. Atheists, therefore, were inexcusable in their claim not to know that God exists. See Donne, 1953, IV, pp. 167-170. In her consideration of this sermon, Noralyn Masselink seems to overlook Donne's (as well as Aquinas') limitation of the source of this knowledge to natural reason's apprehension of the necessity of a cause in its perception of effects. See Masselink, 1989, pp. 66-72. On Aquinas' causal proof for the existence of God and its rejection of the sceptical mode of infinite regress, see Wippel, 1993, pp. 85-127, esp. pp. 113ff.

[118] See Romans 1:26-27.

[119] Harvey, 1593, p. 29. In the *Vanity*, Agrippa observes that just as Gorgianic dialectic implicitly suggests its own uncertainty when it claims to be able prove all things, so should we suspect the new logic of Lull. 'Raimundus Lullius founde out in these later times a monstrous Arte, little differinge from Logicke [Aristotelian], by the which as in times paste Gorgias Leontius did auaunte (who first in great assemblie of learned men, presumed to reason of every thinge) every man mighte dispute of what matter he listed, and with a certaine artificial and huge heape of Nounes, and Verbes, to inuente, and to dispute with ostentation ful of trifling deceites on bothe sides, of euery curious communication'. See Agrippa, 1569, sig. Giii.

[120] See Agrippa, 1992, p. 70.

[121] Ibid., pp. 86-88. In his introduction, Compagni explains that '*De Occulta Philosophia* proposes a total reorganization of magic as an umbrella science which, by gathering under a single roof all the cognitive data collected in the various fields of scientific research, would guarantee the effectiveness of each branch of research and make explicit its potential for acting upon reality'. See Agrippa, 1992, p. 16.

[122] Ibid., p. 413

[123] James Sandford, the supposed translator of *The Mirrour of Madness*, commented in the epistle to the reader of his translation of Agrippa's *Vanity*, that the 'wicked knowledge' exhibited in *De Occulta Philosphia* 'was the cause of his miserable death'. See Agrippa, 1569, sig. iii.

[124] Donne, 1967a, p. 28

[125] See Sextus, *Against the Mathematicians*, VII, 87.

[126] Donne, 1980, pp. 5-6, ll. 31-34. Donne refers to the distinction between Academic and Pyrrhonist scepticism again in his sermon delivered at the funeral of Sir William Cokayne in December 1626. See Donne, 1953, VII, p. 260.

[127] See A. E. Malloch's description of the details of this resistance in Malloch, 1956, pp. 192-193.

[128] Charles Moore confuses the objectives of casuistry and paradox in his response to *Biathanatos*. See Moore, 1790, Part VI, p. 36. It is interesting to note that while Moore observes that among other scholastic writers on suicide (i.e. Aquinas, Martín Azpilcueta Navarre, Gregory Sayre), Donne is 'the only champion' of the deed, he does not suspect the destructive method of the paradox as the reason for Donne's singularity. For modern views that Donne reasoned casuistically in *Biathanatos* and other works, see Donne, 1967b, p. 25; Lota Brown, 1995, pp. 76-83; and Lota Brown, 1988, pp. 23-33; MacMillan, 1971, pp. 179-210. S. E. Sprott has noted that in 1614, Michel Rothard discussed '"paradoxes"...on the "question" of the damnation of Saul [for suicide]' (pp. 26-27). Sprott defers to Malloch on the relation of *quaestiones* and paradoxes, and does not distinguish the procedure of the paradox from that of casuistry, though he does make it clear that a well-established polemical tradition is evident in the destructiveness of the paradoxical argumentation of *Biathanatos*. See Sprott, 1961, pp. 22-27, 86-87. Terry Sherwood has rightly emphasized the destructive quality of *Biathanatos* as a paradox, but does not distinguish this destructive quality from the constructive quality of casuistry. See Sherwood, 1969, pp. 143-153. Dwight Cathcart consistently confuses the polemical procedure of casuistry and paradox, and repeatedly claims that casuistry is 'the articulation of paradoxes' (p. 12). This confusion becomes evident when he uses the term 'paradox' in two senses to describe the relation of Donne's *Paradoxes* to his notion of casuistry as 'the articulation of paradoxes'. He says that 'the *Paradoxes and Problems*, though delightful and certainly paradoxical, have more to do with the Renaissance tradition of paradox than with casuistry' (p. 165). See Cathcart, 1975, pp. 12, 35, 39, 69, 103, 139-140, 161, 165. Despite her view that *Biathanatos*

'clearly belongs to the body of casuistical literature', Camille Welles Slights admits, 'just how it fits into that tradition is puzzling' (p. 137). In her discussion of the divergence of Donne's method in *Biathanatos* from the traditional method which she so lucidly described in the first two chapters of her book, Slights finally suggests that the fact that Donne called the work a paradox may have something to do with the puzzle (p. 143). Unfortunately, she defers to the opinion of Rosalie Colie (which is ultimately derived from Malloch), expressed in her *Paradoxia Epidemica* (pp. 500-501), that Donne's logic in *Biathanatos* is intended to illustrate its own insufficiency, and is thus, a parody of casuistical reasoning. The solution to this puzzle lies in the argumentative procedure of the paradox, as we have seen and will see further. It is no surprise that Slights notices that in *Pseudo-Martyr*, a work which seeks to establish the authority of the monarch through a demonstration, not only of the weaknesses of the Catholic position, but also of the probability of the Anglican position, 'Donne's attitude toward casuistry is more straightforward than it is in *Biathanatos*' (p. 146). Though *Pseudo-Martyr* regularly expresses its disdain for the methods of the casuists, its attempt to prove the priority and authority of one of two conflicting laws with respect to the conscience, corresponds with Slights' description of the casuistical process (pp. 24-27). See Camille Welles Slights, 1981, pp. 24-27, 137-149.

[129] See Donne, 1977, pp. 200, 226. In his *Life of Donne* (1640), Izaak Walton says that Donne kept 'copies of divers Letters and Cases of Conscience that had concerned his friends, with his observations and solutions of them'. See Walton, 1928, p. 44. In a letter to Thomas Lucy in 1607, however, Donne had condemned the probabilism practiced by the Catholic casuists when he complained that 'the Casuists are so indulgent, as that they allow a conscience to adhere to any probable opinion against a more probable, and do never binde him to seeke out which is more probable, but give him leave to dissemble it and to depart from iit, if by mischance he come to know it.' See Donne, 1977, p. 13. A.E. Malloch reviews Donne's animosity toward casuists in Malloch, 1962, pp. 57-76. Michael Rudick and M. Pabst Battin argue against Malloch's conclusion that this animosity was reflected in the 'parody of probabilistic casuistry' which he believed *Biathanatos* to be. See Donne, 1982, pp. xxxvii-xl. Richard E. Hughes mistakenly believes that Donne was referring to the *Paradoxes and Problems* when he asked Lucy about his 'little book of Cases'. Later, he calls *Biathanatos* 'a mockery through and through' and then presents an unconvincing catalogue of fallacious enthymemes which Donne is supposed to have intentionally committed with reference to Aristotle's discussion of rhetorical deductions in *Rhetoric* 140ob34-1402a27. See Hughes, 1968, pp. 61-62, 147-157.

Chapter V

Donne and Late Sixteenth-Century Representations of Paradox

1

The Critique of First Principles and Sandford's *Mirrour of Madnes*

We have shown that the paradox is a fundamentally philosophical enterprise, and should be distinguished from the paradoxical encomium on these grounds. We have also shown that there are those paradoxists, condemned by lovers of wisdom from Socrates to Donne, who seek merely to undermine others' positive assertions of knowledge in the service of a Pyrrhonist scepticism. The 'lazy affecters of ignorance', decried along with their traditional antagonist, the dogmatic 'malicious, prejudged man' in the preface to *Biathanatos*, belong to this type of paradoxist.[1] The distinction observed between these 'lazy' paradoxists and the 'prejudged man' corresponds to the distinction, which we have seen Donne observing between the vainly contentious dialectic of the Pyrrhonists and both the negatively dogmatic dialectic of the Academics and the positively dogmatic dialectic of the Stoics. In the domain of practical reason (ethics), however, the dialectic of Carneades and the New Academy, which Cicero had praised for its attainment to probability, is no different than the Aristotelian dialectic according to which Donne will construct his arguments in *Biathanatos*. While such sceptical dialectic acknowledges the epistemological limits of syllogistic demonstration, it also maintains the self-evident likelihood of the first principles of the arts and sciences including ethics. Though Donne may be attacking the universality of the law forbidding suicide, he is not attacking it in the interest of Pyrrhonist suspension of assent; he is merely performing one half of the dialectical process of the Ciceronian ethicist employing Aristotelian logical principles. He is disputing not '*pro veritate*' but '*de veritate*' in

accordance with the generic prescription of the *thesis* and paradox, to argue, as he says, 'not *contra ius universale*, but *contra universalitatem iuris*.'[2] The other half of this dialectical process is the formation of universal rule which may be applied to particular cases with a confidence in its likelihood; this process is properly the activity of casuistry.[3] Were it not for the letter to Wotton which accompanied them, Donne's *Paradoxes* could easily have been accused of the more radical sceptical attempt to demonstrate the inability of Aristotelian dialectic to prove that one of two contradictory propositions is even more likely than the other; as with the Gorgianic paradox that nothing is, such attempts implicitly deny the possibility of objective criteria for truth, and lead, potentially, to the disintegration of the principles upon which stands all external authority, secular and ecclesiastical. It is no surprise, therefore, that Donne was so concerned to keep both his *Paradoxes* and *Biathanatos* out of the public eye. Nevertheless, though it performs the critical function of a paradox, *Biathanatos* is explicit about the need for first principles, whether they are apparent by the light of natural reason or by the revelation of scripture, to provide the major premises in the deductive process of practical reason.

In the dedicatory epistle of his supposed translation of the paradox of an anonymous Frenchman's, *The Mirrour of Madnes: or a Paradoxe maintaining madnes to be most excellent* (1576), James Sandford warns of the anarchy which would ensue if the universal laws of nature imposed by God were to lose their authority to govern the conduct of men. Opening with the orthodox opinion, which Donne facetiously denies in both his fourth and sixth paradoxes, that the 'reason deuine' of nature is of greater force than fortune, Sandford continues, maintaining the equally orthodox opinion that nature is the source:

> Fromwhence all honest actions are deriued as from there foundresse, and by whom all thinges are maytayned, as by their Preseruresse. Greatly it is to be wished, that nature, mistresse and lady of liuing thinges, as diuine power, which to all men worketh all things for the best, were followed, not neglected: were embraced, not dispised: and as euerye particular parson respecteth chiefly himself, and preferreth his profit before the commoditie of the multitude, so hath, she a special regard of al, not of some, of manye not

of a few, for then her force should faile, and liuing thinges should cease to liue, men should become no men, the world no world, all thinges should be reduced to that Chaos and confuse mixture, which...was in the beginning before bewtie was giuen to the world.[4]

With this statement, Sandford disavows the paradox which is to follow because it will attempt to prove out of the first principles of Aristotelian natural philosophy and of Socratic/Stoic ethics (as represented in the *Paradoxa Stoicorum*), such *theses* as virtue and reason are nothing. Taking as his major premise Aristotle's definition of the golden mean, the same definition which Donne manipulated in his first paradox, Sandford argues that if the vices which represent the extremes between which virtue is achieved are nothing, then virtue itself must be nothing. He borrows the identification of vice and nothing from the Socratic/Stoic position, represented by Cicero in the third paradox of the *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, that vice arises from the lack of system and order.[5] Sandford exploits the potential for lack to be interpreted as privation, as Augustine had in his doctrine of sin, and thus asserts the identity of vice and nothing.[6] He then adopts the Socratic/Stoic identification of reason and virtue, and concludes, 'If all anger be naught, then all the contrary is naught: so by consequence, Vertue is iacke out of office: & Vertue banished, Reason maye go shake his eares, Reason exiled, what foloweth but Madnes?'[7] Continuing with the same conflation of terms and doctrines by which we saw Donne construct the syllogisms of his *Paradoxes*, Sandford imagines that without reason, everyone must necessarily practice vice. 'Therefore all turned to vice, all is starke staring Madnes. So is youre maister Zenoes great end come to nothinge.'[8]

Sandford's argument for the identification of virtue, reason and nothing relies on a fallacious syllogism from which he will derive proof for other fallacious syllogisms advancing other preposterous positions. When he argues against the Socratic/Stoic paradox expanded in Cicero's second paradox, 'That the possession of virtue is sufficient for happiness', Sandford presents the traditional objections against the claims of the gifts of the body or fortune, but when he addresses the assertion of the paradox specifically, he simply defers to the authority of his first

syllogism's conclusion, that virtue and reason are nothing. 'Let reason surcease in mynde, which cannot bee, but where vertue is, whiche is not to bee founde as I haue proued, & al is turned topsituruye from discretion to madnes.'[9] The ultimate objective of Sandford's series of syllogisms is to prove, albeit disingenuously, that 'to bee a Mad man is to be a wise man.'[10] Though this conclusion is similar to that reached by Erasmus in the *Praise of Folly*, the dialectical method of its demonstration and the conspicuous lack of the neoplatonic influence, which underpinned the *Praise*'s concluding commendation of *furore*, betrays the Ciceronian and Aristotelian ethical and logical influences which we have found to inform the tradition of the paradoxical *thesis*.[11] Indeed, Sandford asserts his conclusion with explicit reference to Cicero's fifth paradox. 'Cicero hath a Paradoxe well knowne...That all wyse men onely bee free men, and all fooles Bondslaues and demaunding of himselfe, what libertye is, hee sayth, it is nothing els, but Potestas viuendi ut velis: *A power to liue as yee list*.'[12] In spite of Cicero's assumption that the one who has the power to live as he wishes is the wise man who lives according to reason, Sandford argues that no one has the power to live as he wishes, not even the learned.

As we have seen in the dialectic of Donne's *Paradoxes*, Sandford is aware of the consequences of his logical inferences and is careful to explicate the relation he wishes to establish between the three terms of his syllogisms.[13] After simply stating, 'If no man therefore liue as he list, then is no man free, if no man be free, then is no man wise,' Sandford recognizes that this conclusion follows from the proposition that the free man alone is wise, not the wise man alone is free. According to Cicero's formulation of the Socratic/Stoic paradox, freedom is not a necessary condition for wisdom, but *vice versa*. Thus, it is possible that a wise man exists who is not free, if it is possible that there are no free men in existence. However, if there were no wise men in existence, it follows necessarily from Cicero's definition that there would not be any free men either. Because Sandford wants to conclude that there are no wise men (and hence, only fools and madmen) from the proposition that only the wise man is free, he must make the terms 'wise' and 'free' entail each other.

He makes this identification of terms explicit without further argument. 'If this be true all wise menne are onely free, then is this as true al free men are wyse, but freedome and wisedome booth excluded the rest is nothinge but onely folye'.[14] Sandford desists from further discussion of his identification of freedom and wisdom because his conversion of the proposition 'Only wise men are free', though valid, does not entail the conclusion that there are no wise men because there are no free men. It is valid to convert the original proposition and assert that 'All free men are wise', but this conversion still does not entail that freedom is a necessary condition of wisdom; it merely entails that if there are any free men, they must also be wise. Thus, the conclusion, 'freedome and wisedome booth excluded', does not follow validly. Sandford's invalid restriction of the denotation of the terms 'wise' and 'free' reflects a concern with the same epistemological problem which motivated Donne to restrict his terms by superlatives, the accurate definition of terms. As we have seen, the resolution of this type of problem is the special exercise of the *thesis* as prescribed and illustrated by Cicero; it investigates, as Sandford and Donne knew, the nature of the concepts around which we organize our most abstract notions, concepts such as wisdom, change, perfection and freedom. It is because Cicero was writing a *thesis* that he asks in his fifth paradox, 'For what is freedom?' Cicero's answer is prompt and definitive, but Sandford's intention to overturn traditional principles such as are expressed in the Socratic/Stoic paradoxes and Aristotelian ethical maxims leads him to investigate these concepts further.

This investigation leads him to consider Plato's doctrine of Ideas as a way of grounding the supremely unstable definition of the *summum bonum*. Following Aristotle's view on the inductive source of universal concepts, Sandford rejects Plato's doctrine because it does not explain how human knowledge of particulars is informed by a prior knowledge of the relevant universal Ideas.

> All Universalles (as the Logitioners wel say) are nothinge els, but Conceptus animi, thinges conceiued in mynde, gathered and collected together, by a number of singulars, aswel in Accidences as in Substaunces, as by this man,

and that man, and so forth, from one to an other: I gather a whole nature, which is a man...[15]

Sandford concludes, along with the Platonist writers on mystical knowledge which we have examined, that Plato must have intended his Ideas to be incomprehensible to the Aristotelian. 'Perchance', he says, 'Plato mente that, which Aristotle coulde not perceaue, for hee hath alwayes recourse Ad Opificem Formarum: *To the shaper of formes*, and to the principall form itself'.[16] Sandford, however, will not propose, with the Platonist mystics, an occult means to acquire this perception of the Idea of the *summum bonum*, and concludes that Plato's insistence that the sovereign good is 'Bonum inaccessibile...which cannot be attayned' makes the ethical life of the man in search of the good by which he should direct his action 'but mere Madnes'.[17] After claiming, on the authority of Aristotle's critique of Plato, to have proven that the concepts by which we order our practical reason are themselves inaccessible, Sandford then proceeds to attack the mental faculties which produce the 'Conceptus animi' in which universals are thought to be apprehended. He divides these mental faculties into three, according to traditional cognitive theory, the 'fantasie', the 'place of common distinction' and 'memory'.[18]

As we have seen in our summary of the role of *phantasia* in the epistemology of Aristotle and the Stoics, it is upon the co-ordinated images of the senses produced by *phantasia* that the cognitive faculty ('place of common distinction') bases its judgements. If it is true that universal concepts are derived inductively *via* the senses, as Sandford maintains, then the correspondence of our sense perceptions (as organized by *phantasia*) with their external objects is essential to insure the accuracy of the universal concepts derived from them. As we have seen, Aristotle was considerably less confident in the accuracy of our perceptions than the Stoics, who posited the *lekton* as the cognitive intermediary which guaranteed the accuracy of co-ordinated images of *phantasia*.[19] Sandford follows Aristotle, and asserts sceptically, 'Now manifeste it is that the fantasie is deceyued, and that maketh man to offende especiallye when common destinction geueth consent thereto, aswell in formes in reasons which it conceiueth'.[20] So persuasive is the unreliable faculty of

'fantasie' that 'common distinction' is easily 'ouerthrowen'; its cognition of the images of 'fantasie', it then judges to be 'head stronge reason', which in turn, 'dryueth into straunge quandares, estraunginge if often tymes from the Law of nature'.[21] Since our cognition of the virtues has been 'before proued Madnes', Sandford reasons, 'Seeing the straunge [internal] effectes of phantasie wee must conclude, that neither outwardlye nor inwardly there is ought els but Madnes.'[22] Having suggested the antagonism of our mental faculties to the law of nature, he then provides as his final proof of our natural predisposition to madness, a syllogism which identifies reason and 'fantasie' on the grounds that they are both natural in respect of their direction toward certain ends. This syllogism, though formally valid, is significant as an example of the libertine misuse of the various senses of nature against which Wilson wrote in his English summary of Aristotle's *Sophistical Refutations*. After declaring the Aristotelian principle that 'Nature doth al for some end', Sandford unites reason and 'fantasie' under this description of nature, arguing, 'Whatsoever woorketh to ende, is reason, then fantasie ys reason, for it worketh for ende'.[23]

2

Harvey, Donne and Mock Paradoxes

As we have seen in our examination of his first paradox, Donne manipulated the same Aristotelian doctrine of the final cause to support his startling conclusion about the mandates of nature.[24] Such manipulations, particularly in the interest of obscuring the vague distinctions separating the various senses of nature, characterize the sophistical reasoning of the libertine. As Wilson complained, the 'libertines reason' attempts to obtain the sanction of nature for any behavior; in Sandford's case, that behavior is madness, and in Donne's, suicide. In light of this distinguishing mark of the libertine, we must suspect any attribution of libertinism to *Biathanatos*' argument against the view that suicide is contrary to nature. For unlike the equivocal use of the senses of nature in Wilson's 'libertines reason', Sandford's

syllogism concluding the identity of madness and reason and Donne's own youthful argument for the naturalness of suicide in his first paradox, in *Biathanatos*, Donne is explicitly concerned to distinguish these senses in the interest of designating the priority of one. When he complains, 'This term "the law of nature" is so variously and unconstantly delivered, as I confess I read it a hundred times before I understood it once', he is referring specifically to the confusion of the various senses of nature, a confusion which, we will see, he associates with those who have employed Augustine's rather than Aquinas' definition of the relation between sin and nature.[25] And when he concludes a little later that 'all sin is natural', he does so, not in the sophistical manner with which Wilson's libertine reached the same conclusion, but according to an orthodox reading of the relevant principles established by Aquinas in the *Summa*.[26] We will be examining Donne's use of Aquinas to defend the paradoxical *thesis* of *Biathanatos* shortly, but first, we must describe the type of paradox with which Donne's *Paradoxes* and *Biathanatos* must not be confused, the paradox which, like Sextus' attack on Stoic syllogistic, Erasmus' praise of ignorance and Agrippa's dispraise of the arts and sciences, rejects the power of logic to conduce to knowledge, particularly of God.[27]

To accentuate his contempt for the Euphuism of Lyly, Greene and Nashe, Harvey bestowed limited praise on Sandford's paradox, *The Mirroure of Madnes*.

> Even thatsame very Mirrour of Madnesse, hangeth together with some more coherence of reason; and smelleth not no so rankly of the Tauerne, the Alehouse, the Stewes, the Cuckingstoole, or other such honest places...And although thatsame French Mirrour, be *ex Professo* deuised in a mad garish veyne, and stuffed with geere homely enough, fit for a Libertine & frantique Theame: yet doth it not so basely borrow of the Ruffians bagge...[28]

Had Harvey read Donne's *Paradoxes*, he may have substituted them for Sandford's paradox of madness in his comparison. By Harvey's standards, paradoxes such as these fall clearly under the category of those 'curiously curious' and 'infinitely infinite' arguments invented by paradoxists who prosper when 'Inouation hath sett the best countenance of proofe, or persuasion, upon the matter.'[29] As we have seen,

both Nashe and Donne are as quick to condemn innovative paradoxists, but only

Harvey and Donne illustrate their disapproval with what can only be described as

mock paradoxes. Donne's mock paradox is 'An Apology for Jesuites', which

constitutes the end of *Ignatius His Conclave*. What makes this apology a paradox,

he explains, is that anything might be said in defense of Jesuits. What makes it a

mock paradox, however, is that nothing is said in defense of Jesuits. He says:

> Now is it time to come to the Apology for Jesuites: that is, it is time to leave
> speaking of them, for hee favours them most, which saies least of them...If
> any man have a mind to adde any thing to this Apology, hee hath my leave;
> and I have therefore left three or foure lines: which is enough for such a
> paradox...[30]

Throughout the few remaining lines, no argument is made for Jesuits, the suggestion

being that only innovators as sophistical as the Jesuits could concoct such a paradox.

Consequently, the only apology which Donne claims an honest paradoxist hoping to

defend the Jesuits can offer is silence.

Throughout *Pierce's Supererogation*, Harvey promises that he will formally

praise Nashe in an encomium of the ass. As an introduction to this encomium,

Harvey maintains the intellectual dignity of the irony, which must inform any

encomium of an ass, and that the skillful deployment of this irony will provide his

defense against Nashe's accusation of its dullwittedness in *Strange News*.[31] Harvey

begins by associating his own irony with that displayed in the great paradoxes and

paradoxical encomia throughout the ages, and then proceeds to accuse Nashe of

denying the wisdom of those reverend authors in his denial of the wisdom of

Harvey's irony.[32] The implication is that such a denial is tantamount to a dismissal

of the value of irony generally, and paradoxical encomia and *theses* particularly.

Harvey expands Nashe's detractions in *Strange News*, pretending to agree with them

as an ironic introduction to his own praise of the ass (Nashe).

> The *ironyes* of Socrates, Aristophanes, Epicharmus, Lucian, are but *Carterly*
> *derisions*: the Ironyes of Tully, Quintilian, Petrarch, Pontane, Sanazarius,

> king Alphonsus, but the sory *iestes of the Counsell-table Asse, Richard Clarke*: the Ironyes of Erasmus in his prayse of Folly; of Agrippa in disprayse of Sciences; of Cardan in his Apology of Nero, like Isocrates commendation of Busiris, of Lucians defence of Phalaris the Tyrant, but *Good Beare bite not*: the Ironyes of Sir Thomas More in his Vtopia, Poemes, Letters, and other writings; or of any their Imitatours at occasion, but the *girdes of euery milk-maide*. They were silly country fellowes, that commended the Bald pate, the Feuer quartane; the fly, the flea, the gnat, the sparrow, the wren, the goose, the asse; flattery, hypocrisye, coosinage, bawdery, leachery, buggery, madnesse itself. What Dunse, or Sorbonist cannot maintaine a Paradoxe?[33]

Again, Nashe is made the victim of the irony when Harvey concludes that, if the irony of paradoxical encomia and paradoxes is an indication of dullwittedness, Nashe has proven eminently qualified to praise himself, the 'Autor of Asses' and the 'Asse of Autors'. For this reason, Harvey never attempts his praise of the ass. Rather, he refers readers interested in such an enterprise to Nashe's own writings recommending that they 'giue the young Asse [Nashe] leaue to praise himselfe, and to practise his minion Rhetorique vppon other'.[34] Despite deferring the promised encomium by referring the reader to the testimony of Nashe's own asinine writing, as Donne had tacitly referred the reader to the Jesuits themselves for the paradoxical defense of their rectitude, Harvey does find space to praise the conventional virtues of the 'right asse'. As we have seen, the 'right asse' who 'in ignorance wil finde knowledge' represents the moderate scepticism against which Harvey opposes Nashe's vain contention and the excessive epistemological confidence of 'sawcie' divines such as Trithemius and Agrippa.

Continuing in his ironic tone, Harvey concludes that such conventional praise of the 'right asse' is to proceed too 'coldly' and 'dully', and that to do justice to the ingenious argumentation which characterizes Nashe's railing, he should compose a paradox rather than an encomium. In concluding thus, Harvey recognizes what Erasmus in the *Praise* and Nashe in *Lenten Stuffe* had noted, the paradox is a philosophical composition. This recognition is evident when, in mock deprecation, he suggests that even the followers of Duns Scotus (Dunces) and the theologians of the Sorbonne, whom Harvey would have acknowledged to be the most ingenious

(though perhaps the least honest) dialecticians of the schoolmen, are capable of maintaining paradoxes.[35] We should note as well, that Harvey includes Synesius in his list of ironists. As we have seen, in his *Lenten Stuffe*, Nashe also included Synesius in his list of philosophers who 'come sneaking in with their paradoxes' and who defend normally reviled conditions such as baldness or undignified animals such as the stork. We have noted that Abraham Fleming's sub-title for his translation of Synesius' *Praise of Baldness*, *A Paradoxe proving by reason and example that Baldnesse is much better than bushie haire*, reveals that what is to follow is an argument for preferability, which, we have seen, is characteristic of the *thesis*. We should expect, therefore, a work composed primarily according to the principles of dialectic. When Synesius describes himself as 'a husbandman, or rude countrie clowne' who must proceed not 'with smooth and delicate words' but 'as plaine as a packstaffe', he is contrasting the Socratic regard for truth, which will guide his attempt to use dialectic to demonstrate his position, against the Gorgianic rhetoric, which underpins the praise of bushy hair composed by his adversary, Dion.[36] Dion's praise of bushy hair was organized upon the principles of epideictic oratory, and therefore, neglected the fundamental philosophical issues on which any legitimate praise should be grounded. As Cicero had taught, it is best to learn to handle general issues in the dialectical defenses of *theses* before proceeding to the more particular matters of forensic, deliberative or epideictic oratory.

> Dion, in all his discourse, concludeth not that haire is a good thing to them that have it: nor that it is an evill thing to them that have it not. Our treatise contrariwise searcheth out the verie secret properties of thinges and findeth by reason, that baldnesse is excellent, that it is heavenlie, [and] that it is the ende of Nature...[37]

Synesius restricts himself to dialectical argumentation because he intends, as had Socrates in the *Gorgias*, to illustrate the disparity between philosophy's sometimes paradoxical apprehension of truth and rhetoric's consistent appeal to the common opinion; it is this philosophically searching quality which Harvey opposes to the cold and dull enumeration of the conventional virtues of the 'right asse'.[38]

Rather than praise the ass for its humility and pious ignorance, which requires only rhetorical treatment and no demonstration, or demonstrate its preferability to other animals dialectically by deducing from the superiority of humility and pious ignorance, which is tantamount to arguing the perfectly orthodox view that humility and piety are superior, Harvey announces that he will produce a paradox which will demonstrate the genuinely startling conclusion that the whole world is an ass.

> But what an Asse am I, that proceede so coldly, and dully in the
> Apology of so worthy a Creature? What will you say, Gentlemen, if I can
> prooue with pregnant arguments, artificially drawn from all the places of
> Inuention, according to Ramus, Rodolphes, or Aristotles Logique; that the
> fire-breathing Oxen, and mighty Dragon, which kept the most-famous
> Golden Fleece, the glorious prize of Iason, were Asses of Colchos...[39]

To this proof, Harvey promises he will add many other equally pregnant demonstrations, all which will proceed according to the principles of Aristotelian dialectic expounded by Ramus in his various works on logic, by Agricola in his *De Inventione Dialectica*, or by Aristotle himself. Harvey's description of his arguments as 'pregnant' prepares us for the presentation of paradoxes, but his admission that his arguments will be drawn specifically from the 'places of invention' without any mention of the judgements of *dispositio* should remind us of his criticism of Nashe's 'Arte of Figges' which employs only a 'bottomlesse pitt of Inuention'. Such ungoverned invention results in the sophistical conflation of terms about which Isocrates complained in his *Helen*, and with which Harvey associated the 'minion Rhetorique' of Nashe. Paradoxists, such as Synesius, who can produce demonstrations for trifling *theses*, such as the preferability of baldness, are not to be censured with the sophists, whom Isocrates condemned for maintaining the view that speaking 'ably on ignoble subjects' indicates an 'abundance of arguments' for worthy subjects, because the argumentation of the sophists is deceptive and equivocal. Synesius' arguments, though ironic, are not equivocal, and therefore, do not seek to undermine the power of dialectic to discriminate the true and the false.

Again, wise and vain paradoxists are distinguished by Harvey on the basis of their

respective commitment to truth, the same basis on which Donne had distinguished

himself, as author of the *Paradoxes* and *Biathanatos* from the innovating paradoxists

satirized in *Ignatius His Conclave*.[40]

As Harvey's paradox of the ass unfolds, this distinction between the foolish

sophists, who deceive the equally foolish majority, and the wise philosophers, who

are despised by the common opinion for arguing startling, yet true, positions,

becomes itself the evidence from which he concludes that the world is an ass. After

comparing the paucity of wise and virtuous men with the abundance of fools

throughout history, Harvey identifies this paucity with the 'singularity' of paradox in

terms which we have seen were derived from Cicero's *Paradoxa Stoicorum*.

> Callimachus a sweet Poet, recording the memorable, and wonderful thinges
> of Peloponesus, termed them Paradoxes. Vertuous Italy in a longer terme of
> dominion, with much adooe bred two Catos, and One Regulus: but how
> many Syluios, Porcios, Brutos, Bestias, Tauros, Vitellios, Capras, Capellas,
> Asinios, and so forth? Other singularities, meete matter for Tullyes
> Paradoxes. The world was neuer given to singularities: and no such monster,
> as Excellency.[41]

The paradoxes of Cicero, which were composed to make the startling conclusions of

the Stoics more acceptable to the common opinion, are simply too excellent for the

majority of the world to appreciate. The irony of Harvey's description of Cicero's

Paradoxa is, of course, that such excellence as enabled the rhetorically unelaborated

conclusions of the Stoics to appear orthodox, is now disdained by the common

opinion for its paradoxicality (singularity). The sophistical abuse of rhetoric and

dialectic, which caused Socrates to appropriate dialectic for philosophy, and which

Cicero sought to correct, was now again preferred by the majority.

> He that speaketh, as other use to speake, auoideth trouble: and he that doth,
> as most men doe, shalbe least woondred at. The Oxe, and the Asse, are good
> fellowes: the Libbard and the Foxe, queint wisardes: whatsoeuer abooue the
> common capacity, or usuall hability, a Paradoxe.[42]

The objective of Harvey's mock-paradox is now beginning to emerge. The world has fallen into such a woeful state of ignorance that the eloquence and cogency of Cicero's arguments in the *Paradoxa* are 'aboue the common capacity' and suspected to be the product of 'queint wisard' seeking to make trouble. Those vain paradoxes, which should be despised for their sophistry and needless contention, have now become trusted and preferred by the majority because they are argued by the ignorant for the ignorant, while the rare wisdom contained in lucid and honest paradoxes such as Synesius' or Cicero's has become unrecognizable, and therefore, suspicious. Harvey is referring to this preference for vain paradoxes when he begins to bring his mock defense of the ass to a conclusion.

> Were not the world, an Universall Oxe, and man a generall Asse, how were it possible, that so many counterfait slightes, crafty conueiances, suttle Sophistications, wily coosenages, cunning impostures, and deep hypocrisies should ouerflow all: so many opinions, Paradoxes, sectes, scismes, heresies, apostasies, idolatries, Atheismes should pester the Church: so many fraudes, shiftes, collusions, coouens, falsifications, subordinations, treacheries, treasons, factions, commotions, rebellions could disturbe the Commonwealth?[43]

Donne had attested to this preference for vain paradox when he asked in his eleventh paradox, 'Are not your witts pleased with those Jeasts which cozen your Expectatyonn?'[44] The joke is only on those of his readers, however, who answer in the affirmative, for to derive pleasure from such 'jeasts' is to join the ignorant majority who prefer to be deceived by sophistical paradoxes. Those who recognized the serious intent of the *Paradoxes* as revealed in the letter to Wotton would have appreciated the joke, but would also have denied that they had encountered any genuinely startling conclusions.[45] Harvey, however, spares no one from his joke. The spate of paradoxes which plague the church and the commonwealth, and which betray the ignorance of the masses, have supplanted those useful paradoxes for which Harvey had professed his enthusiastic support.[46] The final, and most compelling piece of evidence in support of Harvey's paradox that the world is an ass, is that the 'graund General of Asses', 'his confuting Aship', Nashe, is permitted

by the press 'to dominere in Print'.[47] Hence, unlike the traditional praise or defense of the ass, Harvey's paradox of the ass is actually an attack on ignorance generally, and Nashe specifically. Like Donne's mock paradox of Jesuits, it argues that no defense of such profound and detestable ignorance could be concocted by any but he who possessed it. Harvey concludes, therefore, that he 'were best to end, before [he] beginne; and to leaue the autor of Asses, where [he] found the Asse of Autors'.[48]

3
Donne, More and Erasmus on Casuistry and Moral Knowledge

Harvey's and Donne's mock paradoxes attack the sophistical argumentation of innovators who pervert the application of Aristotle's logic to serve subversive ends, to plague the church and state with paradoxes which promote schism. And though such paradoxists appear to be proposing new doctrines, their utilization of traditional dialectic to advance views contrary to accepted doctrine, do little more than illustrate the Pyrrhonist's sceptical principle, that no assertion is more convincing than its contrary. Such an illustration is dangerous, as Donne suggested in his condemnation of those paradoxists who draw on authors who have developed epistemological systems which are at variance with Aristotle's. We must suspect, therefore, any interpretation of the *Paradoxes* or of *Biathanatos* which concludes Donne's Pyrrhonism, or his affinity with associated doctrines such as neoplatonic Christian fideism or moral relativism. Both reject the demonstrative power of Aristotelian syllogistic. The former, however, claims that after a declaration of faith initiated by the grace of God, the mind is able to discern the first principles of ethics through its comprehension of the true significance of the allegories of scripture. The latter rejects such a power. It argues that no ethical choice is either right or wrong in itself, and that each individual agent determines the rectitude of his moral choices given his estimation of the circumstances in which they are taken. Advocates of both views could argue paradoxes, though those who argue a relativist position run the risk of being accused of undermining the authority of external law. Donne

recognized the possibility that his argument in *Biathanatos* could be misinterpreted to support a relativist view, and was correspondingly anxious to keep it from the press. However, he was equally concerned to keep it from being destroyed because, he explained in a letter to his friend Edward Herbert that 'this book hath enough performed that which it undertook, both by argument and example.'[49] Donne continues by disavowing any attempt to advance the innovations for which he (and Nashe) had condemned vain paradoxists. Deferring to Herbert's sound judgement, he says, 'If any [of the various authors contained in Herbert's library] grudge this book a room, and suspect it of new or dangerous doctrine, you, who us all, can best moderate.'[50] As we will see, the arguments of *Biathanatos* do not advance the moral relativism with which he was afraid to be associated and of which he has frequently been accused.[51] Because of their obvious lack of seriousness, the *Paradoxes* have escaped such accusations. They have not, however, been adequately distinguished from fideist paradoxes, which rejected the determinations of natural reason guided by Aristotelian logic in favor of the acceptance of the orthodox Christian virtues which are revealed through contempt of the physical world and faithful contemplation of the divine.

Erasmus' exhortation to ignorance in *The Praise of Folly* was specifically a call to those whose consciences had become entangled in or alienated by the moral and theological complexities of the schoolmen. Such complexities obscure the truths intelligible to the mind guided by faith and to the soul insensible to all but its spiritual affinity to the divine. Erasmus' friend and Donne's great uncle, Thomas More, shared this desire to liberate the 'narrow' conscience of the 'scrupulous person' as a prelude to his conventional condemnation of suicide in his *Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation* (1534). The scrupulous conscience which becomes confused by its consideration of the degrees of sin (venial and mortal) into which its thoughts and deeds might carry it, becomes increasingly susceptible to mortal sin because in fearing that even venial sins are mortal, and yet committing them, he acts against his own conscience (however mistaken), and therefore, sins mortally. What results is a timorous soul that cannot rejoice in the promise of God's mercy which is

supposed to be the joyful impetus to repentance and to the contempt of the flesh.[52] Even more to be feared, however, is that through weariness of such scrupulosity, the devil will tempt this soul 'with some subtle suggestion or false wily doctryne of a false spirituall libertie' so that 'he shuld for the false ease & pleasure that he shuld sodenly fynd therin, be easely conveyd from that evill faute into a much worse'.[53] Evident here is a mistrust of the 'libertines reason' which claims to prove that what many call sin is really no sin at all. Though he categorically rejects suicide under any circumstances, because no conscience can be assured that it has truly received a divine dispensation from the law prohibiting it, More advises perplexed consciences to seek some 'good vertuouse folke' and examine with them 'some casis of their own conscience' so that they may learn by example how to apply precept to circumstances.[54] More's advice here is precisely the opposite as that given in *Biathanatos*. Casuistry, the discovery of universal precepts from the examination of a number of like particular cases, is the means to secure the conformity of the conscience with external authority; it is, therefore, a rejection of that 'false wily doctrine of a false spiritual liberty', which represents the relativist ethics of the libertine. As a paradox, *Biathanatos* will question the universality of the precept prohibiting suicide by examining a number of particular cases which contradict it; it will champion the rectitude of the individual conscience whose judgement *in foro interiori* commands it to act against the mandate of external authority.

Though we will see that Donne was not defending a relativist position in *Biathanatos*, it is important that we recognize his difference from More with respect to their approaches to ethical dilemmas. In *Biathanatos*, Donne rejected the utility of Augustine's definition ('*dictum, factum, concupitum contra aeternam legem Dei*') of sin in practical divinity (ethics) because the 'summists' and 'casuists' exploited its generality to serve their specific polemical ends. In his rejection of Augustine's definition of sin, Donne calls casuistry the 'art of sinning [which entangles] wretched consciences in manifold and desperate anxieties' and complains that the casuists make 'all our actions perplexed and litigious *in foro interiori*...[by] applying rules of divinity to particular cases'.[55] In his attempt to resolve the perplexities into

which the casuists have led these wretched consciences by following Aquinas' more precise definition of sin (*'Peccatum est actus devians ab ordine debiti finis, contra regulam naturae, rationis, aut leges aeternae'*) and analyzing it upon the principles of Aristotelian ethics, Donne declares that the *thesis* of *Biathanatos* is representative of the tradition of paradox first described by Aristotle in the *Topics*, expanded by Cicero and Quintilian, taught by Aphthonius, praised by Brinsley, dismissed by Ramus, and distinguished from the vain paradoxes of the sophists by Harvey.[56] It is concerned to investigate a genuinely controversial issue which has seen a conspicuous lack of advocates for its less commonly held position. And as the *Paradoxes* identified the conflation of ambiguous terms in syllogistic argument as a threat to truth by constructing obviously invalid arguments, so *Biathanatos* will attack the derivation of casuistical precepts by the exploitation of the ambiguous terms of Augustine's definition of sin. Though More acknowledged the value of arguing for and against *theses* as an academic exercise, he warned against the danger of introducing paradoxes into affairs of church and state. In the *Utopia* (1516) he maintains that the doubt into which philosophical paradoxes lead is inappropriate at Court, 'where great matters are debated with great authority'. The 'academic philosophy which thinks that everything is suitable to every place' must submit to a philosophy 'more practical for the statesman, which knows its stage, adapts itself to the play in hand, and performs its role neatly and appropriately'.[57] This 'academic philosophy' (*philosophia scholastica*) may refer as easily to that practiced by Cicero's sceptical academics or by the Aristotelian schoolmen. Both maintain the pedagogical benefits of disputing for and against *theses*. As More was painfully aware, however, the exigencies of the current affairs of the state require the application of universal precepts upon which political leaders can agree, however artificial and fallible they may be. In *Biathanatos* such precepts comprise the *ius gentium*, which Donne insists represent the efforts of authorities to control certain behaviors arising under a particular set of circumstances (e.g. the suicide of prisoners) which have been perceived as damaging to the state. In the spirit of the paradoxist and the academic/scholastic philosopher mentioned by More, Donne

exposes the artificiality and fallibility of the *ius gentium* when divorced from its relevant circumstances in order to cast doubt on the precept prohibiting suicide. More is sympathetic to the paradoxical claims of the Christian against the sinfulness of both the secular and ecclesiastical authorities because these claims, though unpopular, are not doubtful. Despite the certainty of these paradoxical claims, their truth must be adapted by 'crafty' preachers to meet the demands of the corrupt authorities who will not be subject to it; what is left, More laments, is an ethical system which allows men 'to be bad in greater comfort'.[58]

Though More was criticizing the adaptation of Christian ethics to changing political circumstances, his recommendation that the scrupulous conscience should seek the advice of 'good, virtuous folk' to guide them through the casuistical process of 'applying rules of divinity to particular cases', raises the question of reliable authority. For the conscience troubled by doubt must judge the virtuousness of those it would seek to assist in the resolution of its dilemma. Presumably, More would advise such a conscience to avoid the 'ingenious preachers' whose casuistry allows 'people to sin with a clear conscience', but only a conscience capable of discriminating sinful from unsinful actions is capable of identifying such preachers.[59] Donne's summary of the contradictory opinions of presumed authorities in *Biathanatos* is characteristic of the academic/scholastic variety of philosophy which More had reluctantly, if not satirically, observed was impracticable in the actual affairs of church and state. Under the scrutiny of this variety of philosophy, however, it is possible that the autonomy of the individual conscience rectified by a contestable standard of right reason may be asserted, which was an assertion which More's Catholic orthodoxy and deference to the hierarchical authority of the church could not countenance, despite his misgivings about their temporal interests.[60] Unlike More, Erasmus' combination of a sceptical distrust of the schoolmen's syllogistic method of demonstration with a constructive neoplatonic epistemology which employed allegory as the rational means to knowledge, produced a much more optimistic view of the perfectibility of human knowledge, particularly moral knowledge.[61] Where his *Praise* dismissed the Aristotelian vanities of scholasticism,

the *Enchiridion Militis Christiani* (1503) proposed the neoplatonic solution. To the 'swarms' of schoolmen who maintain that their precepts 'lay down precisely what he [the Christian] owes in the way of reward and punishment for every action,' Erasmus can provide the relativist's answer. He explains, in his prefatory letter to Paul Volz, that if the schoolmen are questioned in detail regarding the application of these percepts, they can neither 'agree among themselves' nor 'explain the point clearly...So great is the variety in men's natures and circumstances.'[62] But stripped of recourse to the casuistical reasoning recommended by More, he will not leave the moral agent in the uncertain state of Cicero's probabilist or even more uncertain state of the fideist. Though he is careful not to deny the prerogative of princes, Erasmus asserts that the Christian must sometimes spurn the common practices of his society in order to comply with 'the philosophy of Christ'.[63] This philosophy, though founded on a motion of faith against the doubt raised by the intractability of circumstances, provides a knowledge in which the possessor can claim a confidence superior to the disputed casuistical precepts of the schoolmen. 'If only we have the single eye filled with light of which the gospel speaks, if our minds are like a house with the lamp of true faith set on a lampstand, these minor points will easily be scattered like a mist.'[64]

In proposing such a philosophy, Erasmus declares himself a disciple of Augustine's doctrine of illumination, a doctrine which, we will see, Donne rejects in *Biathanatos*. The source of Donne's dissatisfaction is not the emphasis which Augustine had placed on the necessity of faith where logical demonstration fails, but the claim that a mind illumined by faith can derive moral knowledge through a figurative reading of scripture.[65] As we have seen, this dissatisfaction was the basis of Aristotle's rejection of Plato's doctrine of Ideas; and as we will see, Donne's objection on the same basis indicates his participation in a reaction against the similar use of Augustine's doctrine of illumination by dogmatic Puritan rationalists. Erasmus' advice throughout the *Enchiridion* encourages the Christian to disdain the scholastic obsession with the literal sense of scripture and to 'choose [as his mentors] those especially who depart as much as possible from the literal sense, such

as, after Paul, Origen, Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine.'[66] Of pagan philosophers,

only Plato's figurative representation of knowledge of the Ideas corresponds with the

allegorical style of scripture. 'Of the philosophers I should recommend the

Platonists because in much of their thinking as well as in their mode of expression

they are the closest to the spirit of the prophets and of the gospel.'[67] Not only in our

acquisition of moral knowledge should we practice this allegorical interpretation, but

even in our study of the natural world.

> Since we are but pilgrims in the visible world, we should never make it our
> fixed abode, but should relate by fitting comparison everything that occurs to
> the senses either to the angelic world or, in more practical terms, to morals
> and to that part of man that corresponds to the angelic...namely, the spirit.[68]

Finally, Erasmus explicitly subordinates Aristotle, and the contention into which the

schoolmen have brought his logic and natural philosophy, to the mystical avenues

opened by the epistemology of Plato, Pythagoras and Augustine. After citing their

disregard of eloquence in the exposition of mystical knowledge, Erasmus continues

his explanation of the schoolmen's neglect of allegory.

> The second reason is that they are satisfied with Aristotle alone and banish
> the Platonists and Pythagoreans from the schools. But Augustine preferred
> the latter two, not only because many of their ideas are perfectly consistent
> with our religion, but also because their figurative mode of expression, as I
> mentioned, and frequent use of allegory are very close to the language of
> Sacred Scripture.[69]

Recalling Donne's suspicion of the bold epistemological claims of Sebond, Lull and

Agrippa, it is small wonder that he included Erasmus in *The Courtier's Library*'s list

of sources for the contentious paradoxist.

In the *Essays in Divinity*, Donne once again locates himself on the middle

ground between the Platonic mystical epistemology of Erasmus and the sophistical

Aristotelianism of the schoolmen.[70] Like the liberties with allegorical knowledge

which resulted in the paradoxical innovations that justified Paracelsus' suit to

Ignatius in *Ignatius His Conclave*, Donne identifies the schoolmen's wrangling over the senses of terms as the source of the innovations by which they have 'added Suburbs to Hell'.[71] On this point, Donne can agree with Erasmus, and confirm against sceptical controversialists that 'we kill our souls certainly, when we seek passionately to draw truth into doubt and disputation'.[72] However, Donne cannot sanction Erasmus' allegorical solution to the problem of discovering univocal and certain meanings in scripture. After suspecting Nicholas of Lyra for being 'too Allegoricall and Typick' in his interpretive practices, Donne argues that neither the verbal sophistications of the schoolmen nor the equally confusing allegorical readings of the fathers recommended by Erasmus (i.e. Origen, Jerome, Augustine) should be permitted to obscure the literal and univocal signification of the words of scripture.[73] For his defense of the literal interpretation of God's word, Donne explains that because the word of God must be univocal, it can only be understood in its literal sense. He is careful to discriminate, however, between the literal sense which derives from the language in which the word is expressed, and that literal sense which may be communicated univocally to 'diverse understandings'.[74] It is this latter literal sense which is to be preferred to both the verbal sophistications of the schoolmen and to the 'curious refinings of the Allegoricall Fathers'.[75]

4

Donne's Use of Aquinas against the 'Affecters of Ignorance'

Donne's decision to use Aquinas' more precise definition of sin as the organizing principle of his tripartite analysis of suicide in *Biathanatos* is precipitated directly by his concern to eliminate the ambiguity of which the 'summists'and 'casuists' had taken advantage in their applications of Augustine's definition. Donne complained that Augustine's definition of sin ('*dictum, factum, concupitum contra aeternam legem Dei*') requires the moral agent to possess a knowledge of the eternal law of God.[76] He then observes, on the authority of Aquinas, that 'this eternal law is *ratio gubernativa Dei*, which is no other than His eternal decree for the whole world,

and that is providence.'[77] Though Aquinas regularly uses Augustine's definition of sin to defend his own ethical positions, he is aware that without delimiting the denotation of the term 'eternal law', the agent is left at the mercy of the contradictory interpretations of 'summists' and 'casuists', or of that anxious scrupulosity of his own interpretations decried by More.[78] He considers specifically Augustine's definition of sin when he asks whether sin 'is fittingly defined as a word, deed, or desire which is against the eternal law' (*'dictum vel factum vel concupitam contra legem aeternam'*), and concludes that 'St. Augustine more aptly defines sin as being contrary to the eternal law rather than contrary to human reason, especially since the eternal law includes many things beyond the scope of reason, such as matters of faith.'[79] Here, Aquinas establishes the distinction from which Donne will derive his justification for reason's independent (of faith) involvement in the determination of the sinfulness of suicide. The eternal law comprehends matters of both reason and faith, the former admitting the apprehension of knowledge upon the principles of Aristotelian logic, and the latter requiring the assent of faith to those laws revealed in scripture which do not appear to have a clear basis in natural or rational law.

Aquinas further refines Augustine's definition of sin by clarifying the distinct functions of the will and reason with respect to the commission of sin. Addressing the will's relation to sin, he concludes (citing Augustine) that 'moral evil in willing is the root of sin,' and therefore locates sin in the intention of the perpetrator. Intention to sin, of course, is only possible when the perpetrator has knowledge of the sinfulness of the action, but according to Augustine's unrefined definition of sin, the knowledge which is required (*ratio gubernativa Dei*) is beyond the powers of human cognition, as dictated by Aquinas' Aristotelian epistemology. Aquinas, however, offers an account of human reason's relation to the *lex aeterna* which explains precisely how human reason can know something about the eternal law. He says that although 'as dwelling in the divine mind the Eternal Law is unknown to us, nevertheless in some fashion it becomes known to us either through natural reason, which issues from the divine mind as its proper image, or through some revelation

given to us over and above the powers of reason.'[80] For there to be sin, therefore, there must be knowledge derived either from revelation or from reason. The former, Donne tells us, has not spoken to the countless sins (such as suicide) which may arise; and so, it is by natural reason alone that the sinfulness of acts not explicitly revealed to be sinful in scripture are to be judged. To emphasize his intention to approach the exposition of his paradox by clarifying, rather than conflating, potentially ambiguous terms, Donne expresses his preference for the latter of Aquinas' two definitions of sin, which he quotes in order to illustrate that they are more precise than Augustine's definition. The first definition he mentions (*'omnis defectus debiti actus habet rationem peccati'*) accords with a purely rational analysis as it requires a knowledge of what one is 'obligated'(*debiti*) to do.[81] However, the second, in which the tripartite division of the work is represented, is even more precise because it provides for the involvement of reason in the determination of the sinfulness of any act not expressly forbidden by the law of God as it is revealed in scripture.[82]

Donne explains that because Aquinas' tripartite definition makes the eternal law 'a member and part of the definition', it allows an analysis of the sinfulness of suicide through the other parts of the definition which are the knowable rules of nature and reason (*regula naturae, regula rationis*).[83] And, as *lex aeterna* is opposed to *regulae naturae et rationis*, Donne naturally assumes that it refers more specifically than Augustine's use of the term and will, therefore, avoid 'that vast and large acceptation which it could not escape in the description of St. Augustine'. He concludes, based on the purported exhaustiveness of Aquinas' definition, that beyond the laws of nature and reason there can only be left the law of God. Hence, the eternal law 'in this place [Aquinas' definition] be necessarily intended...*lex divina*.'[84] The law of God, as Donne will explain in the opening remarks of his section of the same name, has been given in scripture, and therefore, like the laws of nature and reason may be investigated. The accuracy of the results of such an investigation may be far from certain, however.

> As weak, credulous men think sometimes they see two or three suns, when they see none but meteors or other appearances, so are many transported with like facility or dazzling, that for some opinions which they maintain they think they have the light and authority of Scripture, when, God knows, truth, which is the light of Scriptures, is diametrally under them and removed in the farthest distance that can be.[85]

Donne's distrust of the 'credulous' man's knowledge of scripture betrays his belief that even the laws of God revealed in the scriptures require rational analysis because, in their practical application to particular circumstances, two laws may command contradictory actions; in which case, one law must be given precedence over the other. And this decision can only be made by the individual agent's comparative analysis of the laws in question, an analysis, we will see, founded on the principles of Aristotelian practical reason and ethics. To support his case for the rational determination of the jurisdiction of the various laws of God (and particularly the Decalogue), Donne asserts the harmony of the three laws, natural, rational and divine, which he perceives in Aquinas' definition of sin, when he says in opposition to the 'exquisite and violent distinctions' of 'school-limbecks' that 'that part of God's law which binds always bound before it was written, and so it is but *dictamen rectae rationis*, and that is the law of nature.'[86] He then proceeds by citing Isidore on the identification of natural and divine law, and human law and custom.[87] This identification complete, Donne may proceed syllogistically to conclude that if natural law and divine law are one, and natural and rational law are one, all the laws are one. It is critical that we acknowledge this identification of the laws of nature, reason and God because it reveals Donne's intention to refine Aquinas' definition of the law of nature by choosing amongst many (three of which, we will see, are given by Aquinas himself: fly evil, seek good, generation and corruption and self-preservation) one which not only accords with but is identifiable with the law of reason. The first part of *Biathanatos*, in which Donne sifts through these various definitions, begins a process of clarification of terms which seeks precisely the opposite dialectical objective as did his conflation of terms in the *Paradoxes*. What

remains the same, however, is the logical principles by which this clarification and conflation operates.

Donne's mistrust of the 'weak, credulous' man who falsely imagines that he has apprehended the truth of scripture represents his rejection of exegetical theories, such as Erasmus', which emphasize the Augustinian notion that faith alone, uncontaminated by the confused, controverted and uncertain syllogistical demonstrations of the philosophers and schoolmen, secures reason's accurate comprehension of the divine knowledge hidden in both scripture and creation.[88] Erasmus' denial of the value of scholastic logic was a consequence of his dissatisfaction with the attempt of scholastic theologians to resolve the mysteries of faith through dialectical analysis.[89] In the marginal commentary of his 1522 edition of *Moriae Encomium*, Gerard Lister amplified Erasmus' dissatisfaction in terms reminiscent of Cicero's complaint against the Stoic dialecticians in the *Paradoxa Stoicorum*. Cicero had criticized the persuasiveness of Stoic syllogistic because of its utilization of unelaborated *interrogatiuncula*, which were meant to lead the respondent to recognize the necessity of the Stoic *paradoxa* after he had agreed, in his answers to their little questions, to the unusual terms of their argument.[90] So, Lister says in terms faithful to Cicero, do the theologians manufacture 'maxims' which are called paradoxical or '*inopinatas*' by proposing a series of '*inepta quaestinculas*'.[91] In the *Vanity of Arts and Sciences*, Agrippa accuses the schoolmen of manufacturing paradoxical syllogisms by precisely the same means. According to Sandford's 1569 translation, Agrippa says that scholastic divinity 'is written with a certaine newe kinde of teaching contrary to the use of the auncientes, by briefe questions, and subtill Syllogisms without any eloquence'.[92] Continuing to complain of the innovations (paradoxes) of the schoolmen, Agrippa observes that they go:

> from schole to schole, mouing questions, forging opinions, and wrong the
> Scriptures with intricate woordes geuinge them a contrarie sence, redier
> craftly to deceiue, then plainely to trie out the truthe, they haue also
> presumed to inuente infinite seede plottes of brawlinge, with the whiche they
> minister matter of contention to wranglinge sophisters...[93]

Donne could just as easily agree with Agrippa's characterization of the innovative, paradoxical and contentious 'school-limbecks' as he could with Erasmus' description of the schoolmen in the *Praise* and the *Enchiridion*. The point upon which Donne must dissent from Agrippa, however, is the eschewal of traditional logic in the interpretation of scripture. Agrippa specifies the use of syllogism as a particularly heinous affront to faith. The scholastics 'presume also that they are able with their Syllogisms to finde out, and declare suche thinges as are beleued by faith alone'.[94] Following Augustine, Agrippa concludes that:

> the truth and understandinge of these Scriptures (I meane Canonicall) dependeth upon the onely authoritee of God reuelinge the same, whiche cannot be comprehended by any iudgement of the senses, by any compassing reason, by any syllogisme of demonstration, by any science, by any speculation, by any contemplation, and finally with any force of man, sauing by the onely faithe of Jesus Christe poured into our soule from God the father by the holy ghost.[95]

Like Sebond, Agrippa also believes that the faithful may obtain a vision of God, the creator, through a study of his effects in the created world. Opposing this study of the book of creatures to the beatific vision of God himself after death, he says:

> An other vision there is wherein the hinder partes of God be seene: that is to saie, when with cleare sighte the creatures be perceaued, whiche be the hinder partes & effectes of God, by the knowledge of whiche the creatoure shaper of all thinges, and the firste cause which maketh all thinges is knowne...[96]

As Agrippa makes abundantly clear, and as his 'Digression in Praise of the Asse' confirms, knowledge of the mysteries of scripture and the natural world can only be attained when the philosophy of Aristotle is rejected along with the fallible and contentious natural, civil and canon laws.[97] As we have already begun to observe, Donne's project in *Biathanatos* is to establish a consistent and univocal understanding of the laws of nature, reason and God that eliminates the ambiguity which has rendered natural, civil and canon law so unreliable, and which reasserts

the value of Aristotelian ethics in practical reason's consideration of moral action. Agrippa's conclusion to the *Vanity* finds the ignorance of the simple ass most worthy of emulation because he lacks the presumption to knowledge which the sceptical critique so easily destroys. Agrippa himself employs the critique as both Cicero and Sextus had taught it, insisting, against those, such as Lull, Lever, Ramus and Fraunce, who remain faithful to the Aristotelian organization of the various faculties of human knowledge, that the first principles of the arts and sciences are forced upon us by philosophers who will 'compel us to confesse that, which they should teache by reason'.[98] The suggestion is, of course, that any attempt to teach these first principles results either in infinite regress or reciprocity; Agrippa complains that the philosophers, powerless as they are to demonstrate first principles, require that they 'must be beleued'.[99] Nor can the senses or authority be trusted to deliver the criteria for truth, necessary for the confirmation of knowledge. Those who will see 'the secretes of God' will 'understande not with [their] eies and outwarde eares, but [will] perceaue with better senses...to receaue in truth from the marrowe of the holy Scriptures, which...was hidden from the wise men of this world'.[100] In short, if we do not repudiate the knowledge of this world, and declare our faith as the means to understanding, we will never be turned into that ass which is most 'able to carrie the diuine misteries.'[101]

For Donne, to apply the sceptical critique to expose the ignorance of all who claim to have acquired knowledge by syllogistic demonstration is as vain a pursuit as 'passionately to draw truth into doubt and disputation'. Both are the practice of 'lazy affecters of ignorance' who relieve themselves of their responsibility to seek truth no matter how 'cragged and steep' the hill upon which it stands.[102] The Augustinian response to the sceptical critique is insufficient to guide the Christian through his circumstantially complex ethical life because it divorces the traditionally knowable laws of nature and reason from the law of God, rendering God's will scrutable only to those illumined by the faith granted by the grace of God. What results is a 'weak, credulous' man who believes that he can assert his moral rectitude dogmatically because he interprets his faith as the sign of his salvation through

grace. This dogmatism, which propounds the irrefutability of its precepts in spite of the sceptical critique on the grounds of the confirmation of faith, is characteristic of the Calvinist adoption of the Augustinian doctrines of predestination (implicit in God's foreknowledge), divine illumination and the grace enjoyed by the faithful elect. In *Biathanatos*, Donne explicitly rejects Calvinist epistemology, a rejection which is consistent with his affirmation of Aquinas' Aristotelian ethics and his denial of Augustinian epistemology. After observing that the 'dangerous opinion' of predestination entails an 'impenitableness and an impossibility of returning to God', Donne cites Calvin as a 'strong authorizer, if not an author' of this opinion.[103] Certainly Calvin developed the doctrine of predestination, but ultimately, as Donne indicates, he has merely 'authorized' the opinion of Augustine. Donne notes the dependence of predestination on the doctrine of God's foreknowledge when he says that he will understand their doctrine of impenitableness 'proportionally and analogically to their other doctrine' and 'place this impenitableness only in the knowledge of God'.[104] Augustine, affirming Paul's predestinarian conclusion that the predisposition to receive or refuse God's will is established by God himself through the granting or witholding of grace, had said:

> Item verum est, *Non volentis neque currentis, sed miserentis est Dei*; quia etiamsi multos vocet, eorum tamen miseretur, quos ita vocat, quomodo eis vocari aptum est, ut sequantur. Falsum est autem si quis dicit, Igitur non miserentis Dei, sed volentis atque currentis est hominis: quia nullius Deus frustra miseretur; cujus autem miseretur, sic eum vocat, quomodo scit ei congruere, ut vocantem non respuat.[105]

Nor could man hope to solicit God's grace through the declaration of faith; those unsuited to receive God's grace were unable to make such a declaration. In his *Retractions*, Augustine recognized that he had been mistaken when he claimed that man could take an active part in his salvation. Commenting on I Corinthians 12:6, he said that '*profecto non dicerem, si iam scirem etiam ipsam fidem inter Dei munera reperiri, quae dantur "in eodem Spiritu"*.'[106] Though Donne was anxious about the possibility that he might not receive the gift of God's grace and be

abandoned to his own sin, he also recognized that it is impossible to know if oneself or any other possesses a genuine faith granted by God.[107] Without this knowledge, the 'weak, credulous' man, though confident in his faith, is no more likely to have access to the true meaning of scripture than the Thomist who applies Aristotle's rational principles to his reading of scripture.[108]

5

Ambiguity and Lando's *Paradossi*

Donne's condemnation of those who profess a pious ignorance which conduces to a faith in the certitude of Christian ethics distinguishes his theory of knowledge from that which informed Erasmus' *Praise* and Agrippa's 'Digression in Praise of the Asse'. Though Harvey disapproved of the libertine and sophistical perversion of syllogistic in the *Mirrour of Madnes*, his praise for Synesius' *Praise of Baldness* argues his approval of its syllogistic method and illustrates that, for him, the paradox was not a vehicle for the dismissal of Aristotelian logic. As Harvey knew, genuinely controversial paradoxes (*theses*) could only be debated according to the principles of dialectic outlined by Aristotle in the *Organon*. Without the use of a dialectic which deduces both assertions and their refutations from first principles, in the manner of Aristotelian and Stoic dialectic, none of the paradoxes of the philosophers mentioned in the *Topics*, or of the Stoics, or of wits such as the author of the *Mirrour of Madnes*, or of Synesius, or of academics and students arguing *theses*, or, finally, of Donne's *Paradoxes* and *Biathanatos* could claim to advance unexpected positions. Any theory of knowledge which will not admit first principles because of sceptical misgivings, discredits the concordance of opinion which could sanction such principles, and therefore, proposes a system of demonstration which is ever conscious of its own inability to attain any more than Carneadan probability.

As Cicero illustrated in the *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, such a system eliminates the appearance of paradox by recognizing that the manner of argumentation can be rhetorically manipulated to render the startling amenable to common sense. Nor can this process be reversed; the common-sensical cannot be made to appear startling through demonstrations grounded on probabilities, provided that the likelihood of both the premises and the conclusions of a deductive argument is acknowledged. Such an acknowledgement, of course, betrays the inductive basis of the deductive argument, and refers our judgement to its own fallible powers of verification rather than to a self-evident, universal and indubitable first principle. One is never surprised, therefore, if one never asserts more than likelihood, for exceptions to the probable, though unlikely, are always consciously expected. As we will see when we examine his rejection of scepticism in *Against the Academicians*, Augustine identifies the probabilism which underlies relativism as the source of potential moral anarchy. The Christian who, by faith and grace, understands the truth of scripture, neither suspects its mere likelihood nor is daunted by the prospect of discovering its paradoxical ethical implications. He may often be required by the truth of scripture to believe and act contrary to the common opinion. The paradoxist arguing within the Aristotelian tradition, takes a more moderate position with respect to probability by asserting the certitude and self-evidency of some universal principles (axioms), while acknowledging the contentiousness of other universal principles (definitions/positions/*theses*). As we have seen, reforming Aristotelians, such as Ramus, committed to eradicating the strife caused by the scholastic disputation of paradoxes denied this distinction, while others, such as Blundeville, warned against the sophistry of paradoxists who argued startling *theses* such as Copernicus'. The Aristotelian paradoxist is ever conscious of this tension between certain axioms and contentious definitions, and constructs his arguments according to dialectical rules devised for testing them. The paradoxist committed to demonstrating his positions with the comprehensive certitude of the Stoics, the mystical Platonists or the illumined Augustinians, however, must embrace an epistemology which places the confirmation of such certitude within the power of the understanding, and dispense

with precisely those contentious definitions from which the paradoxical *theses* of the philosophers first arose.

　　We have seen from Donne's disparaging remarks about those who utilize critics of Aristotelian philosophy such as Erasmus, Agrippa, Lull and Sebond as sources for paradoxes that undermine any claims to knowledge that he could not tolerate the 'mentally lazy [who] think they know enough if they can show credibly that other people's knowledge is imperfect.'[109] We must conclude, therefore, that Donne's paradoxes do not follow in the tradition of the encomiasts of ignorance (of conventional Aristotelian wisdom) or of the advocates of allegorical or mystical knowledge. As a consequence of this conclusion, we must further conclude that Donne was not influenced by the Erasmian and Agrippian *Paradossi* of Ortensio Lando, despite his popularity as a writer of paradoxes in the mid-sixteenth century. Lando's thirty *Paradossi* were first published in Lyon in 1543. Another edition was printed in Venice in the same year, and reprinted there in 1544 and 1545. Another Lyon edition was printed in 1550. In 1553, the Paris publisher, Charles Estienne, presented his edition of Lando's *Paradossi* under the title *Paradoxes, ce sont propos contre la commune opinion: debatus, en forme de Declamations forenses: pour exerciter les jeunes advocats, en causes difficiles.* By 1638 twenty-six more editions had been published in France, Italy and England. They were clearly the most popular paradoxes of the period. The first English translation of the *Paradossi* was done by Antony Munday in 1593, and reprinted in 1603. Munday's version contained only the first twelve of the twenty-five paradoxes which Estienne had selected from Lando's original thirty.[110]

　　Significantly, of the five paradoxes which Estienne removed from Lando's thirty, two attack the authority and wisdom of Aristotle, and another, Cicero's views on both philosophy and rhetoric.[111] Though Lando does not explicitly recommend the Platonic epistemology advocated by Erasmus and Agrippa, the conspicuous lack of ambiguity in his defense of conventionally unpopular conditions such as poverty, blindness, exile, ugliness, drunkenness and even death indicates that his arguments will not proceed with attention to possible variations in the denotations of their

critical terms as did the syllogisms of Donne's, Synesius' and Sandford's paradoxes. When Lando defends poverty, as he does in various ways in his first, sixth, twelfth, fourteenth, fifteenth, eighteenth, twenty-first, twenty-second and twenty-third paradoxes, he is not exploring the natures of these qualities in the manner prescribed for the *thesis* by Cicero in *De Inventione* and *De Partitione Oratoria*. As a consequence, contradictory senses of the critical terms such as poverty, ignorance and the like are not explicitly conflated (as in Donne's *Paradoxes*) or clarified (as in *Biathanatos*). Poverty signifies the lack of material wealth univocally, and, according to Lando, conduces to the equally unambiguous virtues of modesty, humility and chastity. He asks in his first paradox, 'Qu'il soit vray, combien de personnes a l'on veu, par le moyen d'honneste indigence, avoir esté reduits à toute modestie, humilité, chasteté, providence?'[112] To such a question, Lando provides the examples of popularly celebrated good men who have also advocated the virtues of poverty or who have themselves embodied such virtues by means of 'honneste indigence', and in so doing confirms the common favorable opinion of attributes such as modesty and humility. Lando is not interested in investigating the natures of those qualities which render poverty preferable by asking whether modesty, honesty and humility are to be preferred as goods. Orthodox Christian morality provides sufficient proof that these virtues are indeed goods; and therefore, no further proof is required. Because the goodness of these conventional Christian virtues is accepted on the authority of tradition and scripture, syllogistic proofs which demonstrate the identification of terms such as honesty and humility with poverty produce no surprises. In the form of a syllogism seeking to prove the preferability of poverty, Lando's minor premise has no more to recommend it than his examples of famous poor but virtuous people. If he were to reason, therefore, from the conjunction of the assumed major premise (honesty is good) with the minor premise (poverty produces honesty) to the conclusion (poverty is good), he would have created an argument, which, while valid, fails to reach the startling conclusions of the unelaborated Stoic *paradoxa* or Donne's *Paradoxes*.

Not surprisingly, Lando, does not defend any of his paradoxes syllogistically. As Aristotle had noted in the *Topics*, uncontroversial positions such as he is advocating require no more than a catalogue of pious examples to prevail with the common opinion. Aristotle had explained, 'Induction is more convincing and clear: it is more readily learnt by the use of the senses, and is applicable generally to the mass of men: but deduction is more forcible and more effective against contradictious people.'[113] In his tenth paradox, 'That it is possible to find some vertue in some women', Donne assumes the role of the sophist against whom Aristotle recommends the use of deduction and seeks to prove his purportedly absurd assertion deductively by arguing that since '*Suum cuique dare* [to give each his own] be the fulfilling of all civil justice' and women 'deny that which is thers to no man', women 'are most just'.[114] Though, as expected, it commits the fallacy of four terms, the syllogism reaches its startling conclusion by manipulating the definition of the term, justice. Only such manipulation within a deductive argument could produce such a paradoxical and 'contradictious' conclusion; as Donne says, 'these [fallacious syllogisms] or none must serve as reasons: and it is my great happiness that Examples prove not rules, for to confirme this opinion the World yields not one Example.'[115] In Lando's arguments for the virtues of poverty, however, the identification of critical terms is not proven by deductions drawn from precisely stated definitions of their natures; they are merely predicated of each other on the strength of his inductive proofs. His defense of 'chaste et humble pauvreté' and 'honneste indigence' is nothing more than a defense of chastity, humility and honesty, a defense so orthodox that Aristotle would surely have found its inductive proof perfectly 'applicable generally to the mass of men'.

If Lando was interested in defending a paradoxical position he would have had to show that these conventionally approved qualities were actually not to be preferred. Such a demonstration would require, in turn, an analysis of terms similar to that found in Cicero's *Paradoxa Stoicorum* and Donne's *Paradoxes* and *Biathanatos*. And while Donne's *Paradoxes* achieve their surprises by means of equivocally deployed middle terms, the startling conclusions of both the *Paradoxa*

and *Biathanatos* are intentionally mitigated by the clarification and restriction of the denotation of their middle terms. Cicero refers to the mitigation of the paradoxicality of his *thesis* when he says in his third paradox, 'If you posit...cases without qualification, their real nature cannot easily be judged' as does Donne when he maintains, in his letter to Herbert, that he believes he has sufficiently defended his position in *Biathanatos* both 'by argument and example'.[116] His stated intention to bring 'our judgement...nearer to a straightness' by presenting arguments 'founded upon a rigorous suspicion' which expose the 'the nakedness and deformity' of the orthodox reasons against suicide is his declaration that he intends to discover the fundamental natures of the laws which appear categorically to forbid suicide.[117] Throughout the *Paradossi*, Lando provides an abundance of examples to prove his points, but omits the syllogistic demonstrations which correspond to the 'argument' opposed to the 'example' in Donne's letter to Herbert. Lando's reluctance to undertake an analysis of terms 'upon a rigorous suspicion' of their common connotations is characteristic of his desire to eradicate the contention and doubt which the schoolmen had propagated in their wordy theological disputes.[118] In this respect, Lando's reforming spirit falls neatly in the tradition of Erasmus and Agrippa.[119] When Lando does scrutinize a potentially ambiguous term, he quickly resolves any confusion by restricting its meaning to that reflected in the examples of commonly admired figures or sanctioned by orthodox authorities. Of course, the standard from which these figures and authorities derive their orthodoxy is the degree to which their views conform with the undoubted word of scripture. In his twenty-first paradox, 'Qu'il vault se servir qu'estre servy', Lando asks:

> Mais pense tu que ce mot de serviteur soit quelque nom abject ou injurieux?...Combien pense tu qu'il se trouve de grans personnages, et d'honorables en memoire avoir esté serviteurs, qui toutefois jamais ne se lamenterent de leur condition ou fortune?[120]

Lando answers his own question citing the example of 'le divin Platon' and Terence, and thus dismisses the potential confusion of verbal analysis. In his twenty-fifth

paradox, 'Qu'il vault mieux vivre en craincte qu'en asseurance', Lando defends fear as he had poverty in his first paradox, by uncritically associating it with the undisputed virtues of modesty and prudence, and by citing the authority of examples, such as Paul, in support of these associations. There is only one sense in which fear may be understood in this paradox, therefore, and that is as the moderator of rashness. Lando concludes on the strength of his inductive proofs that:

> le homme craintif est sage et discret, et que la crainte ne vient grande discretion et bon jugement. Aussi nous voyons les hardiz et temeraires estre prodigues de leur vie et honneur, et n'avoir aucun discours de l'advenir, mais sans conseil s'exposer à tous dangers et fortunes...[121]

We need only recall his conflation of Aristotle's doctrines of the golden mean and final causes in his first paradox, to confirm that Donne's analysis of terms (sophistical or genuine) reflects an acknowledgement of ambiguity which is totally lacking in Lando's analysis.

6

Lando's *Paradossi*, Estienne and the Dismissal of Syllogistic

It is possible to explain Lando's failure to question the nature of the virtues he defends by reading the *Paradossi* not as paradoxical *theses*, but as the forensic declamations which both Estienne and Munday had called them in their French and English translations.[122] This explanation would appear to relieve them of the burden of philosophical investigation prescribed for the *thesis* by Cicero in *De Partitione Oratoria*. Hence, Lando's argument that ignorance is better than wisdom is not a declamation of the third type of the *cogitatio* described by Cicero in *De Partitione Oratoria* or of the *thesis comtempliuae* described by Aphthonius in the *Progymnasmata*, but is actually a declamation of a forensic *hypothesis*, which seeks not to exalt the universal nature of ignorance above that of wisdom, but rather to defend a certain type of ignorance (of worldly knowledge) of a certain type of man

(a Christian) against the claims of a certain type of wisdom (worldly knowledge) of a certain type of man (learned in worldly knowledge). According to this explanation, Lando's *Paradossi*, therefore, are only loosely called paradoxes because, though they superficially argue against common opinion, they neither investigate the relative natures of their subjects in the abstract (as Cicero, Aphthonius and Aristotle had prescribed for the *thesis*) nor utilize deductive argument, the characteristic dialectical tool of the philosopher (as Cicero and Quintilian had observed). This explanation also clarifies Lando's statement that 'the truth of any matter whatsoever, appeareth most cleerly, when the different reasons against the same, is equalled or neighboured therewith.'[123] As we have seen, Lando's paradoxes did not intend to 'vex' or raise 'an alarum to truth' as Donne's *Paradoxes* and *Biathanatos* had, because he intended simply to confirm the common opinion of an accepted truth by employing those reasons, which could be used as refutations of that truth, to defend it. Hence, if a defense of ignorance normally constitutes a reason against the truth of the superiority of wisdom, it becomes a confirmation of that truth when a specific type of ignorance is defended as an exalted form of wisdom. It was this type of defense which Wilson, the model for student lawyers in late sixteenth-century England, recommended when he explained in the *Arte of Rhetorique*, '*Contraria inter se opposita magis elucescunt*'. In his translation of the preface to the reader, Estienne retains Lando's emphasis on the forensic nature of the *Paradossi*.

> A ceste cause [to improve the skills of lawyers] je t'ay offert en ce livret le debat d'aucuns propos que les anciens ont voulu nommer Paradoxes, c'est à dire contraires à l'opinion de la plusparts des hommes, à fin que par discours d'iceulx la verité opposite t'en soit à l'advenir plus clere et apparante, et aussi pour t'exercer au debat des choses qui te contraignent à chercher diligemment et laboriuesement raisons, preuves, authoritez, histoires, et memoires fort diverses et cachées.[124]

As Lando suggests, the *Paradossi* resemble Cicero's *Paradoxa* in their defense of uncommon opinions by appeals to common sense; such appeals, as Quintilian had noted, dispense with dialectical demonstrations in favor of examples. Despite

Lando's claim that the *Paradossi* are exhortations to the lawyer to search diligently for reasons and proofs as well as examples, there are no instances of deductive proof in them. Though Cicero suggests a more precise rhetorical objective when he says that he will transpose 'things expressed in the schools of philosophy in the form of logical demonstration into this oratorical style of discourse that is my own', he does not omit analyses of ambiguous terms in the form of deductive argument.[125] To questions typical of the general inquiries of the philosophical *thesis*, such as 'Can a thing that is a good for anybody be an evil?', Cicero consistently adds examples from 'the life and actions of men of eminence', never forgetting that his arguments are designed to appeal to the common opinion.[126] Nonetheless, the analysis of *theses* in the form of deductive argument remains central to the procedure of his arguments. In his third paradox, 'That transgressions are equal and right actions equal', he examines the nature of transgression both in abstract terms and in the structure of deductive argument. 'If this fact of not being allowed cannot ever become greater or smaller, since the action's not being a transgression consists in its not having been allowed, the transgressions springing from the fact of non-allowance must necessarily be equal.'[127] Cicero's combination of example and syllogistic analysis in his defense of the Stoic *paradoxa* reflects his concern with the reconciliation of rhetoric and dialectic. When, in *Brutus*, Cicero had praised Servius' combination of knowledge of *aequitas* (which is obtained through the examination of the third class of the *cogitatio*) derived from the consideration of *theses* and of the particular circumstances (*hypotheses*) addressed by the civil law, he designated dialectic *ars omnium artium maxima*, and a prerequisite for the ideal forensic orator. The *Paradossi*'s neglect of dialectical analysis, while pleasing the anti-Aristotelian, would certainly have displeased Cicero.

In his1554 edition of the *Paradossi*, Estienne added a paradox of his own, 'Que le plaider est chose tresutile et necessaire à la vie des hommes' to which a rebuttal was added in the *Deux Plaidoyez*, which was included in the 1570 Poitiers edition of the Estienne translation of the *Paradossi*.[128] Estienne's defense of the lawyer's art is predominantly satirical and displays none of the respect for the

dialectical analysis evident in Cicero's *Paradoxa* or Donne's *Biathanatos*. Indeed, the target of his satire is precisely that lawyer who exploits ambiguous questions to obscure the plain truth. Agrippa's opinion of lawyers reflects the suspicion of Aristotelian dialectic evident in both the *Vanity* and in Lando's Erasmian paradoxes of ignorance and foolishness. Agrippa had described lawyers as Nashe had described Ramists, as Harvey had described Nashe, as Cicero had described the Stoics, as Isocrates had described the sophists, as Erasmus had described the schoolmen, and as Donne had described the equivocal Jesuits in *Ignatius His Conclave*. Among lawyers, Agrippa complained:

> is so much deceipte, wrangling, and discorde, that he which disagreeth not from others: he that knoweth not how to gainsaie other mens woordes with newe opinions, and bringe all apparante thinges in doubte, and with doubtfull expositions to applie well inuented Laws to theire deuises, is accompted little or nothing learned.[129]

Agrippa himself had claimed that he was not entirely serious in his invective in the *Vanity*, but there is little doubt that his attack on the contentiousness of lawyers, orthodox as it is, was entirely in earnest.[130] Estienne's paradox of lawyers, like all of Lando's, lacks dialectical ingenuity, perhaps because his objective is to show that there are some lawyers who are not like those condemned as vain paradoxists by Agrippa. To succeed in this proof, therefore, he must avoid precisely that dialectical analysis of the meanings of ambiguous terms that Cicero claimed distinguished the forensic oratory of Servius.[131] After observing that the common opinion (in the voice of Bon Acord) finds the arguments of prosecutors to be the product of 'differents' and 'questions' full of 'inventions et subtilitez des debats', which are only interpretable by other subtle lawyers, Estienne proceeds in the inductive manner of Lando to provide examples of lawyers who are not sophistical.[132] Where would be, he asks, without the lawyer who helps 'procure le bien et utilité des hommes' and the counselor 'qui donne son advis pour l'equité'?[133] If Estienne held dialectical analysis in as low regard as Lando, as it appears he did, his counselor would have no recourse to the type of investigations (*cogitatio*) which Cicero had insisted were

specifically concerned with equity. In his response to the paradox of the lawyer, the second 'plaidoyer', exactly the same sophistical qualities in lawyers are attacked, except in this case, examples need not be provided of good lawyers; all that is required is a rehearsal of the common opinion's low estimate of them. The indubitable authority of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians is then invoked for the same purpose as Lando had invoked it in his third paradox, 'Qu'il vault mieux estre ignorant que sçavant', to illustrate the vanity of human knowledge, and particularly that of the subtle dialecticians.[134]

In his paradox of ignorance, Lando had advised a humility in matters of religion which was characteristic of those who asserted the priority of scripture in the direction of moral life, such as Erasmus and Agrippa. And though this humility was informed only by contrast to the intellectual pride of the scholastic theologians so reviled by humanists throughout Europe in the early sixteenth century, to recommend the abandonment of the Aristotelian logic which underpinned scholastic theology was also to recommend the abandonment of the faculty of practical reason, which employed that same logic to deliver probable conclusions upon which the will could confidently take action. Such confidence, therefore, is possible only within an epistemological scheme which permits the mind some access to knowledge through the exercise of reason alone. As Cicero had observed, Stoic dialectic, while it permitted such access, failed to recognize the disparity between the theoretical necessity of its syllogistic conclusions and the mere probability of those conclusions obtaining in the circumstantially complex ethical lives of real men. Both Aristotle and Aquinas, recognize this disparity between knowledge (*episteme*) and opinion (*doxa*) and provide for it in their explanation of logical operations of the practical reason, operations which, while sometimes mistaken, may yet achieve a degree of likelihood sufficient to produce a rectified conscience and a confident will. Lando's Pauline exhortations to ignorance and folly, leave the conscience stripped of its access to the fallible Aristotelian dialectic so corrupted by the schoolmen and lawyers, and refer it to alternative methods of verification. Lando could not approve the attempts of scholastic reformers, such as Lull or Ramus, to eliminate the

uncertainty from Aristotle's logic, and advised instead, the pious confession of the vanity of human knowledge, the fearful submission to the inscrutable authority of God and obedience to the expression of his will in scripture.[135]

7
Montaigne's Pyrrhonist View of Paradox

As we have seen, Donne's decision not to use Augustine's definition of sin in *Biathanatos* reflects an underlying dissatisfaction with epistemological positions, such as Lando's, which respond to the doubt exposed both by the sceptical critique and by scholastic controversy with a declaration that the truth of God's law is knowable only to those who faithfully submit to it. Such a view makes faith the sole criterion for the establishment of the first ethical principles from which the moral agent may deduce the right course of action given a certain set of circumstances. While Donne maintained that faith was necessary to lead the mind to assent to the truth of divine mysteries which appear to defy rational explanation such as Marbeck's paradox of Psalm 24 (23), he also maintained that reason should be utilized to resolve our doubts about matters upon which God has not revealed the truth, and to deduce courses of action in our ethical life which seem likely to be free of sin. The identification of the laws of nature, reason and God in *Biathanatos* represents Donne's effort not only to create a paradoxical argument which refutes the common opinion against suicide, but also to delineate the constructive role of reason in ethics according to the Aristotelian ethics of Aquinas.[136] And while Donne never forgets the tentativeness of the positions he advances in *Biathanatos*, positions which fall under the category of *theses* or paradoxes, his repeated emphasis on the universality and immutability of the laws of nature, reason and God reveal that his *thesis* will do more than simply refute the universality of laws forbidding suicide.[137] His intention, he says, is to free suicide 'not only from those enormous degrees of sin, but from all'.[138]

As we will see, Donne does not choose the sceptical and relativist tactic of the libertine who asserts that the law of nature prohibits nothing, that the law of reason is subjective and variable, and that the law of God is inscrutable. Against such assertions, Donne claims that 'that part of God's law which binds always bound before it was written, and so it is but *dictamen rectae rationis*, and that is the law of nature' and that 'though our substance of nature, which is best understood of the foundations and principles and first grounds of natural law, may not be changed, yet *functio naturae*, which is the exercise and application thereof, and deduction from thence, may and must.'[139] These claims constitute a response not only to libertines, but also to fideists such as Montaigne, who deny rational access to divine law on Pyrronist grounds.[140] Donne, following Aristotle and Aquinas on the operation of practical reason, acknowledges that deductions of particular actions from these first principles of law may change according to circumstances, but maintains that such a rational process, though imperfect, is both necessary and reliable. In his 'Apology of Raymond Sebond' (1580), Montaigne had called this rational process 'lumpish and barren matter' and attributed any claim of its worth to the 'grace of God.'[141] And despite the fact that Sebond sought to devise a cognitive system whereby the intellect could attain an understanding of everything it observed, Montaigne defends him only in so far as he exalted the necessity of faith.[142] Thus, instead of defending the allegorical method of Sebond as the most reliable rational means to knowledge, Montaigne will use reason as Sextus had, 'to make them [those who place reason before faith] feele the emptinesse, vacuitie, and no worth of man: and violently to pull out of their hands, the silly weapons of their reason'.[143] As we have seen, Donne's rejection of Sebond was a consequence of his Aristotelian mistrust of the allegorical method of confirming the primacy of first principles and of demonstrating their analogues. Montaigne, like Aristotle before him, suspected 'meerely poetical' explanations of human superiority in the order of creatures, but, unlike Donne and Aquinas, would not permit human reason any access to a law of nature which could be identified with the law of God.[144]

Donne's aim to identify the laws of nature, reason and God, required him to invest the two former laws, so disparaged by Montaigne, with a universality and certainty which could distinguish them from the mutable, particular and unreliable law of man, *ius gentium*. As we will see, after arguing in the first part of *Biathanatos* that the principal law of nature for man is the law of reason, Donne need only claim that the first indemonstrable principles of these laws are known self-evidently to all men. Donne's argument for the identification of the laws of reason and nature in man is derived from an inversion of Aquinas' hierarchical organization of the three principles of nature operative in man, and will be examined below. Such an identification for Montaigne, however, is impossible because the mutable *ius gentium* cannot be distinguished from the unreliable law of reason. And as the various and contradictory customs of cultures around the world, which he is so fond of observing, all claim their source in nature, neither nature, reason nor custom can be said to command universally or absolutely. Moreover, any attempt to locate the source of the principles of Christianity in nature also reveals their true source in the mutable *ius gentium*. Montaigne says, 'Another country, other Testimonies, equall promises: alike menaces, might semblably imprint a cleane contrary religion in us: we are Christians by the same title, as we are either Perigordins or Germans.'[145] And as of all laws of all nations, 'there is not one alone, that is not impugned or disallowed, not by one nation, but by many,...the generalitie of approbation...[is] the onely likely ensigne, by which they may argue some lawes to natural'.[146] Donne complained that the law of nature 'is with most authors confounded and made the same with *ius gentium*' and rejected the view of the Catholic casuists, Azorius and Sylvius (which Montaigne shared), 'that the law of nature, as it concerns only reason, is *ius gentium*' on the grounds that such an identification has been asserted merely to distinguish the natural law of self-preservation in all animate beings from the higher law of nature which rational beings follow.[147] To assert from this negatively derived definition of natural law in humans, from what such a law *cannot* be, that what is most reasonable in ethics is what 'is...practiced and accepted in most, especially civilest, nations' is simply not, as Donne illustrates in the following

paragraph, supported by historical precedent. 'How,' he asks, 'shall we accuse idolatry or immolation of men to be sins against nature,' if these once customary practices must be considered to accord with reason, which is the law of nature in humans?[148] The list of examples of immolation which Donne then offers, whether true or not, are certainly inappropriate as support for an identification of *ius gentium* and *recta ratio*.[149] However, as illustrations of the kind of patently forbidden behavior (idolatry and immolation) which could be defended as natural and rational because customarily practiced, these examples serve Donne's objective perfectly.[150] Donne is fully aware that no one would attempt to defend such behavior as universally natural, that is, in accordance with 'that part of God's law which binds always [and] bound before it was written, ...[that] *dictamen rectae rationis*, ...the law of nature.'

Montaigne's rejection of the universality of natural law resulted only partly from his observation of the variability of human laws and customs. In the 'Apology', he summarizes both Cicero's and Sextus' principles of scepticism as expounded in the *Academica*, the *Outlines*, and *Against the Mathematicians*, and declares his allegiance to scepticism generally, not only because it denies the presence of immutable natural laws underlying human law, but also because it denies the mind the capacity to discern the true from the false. Montaigne's denial of this capacity is simply a restatement of Cicero's and Sextus' rejection of the Stoic *lekton*. He says that 'we are those that aver some falsehood entermixt with every truth, and that with such likenesse, as there is no set note in those things for any assuredly to give judgement or assent.'[151] We have seen that Cicero was content to assert the probable correspondence of our perceptions with the external world (*verisimile*), but that Sextus, recognizing that such an assertion assumes a true perception of the external world, took the stronger sceptical line and proclaimed that no proposition was more likely to be true than false. Montaigne follows Sextus, stating, 'Apparances are every where alike. The law of speaking *pro* and *contra* is all one. *Nothing seemeth true, that may not seeme false.*'[152] Still following Sextus, Montaigne recommends the suspension of judgement and the obedient acceptance

of the particular civil and ecclesiastical laws under whose jurisdiction one finds oneself, for, he says, 'The first law that ever God gave unto man, was a Law of pure obedience.'[153] And the prerequisite for such obedience is, as Erasmus, Agrippa and Lando had said, ignorance of the vain contentious debates of those who argue the preferability of their opinions. 'We must be besotted,' Montaigne says, 'ere we can become wise'.[154] He continues later, 'It is more by the meanes of our ignorance, than of our skill, that we are wise in heavenly knowledge. It is no marvell if our natural and terrestial meanes cannot conceive the supernaturall, or apprehend the celestial knowledge. Let us add nothing of our own unto it, but obedience and subjection'.[155] Montaigne has eliminated the role of the conscience led by practical reason, which Donne's identification of the laws of nature, reason and God was intended to facilitate.

While Montaigne's Pyrrhonism required him to recommend that the individual conscience submit to external authority, he also recognized that only the individual can determine if he has acted in good conscience.[156] This determination, however, is impossible because the Pyrrhonist maintains that no position is more likely to be true than any other.[157] As we have seen, Donne found those who doubted even the testimony of their consciences as a consequence of sceptical epistemologies, such as Montaigne's, guilty of moral laziness. After describing the deductive procedure of the practical reason from 'those true propositions, which are...the issue of light of nature and of our discourse' to 'those conclusions' which then assume 'the nature of propositions and beget more', Donne explains that provided these conclusions are not 'corrupted and bastarded by fallacy,...every man's resolution is determined and arrested by [them], and submitted to [them]'.[158] To those whose consciences' are led according to this syllogistic method of reasoning, he opposes the obedient Pyrrhonists praised by Montaigne, those 'men of weak disposition, or lazy, or flattering, [who] look no farther into any of these propositions than from whose mouth it proceeds, or what authority it hath now, not from whence it was produced'.[159] What Donne is recommending when he suggests that the conscience is bound to analyze the universal premises from which particular

choices are deduced is the type of investigation of which *Biathanatos* is an example, the investigation of a *thesis* or paradox. Montaigne's Pyrrhonism denied reason any knowledge of these premises, and therefore, rejected the utility of speaking *pro* and *contra* which Harvey had praised in the declamation of paradoxes of genuinely controversial issues. Montaigne asks, 'Is it not better for a man to suspend his owne perswasion, than to meddle with these seditious and quarellous divisions?'[160] The ancient paradoxists, whose *theses* are mentioned by Aristotle in the *Topics*, argued in 'a manner of writing doubtfull both in substance and intent, rather enquiring than instructing', and therefore, intended not to convince others of their opinions, but rather 'to shew the wavering of mans minde above all matters, or ignorantly forced by the volubilitie and incomprehensibleness of all matters'.[161] As Isocrates, Aristotle and Diogenes Laertius had noted, Montaigne claims that the paradoxes of Melissus, Protagoras, Parmenides and Zeno were all devised to demonstrate the absurd *theses* which one could defend syllogistically. In his refutations of their *theses*, Aristotle had warned against abandoning the principles of logic because sophists constructed arguments which appeared to demonstrate the futility of dialectic to distinguish the true from the false.[162] Montaigne, however, following Sextus' opinion of the consequences of Gorgias' paradox 'that nothing is', disregards Aristotle's warning and concludes that even the wisest men 'humane reason hath perswaded, that she had neither ground or footing, no not so much as to warrant the snow to be white'.[163] The final proof that the logic so prized by Aristotle and his followers is unable to lead reason to knowledge is Epimenides' paradox of the liar, which of course, still troubles logicians today.[164]

8
Syllogistic Analysis and the Operation of Conscience

For Montaigne, the paradoxes of the philosophers hold no surprises because our methods of demonstration are too uncertain to eliminate any possibility, much less to identify likelihoods. In 'Of the Art of Conferring', he had said, 'No

propositions amaze me, no conceit woundeth me, what contrariety soever they have to mine' because, as he observes in 'Of the Institution and Education of Children', to declare anything to be impossible 'is by rash presumption to presume and know how farre possibilitie reacheth.'[165] Of course, to determine the probabilities of possibilities was the original purpose of Aristotle's dialectic; to deny logic the power to distinguish the true from the false was, for Montaigne, to liberate the conscience from the contentious, yet dogmatic, precepts of Aristotelian divines and philosophers. In the midst of his praise of learning by example and experience, he recounts the story of his encounter with an Aristotelian from Pisa in terms reminiscent of the Oxford dons attacked by Bruno in *The Ash-Wednesday Supper* and recorded by Anthony à Wood in *The History and Antiquities of the University of Oxford*. This man, Montaigne explains, was 'such an *Aristotelian*, as he held this infallible position; that a conformitie to *Aristotles* doctrine was the true touchstone and squire of all solide imaginations, and perfect veritie; for, whatsoever had no coherencie with it, was but fond *Chimeraes*, and idle humours'.[166] Aristotle, Ramus and all those who have followed them in believing in the self-evidency of first principles are promptly dismissed with Montaigne's dismissal of this Aristotelian. 'Aristotles principles shall be no more axiomes unto him [the sceptical scholar], than the Stoikes or Epicurians. Let this diversitie of judgements be proposed unto him, if he can, he shall be able to distinguish the truth from falsehood, if not, he will remaine doubtfull.'[167]

Montaigne's sceptical scholar, will, of course, disbelieve the demonstrations of the dialecticians and remain doubtful. His Pyrrhonist doubt will not make him contentious or seek to discover the natures of things through dialectical analysis of *theses*, as did the probabilist scepticism represented in Cicero's *Paradoxa Stoicorum*. Such analysis results only in the discovery of the uncertainty of our definitions. After describing the controversies created by Luther's *theses* and other such unorthodox writings, Montaigne says:

> Our contestation is verball. I demaund what Nature voluptuousnesse, circle and substitution is? The question is of words, and with words it is answered. A stone is a body: but he that should insist and urge: And what is a body? A substance: And what a substance? And so goe-on: Should at last bring the respondent to his Calepine or wits end.[168]

Harvey had also bemoaned the convoluted verbal conflicts between the religious factions of his and Montaigne's time, but had maintained that it was the method of Aristotle and Ramus which was the means by which the confusion arising from these disagreements could be dispelled. If these schismatics would 'define thinges simply, without any colours, or embellishments, according to the precepts of Aristotle, and the examples of Ramus…the most-endlesse altercations; being generally verball, then reall, and more circumstantiall, then substantiall; will soon grow to an ende.'[169] Montaigne was obviously not convinced by the view of Ramus and his followers that a syllogistic demonstration may preempt the sceptic's infinitely regressive analysis of terms when it reaches the self-evident axiom from which the demonstration proceeds. Had Harvey been as confident in the demonstrative power of syllogism, he would not have acknowledged genuinely controversial issues to which the precepts of Aristotle did not definitively speak; hence his praise of the profitable paradox. However, regarding the uncertainty of the conscience, with which Donne is principally concerned in *Biathanatos*, Harvey's concerns about the libertine threat to public order force him to endorse the Ramist method as a means to eliminate the doubts of the moral agent. The principles which ground our knowledge ('Science') may not be applied to serve the individual, and sophistical, ends against which Wilson had warned in his discussion of the 'libertines reason'. Though he alludes to Aquinas' emphasis of the knowledge (*scientia*) constitutive of conscience which will inform Donne's Thomist treatment of the conscience in *Biathanatos*, Harvey does not accommodate the error which both Aquinas and Donne allow a rectified conscience.

> Indeed Conscience, grounded upon Science, is a double Ancher; that neither deceiueth, nor is deceiued: and no better rule than, then a regular, or publique

> Conscience; in diuinity ruled by Diuinitie, in law, by Law, in art, by Art, in reason, by Reason, in experience, by Experience. Other irregular, or priuate Conscience, in Publique functions, will fall-out to be but a lawlesse Church...[170]

Harvey's Ramistic confidence in the certainty of knowledge comprising the *scientia* of *conscientia*, allows him to collapse the distinction between judgements made *in foro interiori* and *exteriori* with which Donne was so concerned in *Biathanatos* and the *Essays in Divinity*.[171] Judgements made *in foro interiori* are determined by what Harvey would call the 'priuate Conscience' while those made *in foro exteriori* are those made against the legal standards imposed by the civil and canon laws, which for Harvey represent the 'publique Conscience'.

Donne recognizes the validity of the claims of the individual conscience against the mandates of human law, and, following Aquinas and the casuists, insists that even the commands of an erring conscience must be obeyed over against any external authority. 'And this obligation which our conscience casts upon us is of stronger hold and of straiter band than the precept of any superior, whether law or person, and is so much *iuris naturalis* as it cannot be infringed nor altered *beneficio divinae indulgentiae*'.[172] Donne is careful to distinguish, as had Aquinas, between a conscience which errs '*mala fide*' because it has neglected to exercise 'all moral industry and diligence', and one 'which errs justly, probably, and *bona fide*', but nevertheless maintains that 'as long as that error remains and resides in it, a man is bound not to do against his conscience.'[173] As we will see, Donne's allowance of probability as sufficient for a rectified conscience betrays his adoption of Aquinas' Aristotelian doctrine of the potentially fallible faculty of practical reason, which makes use of primary universal principles known intuitively in its consideration of the particular circumstances under which an ethical choice must be taken. For Aristotle, the complexity of ethical circumstances often reflects the same complexity inherent in the diversity of the objects of sense; and therefore, universal conclusions drawn from the observation of particular sets of circumstances were no more certain than those derived from the examination of sets of physical objects. Though

Montaigne's Pyrrhonism takes this resemblance as grounds for rejecting claims of probability in ethics, Aristotle's confidence in both the accuracy of universal conclusions drawn inductively and their application as major premises in deductive arguments leads him to recommend a syllogistic method in the exercise of practical reason. Donne's advocacy of the conscience's use of the syllogistic method of analysis is evident in his description of the deductive procedure by which our discourse produces conclusions which produce propositions from which further conclusions may be drawn, but remembers that the further the deductive procedure descends from the first principles, the more likely that its conclusions will be 'corrupted and bastarded by fallacy'.[174] Donne's observation of the variability of human laws leads him to reject the universality of the *ius gentium*, and with it, its use in the deductive procedure of the practical reason. Only the law of reason, in so far as it is common to all men, deserves the title of human law. Montaigne, observing this same variability, had also rejected the possibility of a universal and absolute human law. However, unlike Donne, who accepted some ethical first principles which are known to all through natural reason, his sceptical mistrust of the reliability of both the senses and syllogistic demonstrations would not permit him to posit the law of reason as the ground upon which human law could claim universality.[175] After Montaigne explains that 'the generalitie of approbation...[is] the onely likely ensigne, by which they [those who seek to identify the human law and the natural law] may argue some lawes to be naturall', he proceeds to illustrate that such a generality does not exist.[176] If reason were capable of delivering conclusions to which all men could assent, this general approval might be attained, but since the 'senses are the beginning and end of humane knowledge', human law and science generally 'cannot be maintained but by unreasonable, fond and mad reason'.[177] Beginning with the criterion for universality, which Montaigne claims reason cannot fulfill, Donne says that 'that law hath most force and value which is most general, and there is no law so general that it deserves the name of *ius gentium* (or if there be, it will be the same...as *recta ratio*...)'.[178] Later, he gives an example from the *De privilegiis iuris civiles* (1606) written by the Austrian legal and political

commentator, Georgius Acacius Enenkelius; this example of the deductive procedure of conscience describes the function of practical reason as neither unreasonable, fond nor mad. 'It is natural and binds all always, to know there is a God; from this is deduced by necessary consequence that God, if He be, must be worshipped, and after this, by likely consequence, that he must be worshipped in this or this manner'.[179]

Donne's awareness that the more particular our deductions are, the less able they are to claim more than likelihood, reveals the Aristotelian and Thomistic grounds on which he bases his exposition of the operations of the conscience. As we have seen, the use of syllogistic argument requires the acceptance of some first principles which themselves are indemonstrable. Aquinas had stated that the human law could not be derived from the natural law discernible to reason for the same reason as had Montaigne and Donne (i.e. the variability of human laws); but like Donne, he attributed the discrepancy between the 'general precepts of the natural law' and the discordant laws of various societies not to a lack of universality and necessity in the precepts, but to the 'great variety of human affairs' which obscure the application of the first principles of the natural law to specific and complex circumstances.[180] Montaigne's Pyrrhonism led him to dismiss the view that 'there be some firme, perpetuall and immoveable [laws], which they call naturall, and by the condition of their proper essence, are imprinted in mankind'.[181] Because this dismissal implicitly denies differences in degrees of likelihood, it results in the elimination of the distinction separating the orthodox and the paradoxical; all assertions, therefore, are opinions (*doxa*) which are no more likely than any other. On the other hand, Ramus' insistence on the presence of true, but indemonstrable, axioms and definitions governing the whole of human knowledge, renders all assertions either true or false, and therefore, the proper objects of knowledge, not of opinion. For both Aristotle and Aquinas, the practical reason, in so far as it determines our ethical choices, is concerned specifically with contingencies. By their nature, these contingencies represent matters which may be otherwise, and thus, are contrasted with those first necessary principles of which we may claim to have

knowledge (*episteme*).[182] Of contingent matters, however, we may only have

opinions. In the *Posterior Analytics*, Aristotle explains the difference between

objects of knowledge and of opinion.

> No one thinks that he opines when he thinks that it is impossible for it to be
> otherwise, but that he understands; but when he thinks that it is so but that
> nothing prevents it being otherwise, then he thinks he opines, supposing
> opinion to be about that sort of thing and understanding about what is
> necessary.[183]

Donne explicitly observes this relation in the title of *Biathanatos*, stating that he will

argue that the law prohibiting suicide is merely an opinion, and therefore, is

susceptible to paradoxical arguments against it. As a *thesis*, it will investigate the

nature of the reasons traditionally used to defend the universality of the law in

accordance with the Ciceronian prescriptions for the philosophical procedure of

theses; and as a paradox, it will argue that the issue lacks a precept which presides

over it absolutely and with necessity, and is thus, bound irrevocably within the

domain of opinion. He says that *Biathanatos* is a 'declaration of that Paradox or

Thesis, that Self-Homicide is not so naturally Sin that it may never be otherwise;

wherein the Nature and the Extent of all those Laws which seem to be violated by

this Act are diligently surveyed'.[184]

Notes to Chapter V

[1] Donne, 1982, ll. 1144-45

[2] Ibid., ll. 1150-51, 1764-65. Aristotle had suggested that the paradoxist must seek to attack the universality of an assertion if he intends his paradox to be a refutation of that assertion because, he explains, 'refutation is not possible if nothing is conceded universally'. See *Prior Analytics* 66b16.

[3] Because ethical rules derived casuistically are formed with an awareness of the limits of their reliability, various schools of casuistry emerged each asserting a different degree of probability as the criterion for the rectitude of a particular ethical decision. Donne refers to these various schools without claiming his allegiance to any one in particular, though his repeated insistence on a diligent rational involvement in such decisions implies his sympathy to the probabiliorists, who believed, against the probabilists, that the most probable option was to be taken, not merely one which achieved some degree of probability. See for instance, Donne, 1977, p. 13. For an overview of the various schools of casuistry and their relation to Donne, see Camille Welles Slights, 1981, pp. 13-15; and Malloch, 1962, pp. 63-71. On the Anglican preference for probabiliorism, see Camille Welles Slights, 1972, pp. 85-101.

[4] Sandford, 1576, sig, Aii-Aiii.

[5] *Paradoxa* 26. Sandford alludes to Cicero's discussion of the Stoic paradox that all transgressions are equal in *Tusculan Disputations*. Sandford says that Cicero asked his Stoic adversary, 'puttest thou measure in a fault?' If, as the Stoics maintain, all transgressions are equal, he must deny degrees of vice. See Sandford, 1576, Sig. Aiiii. See also *Gorgias* 504b-d.

[6] For a discussion of Augustine's identification of evil with the privation of good, and its relation to Donne's representations of evil, see Evans, 1982, pp. 1-22. Evans refers to Donne's equation of sin with disorder in *Sermons* VII, 8, but fails to acknowledge the Stoics (*via* Cicero) as the source for this equation. As Cicero argued in *Tusculan Diputations*, and as Sandford noticed, if sin consists in disorder, the relative gravity of sin must be measured against the degree of disorder it causes. As we will see, both Donne and Augustine recognized the danger of relativist ethics. Their different responses to the threat, however, complicate Evans' view of the compatibility of Donne's and Augustine's 'paradoxical' notions of sin.

[7] Sandford, 1576, sig, Aiiii. For Socrates' association of reason and virtue, see *Euthydemus* 281d.

[8] Sandford, 1576, sig, Aiiii

[9] Ibid., sig, Aiiii. For Socrates' association of virtue and happiness, see *Gorgias* 470e.

[10] Sandford, 1576, sig, Di-Dii. Sandford goes on to combine his association of virtue and madness, with the propositions that virtue is eternal and that the eternal is superior, to conclude that 'nothing is better then Madnes'. See Sandford, 1576, sig. Cv.

[11] Despite her recognition that the 'author of the Mirrour is a sophisticated logician, who juggles identities and syllogisms', Sister Mary Geraldine mistakenly places the *Mirroure of Madness* in the Erasmian tradition. See Geraldine, 1964, pp. 53-55.

[12] Sandford, 1576, sig, Dii. See also Cicero, *Paradoxa* 33-34.

[13] See above pp. 158-160.

[14] Sandford, 1576, sig, Dii

[15] Ibid., sig, Bi

[16] Ibid., sig, Bii

[17] Ibid., sig, Bii

[18] Ibid., sig. Ciiii. For the details of this theory, see Wolfson, 1935, pp. 69-133.

[19] I. M. Bochenski has noted that 'there is undoubtedly in Aristotle something corresponding to the Stoic [*lekton*] or to the late scholastic '*conceptus objectivus*': namely the [*logos*]'. He adds, however, that the similarity of the Aristotelian *logos*, which he says is 'highly ambiguous' in Aristotle, to the Stoic *lekton* is restricted to its existence as 'an aspect of reality'. See Bochenski, 1951, p. 29. For more on this point, see Loyd, 1996, pp. 58-74, esp. 60-62.

[20] Sandford, 1576, sig. Ciiii

[21] Ibid., sig. Ciiii

[22] Ibid., sig. Ciiii

[23] Ibid., sig. Di. See also *Physics* 198b10-199b32. This syllogism is in Barbara and may be represented:

> Whatever works to an end is reason.
> Fantasy works to an end.
> Therefore, fantasy is reason.

Sandford follows this syllogism with another which takes the conclusion that fantasy is reason as the first premise and the earlier identification of fantasy and madness as the second, to conclude that 'reason is Madnes'. Hence:

> Fantasy is reason
> Fantasy is madness.
> Therefore, reason is madness.

Though this syllogism commits the fallacy of the undistributed middle, in light of Sandford's identification of fantasy and reason with respect to his definition of nature, the first premise, that fantasy is reason, may be inverted to secure its formal validity in Barbara (assuming, as Sandford intends, that 'fantasy' refers to the faculty as a whole and not to any particular 'phantasms' produced by that faculty). Nevertheless, this syllogism, as well as the one from which its first premise is

derived, is susceptible to the objection that it commits the fallacy of four terms in its equivocal manipulation of the senses of the term 'nature'.

[24] See above pp. 194-199.

[25] Donne, 1982, ll. 1486-1488

[26] Ibid., ll. 1543-1544. For a discussion of Bartholomäus Keckermann's scholastic understanding of the term 'nature', its use in his manual of Aristotelian logic, *Systema Systemata* (1613), and its relation to other early seventeenth-century understandings of the term, see Costello, 1958, p. 86.

[27] For a discussion of the role of ignorance in Erasmus' theology generally and in the *Praise of Folly* specifically, see Screech, 1980, pp. 16-68.

[28] Harvey, 1593, p. 139. Earlier, Harvey had more unequivocally accused *The Mirroure of Madnes* of frivolity. See Harvey, 1593, p. 70.

[29] Ibid., p. 82

[30] Donne, 1969, p. 97

[31] See Nashe, 1910, v. 1, p. 307.

[32] In the *Academica*, Cicero considers Socrates' use of irony to be a noble type of dissembling. See *Academica* II, 15, 74.

[33] Harvey, 1593, pp. 156-157

[34] Ibid., p. 22

[35] In her discussion of Harvey's promised (but never delivered) praise of the ass and his comment regarding the paradoxes of the followers of Scotus and the theologians of the Sorbonne, Eliane Cuvelier does not acknowledge the difference, which both Harvey and Nashe recognized, between the philosophical paradox and the rhetorical paradoxical encomium. See Cuvelier, 1982, pp. 181-194, esp. 184.

[36] Synesius, 1579, sig. Biii-Biiii. In a marginal comment, Fleming notes Synesius' identification with Socrates when he (Synesius) says, 'The unlearned and untaught multitude are favourers of absurd opinions: whereby it cometh to passe that if anie one presume to bring in a thing contarie to common custome, he must needes drinke poison' (sig. Ci). Later, Synesius defers to Plato's distrust of rhetoric. 'To what purpose serueth Platoes disproofe? He being an Orator, manifestlie sheweth, that Rhetorike is a smooth, a painted, and a pausible science: and therefore more addicted to flatterie, than to truth and equitie' (sig. Diiii). See Synesius, 1579, sig, Ci, Diiii. Harvey alludes to Fleming's 1579 translation of the *Laus Calvitii* when he describes the celebrated paradoxical encomiasts and paradoxists as 'silly country fellowes'. See Harvey, 1593, p. 157.

[37] Synesius, 1579, sig. Dii

[38] Synesius argues from contraries: 'Life and light being two of the best companions, are contrarie to death and darknesse. And if so be that brightnesse have nakednesse, & yet beautifieth: darknesse undoubtedlie having hairiness, of necessitie beseemeth.' He also refutes by exposing contrariety: 'Dion supposing haire more handsome for men, than for women, speaketh against himself, and tumbleth out flat contraries. For how shoulde we attribute that to strong men, which when they have, maketh them weak?' See Synesius, 1579, sig. Ciii.

[39] Harvey, 1593, p. 167

[40] For a discussion of Donne's view of the innovative equivocations of the Jesuits which overlooks his recognition of their paradoxicality, see Klause, 1994, pp. 181-215, esp. 190-193. Contrastly, for the view that Donne's *Paradoxes* were composed following the model of Jesuit doctrine of equivocation, and indicate his approval of the doctrine, see Price, 1996, pp. 51-81. Charles Coffin argued a similar position, claiming that Donne was imitating the style of the Jesuit as a satirical technique in *Ignatius His Conclave*. See Coffin, 1937, p. 201. In a letter to Robert Ker, Annabel Patterson has noticed Donne's anxiety over what she believes was a suspicion of equivocation in one of his sermons. See Patterson, 1982, p. 48. David Chanoff has also observed a similar anxiety over the doctrine of equivocation in Stanza XIX of 'A Litanie' and identified it as evidence of Donne's lingering Catholic sympathies. See Chanoff, 1979-1981, pp. 154-167.

[41] Harvey, 1593, p. 169

[42] Ibid., p. 169

[43] Ibid., p. 170

[44] Donne, 1980, p. 52, ll. 18-19

[45] Despite his insistence on the serious intentions of his paradoxes, Donne must have had his youthful eleventh paradox in mind when he complained, in a 1630 sermon, that those paradoxes which have 'called the faculties and abilities of women in question' have been generated 'out of a petulancy and wantonnesse of wit'. He is referring specifically to those who defend the (not yet universally dismissed) opinion that women have no souls. See Donne, 1953, IX, p. 190.

[46] Harvey, 1593, pp. 5-6

[47] Ibid., p. 170

[48] Ibid., p. 172

[49] Donne, 1977, p. 20

[50] Ibid., p. 20. In the presentation letter accompanying the copy of *Biathanatos* which John Donne Jr. sent to Constantine Huygens, the younger Donne refers to the work as a paradox, and then reiterates word for word his father's defense of the vaildity of the arguments and his disavowel of any intent to propose a 'new and dangerous doctrine'. Huygens included Dutch translations of Donne Sr.'s poetry in his *Korenbloemen* (1658). For the text of the younger Donne's letter, see Frye, 1952, pp. 495-496. Dennis Flynn has argued that both *Biathanatos* and *Pseudo-Martyr* were ironic, and that Donne sent Herbert a copy of *Biathanatos* because he knew that Herbert would not be 'scandalized' by it. Throughout his article, Flynn fails to discriminate the terms paradox and *thesis*, and consequently, mistakes the intentions of both works. See Flynn, 1973-1974, pp. 49-69. For a view which attributes the difference between *Biathanatos* and *Pseudo-Martyr* to their different intended audiences, see Emily P. Miller, 1987, pp. 7-14.

[51] S. E. Sprott has recorded the seventeenth and eighteenth-century responses to *Biathanatos* and notes that Anthony Tuckney, a Calvinist and Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge was the first 'to examine Donne's relativist reasoning for suicide' (p. 64). Tuckney's examination, which, significantly, took place in the context of a Cambridge University disputation held 'some time between 1655 and 1661' (p. 62), was followed by attacks on the relativism of *Biathanatos* by John Adams in 1700 and Charles Moore in 1790. See John Adams, 1700, pp. 73-77; and Moore, 1790, v. VI, pp. 13-15. On Tuckney, see Sprott, 1961, pp. 62-65; and Costello, 1958, p. 111; on Adams and Moore, see Sprott, 1961, pp. 74-78, 152-155; and Williamson, 1934, pp. 276-291. Many modern readers of *Biathanatos* have followed Tuckney, Adams and Moore into the same error of accusing Donne of relativism. See Coffin, 1937, pp. 253-259; Malloch, 1958, pp. 32-34; Hoopes, 1962, pp. 122, 170-171; Carey, 1981, pp. 190-195; and Lota Brown, 1995, pp. pp. 21-23, 76-83.

[52] See More, 1976, p. 113.

[53] Ibid., p. 114

[54] Ibid., pp. 146-147. Following Augustine's answer to Donatus as recorded in Gratian's *Decretum* (*Patrilogia Latina*, v. 33, 753-756), More insists that a potential suicide may be bound in order to prevent him from commiting the act because 'it is agaynst the playne open prohibicion of god'. See More, 1976, p. 145. In *Biathanatos*, Donne rejects this reason because he maintains that even an erring conscience may act without sin if it believes it has received a divine dispensation from the law. As we will see, he also rejects Augustine's second reason, that there is no example of the faithful commiting suicide in the scriptures. More defers to Augustine's second reason as well. See Donne, 1982, ll. 2843-2854, 3898-3937; and More, 1976, p. 141. For a discussion of More's use of Augustine's arguments against suicide and his concerns about the degree to which he effected his own execution, see Green, 1972, pp. 135-155.

[55] Donne, 1982, ll. 1415-1426

[56] A. E. Malloch has shown that the two definitions of sin which Donne attributes to Aquinas (*Peccatum est...*[ll. 1444-1445]) and (*Omnis defectus debiti...*[ll. 1442-1443]) are taken from the *Tabula Aurea* (1473), a 'sourcebook for Thomistic texts' of the fifteenth-century Dominican, Peter of Bergamo. Malloch claims that Donne chose Aquinas' tripartite definition because it would 'help to make his argument fragrant in the nostrils of those scholastic and artificial men' who (Malloch claims) Donne meant to parody in *Biathanatos*. See Malloch, 1957, pp. 332-335. Michael Rudick and M. Pabst Battin note Donne's use of Aquinas' definition of sin, but consider it to be merely a 'refinement of the unitary account of sin in Augustine'. See Donne, 1982, pp. xlvii-xlix.

[57] More, 1965, p. 99

[57] Ibid., p. 99

[58] Ibid., p. 101. A. E. Malloch has overlooked More's irony in this passage of *Utopia*, and concludes that he was sceptical about man's apprehension of the universality of Christian truths, and therefore, genuinely recommended a relativist ethics which could accommodate changing, and potentially contradictory, political circumstances. His decision to remain silent on the issue of Henry's divorce, a decision which, while initially politic, resulted in his knowingly effecting his own execution, should be sufficient evidence that More did not genuinely advocate the subordination of Christian ethics to the inconsistent demands of secular authority. As a result of his misreading, Malloch makes More, Erasmus, Agrippa, Montaigne and Donne all part of a tradition of paradox which subscribes to the relativist principle 'that knowledge is dramatic...[and] proportional to each historical scene' (p. 202). See Malloch, 1956, pp. 191-203; and Malloch, 1958, pp. 32-34. M. T. Jones-Davies has followed Malloch into the same error by accepting his reading of the *Utopia*. See Jones-Davies, 1982, pp. 105-123, esp. 116. For useful comment on this passage in *Utopia*, see the introduction of Edward Surtz, S. J. in More, 1965, p. cxlvii.

[59] It is worth noting that the Anglican casuist, Jeremy Taylor accused Catholic casuists of the same attempt to relieve the conscience of its burden to assent to what it perceives to be the best course of action through 'ingenious' interpretations. 'They [the Catholic casuists] have made their cases of conscience and the actions of their lives unstable as the face of the waters, and immeasureable as the dimensions of the moon; by which means their confessors shall be enabled to answer according to every man's humour, and no man shall depart sad from their penitential chairs'. See Taylor, 1660, XI, p. 345 (quoted in Camille Welles Slights, 1981, p. 6). Not surprsingly, in the sixteenth and seventeenth-century controversies between Protestant and Catholic casuists, both sides were equally convinced that the other was inventing ways to justify sinful actions. For more on this controversy, see Camille Welles Slights, 1981, pp. 3-34.

[60] In a letter to Henry Goodyer in 1609, Donne said, 'To do things by example, and upon confidence of anothers judgement may be some kinde of second wisdome; but it is but writing by a copy: or indeed it is the hardest of all, and the issue of the first wisdome, for I cannot know that this example should be followed, except I knew that it is good, and so I must judge my Judge. Our assent therefore, and arrest, must be upon things, not persons.' See Donne, 1977, p. 28. On More's orthodox Catholic view on suicide, see Green, 1972, pp. 135-155. On the relation of More and Erasmus to Donne's Catholic upbringing, see Flynn, 1983, pp. 1-9. For Flynn's criticism of Bald's and Walton's accounts of Donne's conversion from Catholicism, see Flynn, 1975-1976a, pp. 1-17; and Flynn, 1975-1976b, 178-195.

[61] On More's and Eramsus' common humanist claims against the scholastic theologians on points of scriptural interpretation, see Nauert, 1998, pp. 427-438, esp. 435.

[62] Erasmus, 1988, p. 9

[63] Ibid., p. 9

[64] Ibid., p. 13. See also Matthew 6:22.

[65] For Augustine's description of the attainment of illumination through figurative reading, see Augustine, *On Christian Docrtine* III, 5-17.

[66] Erasmus, 1988, p. 34. For a discussion of Augustine's use of allegorical interpretation as a means to avoid the errors which arise from excessive attention to the literal signification of words, see Mazzeo, 1964, pp. 1-28, esp 7-16. For a discussion of Origen's neoplatonic influence on Erasmus' theory of exegesis, see Screech, 1980, pp. 113-117, 223-240. For a discussion of Origen's preference for allegorical interpretation, see Copleston, 1972, pp. 21-22.

[67] Erasmus, 1988, p. 33

[68] Ibid., p. 65

[69] Ibid., p. 69. For a discussion of Erasmus' aversion to the Aristotelian methods of exposition of the scholastic theolgians, see Screech, 1980, pp. 107-110.

[70] For discussion of the mixture of Aristotelian and Platonic doctrines in the late sixteenth century, see Schmitt, 1983a, pp. 139-190; and Schmitt, 1983b, pp. 89-109. Martin Camargo has shown that

Augustine himself may have criticized Erasmus for overestimating the power of Platonic philosophy to discover the truth. See Camargo, 1998, pp. 393-408.

[71] Donne, 1967a, p. 27. Donne, no doubt, was also thinking of the moral permissiveness of the Jesuit doctrines of equivocation and probabilism. Probabilism, as opposed to the Protestant casuistical doctrine of probabiliorism, permitted an action to be justified by reasons which achieved even a lesser degree of probability. In John Webster's *Duchess of Malfi* (1623), Bosola observed the danger of such forms of justification. '...Why, 'tis well: / Security some men call the suburbs of hell, / Only a dead wall between...' (V, iii, ll. 333-335).

[72] Donne, 1967a, p. 39. In *Biathanatos*, Donne would confirm that only a decision taken without the perturbations of the passions is rationally justified. There he says that 'he whose conscience, well-tempered and dispassioned, assures him that the reason of self-preservation ceases in him, may also presume that the law ceases too'. See Donne, 1982, ll. 1741-1743.

[73] Mary Paton Ramsay has failed to observe these critical distinctions in Donne's interpretive practice, and permits him to approve both the allegorical readings of Augustine and the syllogistic expositions of Aquinas. Though Donne could utilize allegorical methods to express ideas which he considered to be beyond the limits of human knowledge, Ramsay fails to describe Donne's epistemological views with respect to the divergent traditions of neoplatonic Augustinianism and Aristotelian Thomism. As a result, her account of Donne's scepticism is confused, at times affirming his rejection of knowledge of universals through the senses on traditional neoplatonic grounds, and at others, his acceptance of Aristotelian deductive procedures (which assume some knowledge of universals through the senses). See Ramsay, 1924, pp. 153-173, 200-223. For a useful discussion of Erasmus' debt to Augustine's allegorical method of interpretation, which draws the distinctions between Augustinian and scholastic epistemology which Ramsay neglects, see Cave, 1979, pp. 78-110.

[74] Donne, 1967a, p. 40. See Donne, 1953, VI, pp. 62-63 for Donne's warning against the dangers of both allegorical and literal interpretations of scripture. Quoted in Stanwood and Asals, 1986, pp. 266-267. Veronica Kahn has shown that Luther objected to the figurative reading of Erasmus for the same reasons that Donne objected to excessively allegorical interpretation. See Kahn, 1985, pp. 100-101.

[75] Donne, 1967a, p. 40. See Donne, 1953, IX, pp. 328-329 in which Donne observes a discrepancy between the figurative interpretations of Jerome and Augustine. Quoted in Stanwood and Asals, 1986, pp. 254-255. For a discussion of Protestant typology and its relation to literal readings of scripture, which explicates the typological exegesis displayed in some of Donne's sermons, see Lewalski, 1979, pp. 111-144. Lewalski notes that despite Donne's 'creative uses of typology' in his divine poems and interpretations of scripture, he 'made very limited use of natural types', and therefore, should not be understood to have employed the 'pervasive Platonic symbolism of Augustine' (pp. 138-140). Though he argues for Donne's reliance on Augustine in his exegetical practice, Dennis Quinn observes that Donne derived 'spiritual' meanings 'especially in connection with the Psalms and other poetical and prophetic books'. See Quinn, 1962, pp. 323-324. Jeanne M. Shami has argued that Lewalski has over-emphasized Donne's reliance on typological interpretations of examples in his sermons. See Shami, 1983, pp. 53-66. Donne regularly expresses his suspicion of logical inferences drawn from allegorical readings of scripture in *Biathanatos* (e.g. ll. 4225-4228). His suspicion of such metaphorical interpretations is further reflected in his condemnation of this practice in the formation of Catholic doctrine, a practice, he said, which rendered such doctrine merely 'a piece of poetry'. See Donne, 1839, III, p. 318; quoted in Sprott, 1949-1950, p. 344. Joan Webber has also observed Donne's criticisms of excessively allegorical methods of interpreting scripture, but has failed to distinguish the Thomist basis of analogical methods of interpretation and the neoplatonic basis of allegorical and metaphorical methods. She does, however, notice the Puritan preference for allegorical reading and the Anglican insistence on the preservation of literal meanings in interpretation. See Webber, 1963, pp. 122-182, esp. 139-142, 164-174.

  James S. Baumlin would have benefitted from more attentive reading of Lewalski's and Quinn's studies of Donne's interpretive practices. In his attempt to attribute to Donne the 'incarnationist rhetoric' (which Baumlin's fails to notice is taught in Book IV of Augustine's *On*

Christian Doctrine), he misrepresents Donne's negative opinion (expressed in *The Essays in Divinity*) of the mystical interpretations of the cabalists, and mistakenly associates Donne's poetic use of Platonic imagery with Calvinist and Augustinian semiotics. See Baumlin, 1988, pp. 151-182. In a later book on Donne's rhetoric, Baumlin continues to insist that Donne responds to sceptical doubts about the power of words accurately to represent external reality through the assertion of an 'incarnation' of the truth in the text. This incarnation, like Baumlin's sister rhetorical response to scepticism, 'transcendentalism', is a mystical (and pseudo-neoplatonic) affirmation of the accessibility of truth which relies fundamentally on an initial declaration of faith. Transendentalism is essentially the mirror image of incarnationism for Baumlin; instead of the truth mystically becoming incarnate in the word, the word equally mystically transcends the subjectivity of its own ambiguous verbal parameters to accurately reflect the Platonic concept lying static beyond the sensible realm. Baumlin says that Augustine's rhetoric is the origin of Donne's supposed transcendentalism, and argues that Donne recommended that the reader of Christian paradoxes 'yield to the unreason of its paradoxy' by asserting with Augustine, '*credo ut intelligam*' (p. 226). Two errors are evident in Baumlin's account. First, and most drastic, is his assertion that incarnationism is a feature of Aquinas' and Aristotle's rhetorical theory because for them 'truth is knowable and language capable of expressing it' (p. 263). Baumlin defends this claim on the basis of Aquinas' and Aristotle's rejection of scepticism, but does not investigate the details of that rejection, and consequently, ignores both their realism and empiricism, both of which are incompatible with Baumlin's notion of incarnationism (pp. 48-49). Second, Baumlin's representation of Donne's view of the literal, figurative and allegorical assumes Donne's incarnationism and transcendentalism, and therefore, creates the impression that, for Donne, the literal was just a more restricted form of the figurative or allegorical, which, of course, it was not. At one point, Baumlin tries to distinguish the figurative from the performative in an effort to distance his notion of incarnationism from the sceptical problems of verbal representation, but ultimately his distinction disintegrates into a jumble of un-significant hyphenated and half-italicized neologisms, a sure sign that his explanation is incoherent. Finally, as if to suggest that hyphenating the word 'represent' removed its symbolic connotation, Baumlin says of one of Donne's verse letters to Thomas Woodward, 'the poem admits its failure to re-present, and thus preserve, the poet through language' (p. 165). See Baumlin, 1991, pp. 47-52, 162-176, 191-229, 263-269.

On Augustine's 'incarnational rhetoric', see Camargo, 1998, pp. 393-408. Thomas F. Merrill has argued that as a minister, Donne insisted, with the Puritans, on the sacramental power of the preached word of God, an insistence, Merrill claims, which would have placed him at odds with the Anglican view represented by Hooker, that both the reading and hearing of scripture conduce equally well to the salvation of the congregation. See Merrill, 1968-1969, pp. 597-616. In his discussion of Donne's view of the value of mystical interpretations of Christian mysteries, James Biester overemphasizes the influence of Augustine as well as Donne's intention to simulate the divine mysteries in his sermons and religious poems by attempting to evoke the wonder associated with their contemplation. See Biester, 1997, pp. 128-154.

[76] In his brief discussion of Donne's ethical interpretations of scripture, Dennis Quinn continues to recognize only Augustine's influence and fails to mention Aquinas at all. See Quinn, 1962, pp. 326-329. For a discussion of Augustine's interpretive theory and its potential for divergent applications to ambiguous texts, see Mazzeo, 1964, pp. 1-28, esp. 16-23.

[77] Donne, 1982, ll. 1430-1432; see *Summa* II ii, q. 91, a. 2

[78] See *Summa* II i, q. 21, a. 1; q. 19, a. 4; q. 71, a. 6.

[79] *Summa* II i, q. 71, a. 6

[80] *Summa* II i, q. 19, a. 4

[81] Aquinas had said that 'a wrong act is simply one which deviates from the rightness that a given action ought to have'. See *Summa* I, q. 63, a. 1.

[82] The laws of nature, reason and God are delineated by Aquinas in his treatise on law in *Summa* II i, qq. 90-105.

[83] Donne, 1982, ll. 1446

[84] Ibid., ll. 1447-1449. Though he claims that Aquinas distinguished between the eternal and divine law on the grounds that the former consisted of a set of divine archetypes similar to Platonic forms and the latter, of divine commands such as the Ten Commandments, Anthony J. Lisska, maintains that both conform to rational necessity. It is this conformity, we will see, which Donne seeks to emphasize in his utilization of Aquinas' tripartite analysis of law. See Lisska, 1996, pp. 89-115, 126-128.

[85] Donne, 1982, ll. 4104-4111

[86] Ibid., ll. 1457-1460

[87] Aquinas relies heavily on Isidore's formulations of the laws of God, reason, nature and custom in the *Etymologiae* throughout his discussion in *Summa* II i, q. 90-105. See for example *Summa* II i, q. 95, a. 4; q. 96, a. 2; q. 100, a. 7.

[88] For a survey of humanist objections to scholastic logic, including those of Petrarch, Valla, Vives and Colet, see Perreiah, 1982, pp. 3-22. For a general discussion of the elements contributing to the rise of humanism against scholasticism, see Nauert, 1998, pp. 427-438; and Ashworth, 1982, pp. 787-796.

[89] Erasmus presented his edition of Aristotle to John More (1510-1547), the son of his friend Thomas, in the dedicatory letter of 1531. There he acknowledges the confusion into which the scholastic tradition has cast his work, but assures John that with patience, he will be led to an understanding of Aristotle's greatest of minds. See Erasmus, 1539, sig. A2. Obviously, Erasmus recognized the value of Aristotle's thought, particularly of his natural philosophy. His objection to Aristotle rested principally on the use of his logic in divinity. On Erasmus' edition of Aristotle, see Schmitt, 1983b, p. 19.

[90] See *Paradoxa* 2-3.

[91] Erasmus, 1522, pp. 265, 271

[92] Agrippa, 1569, sig. Uuiii. Agrippa's Latin for 'brief questions' is *quaestiunculas*. See Agrippa, 1537, sig. Xiiii. Petrarch had opposed Ciceronian eloquence to the syllogistic method of the schoolmen, calling the dialecticians 'monsters...armed with double-edged enthymemes' who should be avoided when they 'spit out syllogisms'. Quoted in Cassirer, Kristeller and Randall Jr, 1948, pp. 135, 139. For more on Petrarch's critique of Aristotelianism, see Trinkaus, 1980, pp. 249-274; and Perreiah, 1982, pp. 3-22. For a summary of Petrarch's Augustinianism and his rejection of the logical abuses of scholasticsm, see Murphy, 1980, pp. 223-247.

[93] Agrippa, 1569, sig. Xxi

[94] Ibid., sig. Xxii. Agrippa's Latin emphasizes the point more forcefully. He has '*demonstrare*' for Sandford's 'to declare'. See Agrippa, 1537, sig. Yi.

[95] Agrippa, 1569, sig. Zziii

[96] Ibid., sig. Yy

[97] See ibid., sig. Ssiii-Ttiii. Agrippa later claimed that Aristotle 'thorowe the immoderate desire of knowledge fallinge madde slewe him selfe, beinge made a woorthy sacrifice for the deuils which taught him knowledge' (sig. Tiii-U).

[98] Ibid., sig. C

[99] Ibid., sig. Biii

[100] Ibid., sig. Xxiii

[101] Ibid., sig. Bbbi

[102] See *Satire* III, l. 80. For an interesting discussion of the possible sources for Donne's 'hill of truth' image, and its relation to the 'rectilinear movement' (i.e. 'about must, and about must goe', l. 81) which represents the rational exertions of the searching Christian, see Hester, 1976-1977, pp. 100-105.

[103] Donne, 1982, ll. 1284-1285, 1333

[104] Ibid., ll. 1340-1343

[105] Augustine, *Ad Simplicianum* I, q. 2, 13. See also Romans 9: 16-17.

[106] Augustine, *Retractionum* I, 23. For a discussion of the problem of grace and free will in Augustine, see Gilson, 1961, pp. 154-164.

[107] For Donne's anxiety, see for instance, 'Divine Meditation I', ll. 7-14. Donne expressed the same epistemological reservations with respect to predestination in a 1626 sermon. There he warned, 'Consider how dangerously an abuse of the great doctrine of Predestination may bring thee to think, that God is bound to thee, and thou not bound to him, that thou mayest renounce him, and he must embrace thee, and so to make thee too familiar with God, and too homely with Religion, upon presumption of a Decree.' See Donne, 1953, VII, p. 317. See also John F. H. New's discussion of this passage in the context of the Anglican/Puritan controversy over grace and predestination. His comments on the commitment of Donne, Hooker and Anglican's in general to the application of reason in matters which scripture does not explicitly address are illuminating on this point. See New, 1964, pp. 7-29, esp. 20-21. Jeffrey Johnson has shown that Donne also thought that the issue of the resistability of God's grace (which, like predestination, grew out of the objections raised by Calvin) was theoretically insoluable and should not, therefore, be admitted as a matter for disputation. See Johnson's discussion of *Sermons* I (p. 255) in relation to Donne's view on grace and predestination in Johnson, 1999, pp. 123-131, esp. 125. For a reading of 'Holy Sonnet I' as a declaration of the necessity of faith and grace in the Christian response to doubt, see Bond, 1981, pp. 25-35.

[108] Charles B. Schmitt observes that even Aquinas incorporates Platonic elements into his thought to provide a metaphysical framework in which the mind may apprehend universal principles of Christian ethics and theology. He goes on to argue that Aquinas' 'eclectic Aristotelianism' influenced the thought of the late sixteenth-century Aristotelian, John Case. See Schmitt, 1983b, pp. 93-95; and Schmitt, 1983a, pp. 149-150. For an account of the conventional and contradictory position, that Aquinas' rejected Plato's doctrine of Ideas, see Henle, 1956, pp. 324-400. F. C. Copleston has observed the Platonic elements in Aquinas' thought to which Schmitt may be referring, but is also careful to emphasize the critical differences between Aquinas' theory of analogy and the Platonic Idealism adopted by Augustine. See Copleston, 1955, pp. 121-142.

[109] Donne, 1930, p. 40

[110] For more on the publishing history of the *Paradossi*, see Trevor Peach's introduction to his critical edition of Estienne's *Paradoxes*, which contains his translation of Lando's *Paradossi* and some supplementary material added by Estienne. See Lando, 1998, pp. 7-50.

[111] The twenty-eighth through thirtieth of Lando's *Paradossi* are entitled: 'Che l'opre quali al presente habbiamo sotto nome di Aritotele Stagirita non sieno di Aristotele', 'Che Aristotele fusse non solo ignorante, ma il piu malvagio huomo di quella età', 'Che M. Tullio fusse non solo ignorante di Filosofia, della quale tanto temerariamente si vanta, ma anche di Retorica'. Michel Simonin suggests that Estienne omitted these paradoxes because they would offend both the humanists and scholastics who so valued the works of Cicero and Aristotle. He goes on to argue that the conventional Christian piety of Lando's *Paradossi* (especially the first paradox, 'Che miglior sia la povertà, che la richezza') influenced the development of Christian paradoxes, such as Poissenot's *Traicte Paradoxique* (1583), which placed faith and humility above reason and power. See Simonin, 1982, pp. 23-39.

[112] Lando, 1998, pp. 64

[113] *Topics* (Aristotle) 105a15-18

[114] Donne, 1980, pp. 21-22, ll. 10-12

[115] Ibid., p. 22, ll. 29-31. See also Donne, 1953, VI, pp. 208-209.

[116] *Paradoxa* 24; Donne, 1977, p. 20

[117] Donne, 1982, ll. 1274-1275, 1205-1206

[118] Sister Mary Geraldine has argued that Lando's 'concern is with wordishly ingenious dialectic', and attempts to establish his influence on Donne's *Paradoxes*. She does not, however, notice that Lando avoids syllogistic argumentation. The syllogism, as Cicero had made clear in his attack on Stoic logic, is the trademark vehicle for 'wordishly ingenious dialectic'. If Lando was concerned with such dialectic, he criticized it not by parodying it, as did Donne in the *Paradoxes* (and as Geraldine suggests), but by avoiding it altogether. In her attempt to argue Lando's influence on Donne, Helen Peters cites Geraldine in support, but observes that 'Donne's Paradoxes with their outrageous wit outstrip Lando's earlier efforts'. Peters' observation is accurate, but she fails to recognize why. The structure of Lando's conventional inductive argumentation simply cannot serve

as a vehicle for the wit which arises from the fallacy of four terms in syllogism. See Geraldine, 1964, pp. 46-49; and Donne, 1980, p. xxii. See also MacMillan, 1971, p. 67.

[119] Myron P. Gilmore has argued that Lando disagreed with Erasmus on a number of issues, most prominent of which was Erasmus' criticism of the Ciceronian rhetoricians in his *Ciceronianus* (1528). In Lando's *Cicero relegatus et Cicero revocatus* (1534), Ciceronian rhetoric is criticized in the form of the imaginary trial and exile of Cicero in the first dialogue, but in the second, is vindicated by a defense of Cicero's rhetorical virtues. Lando subjects Erasmus to similar scrutiny in his *In Des. Erasmi Roterodami funus dialogus lepidissimus* (1540). Though his true opinion of Ciceronianism and Erasmus is not clear from these works, Lando's epistemological affinity with Erasmus and Agrippa is evident in his dialogue *Sacra Srittura* (1552), which adamantly emphasized the superiority of scripture as a guide to moral knowledge. See Gilmore, 1974, pp. 1-14. On *Cicero relegatus et Cicero revocatus*, see Fahy, 1975, pp. 30-41. On *Sacra Srittura*, see Grendler, 1981, pp. 25-38.

[120] Lando, 1998, p. 204

[121] Ibid., pp. 234-235

[122] In his introduction, Trevor Peach discusses the similarity of Lando's *Paradossi* to mock-forensic declamations ('causes grasses'). See Lando, 1998, pp. 18-19. We recall also that Thomas Newton, in his commentary on his translation of the *Paradoxa*, considered Cicero's rhetorical objective to be forensic. See Cicero, 1569, sig. Aii. Rosalie Colie profoundly misreperesented both the rhetorical prescription according to which Lando was composing his *Paradossi* as well as the Augustinian and Pauline epistemology which they advocate when she confusingly claimed that the 'forensic paradoxes of Lando's *epideixis*' are opposed to the 'paradoxes of religious transcendence exploited in *Paradise Lost* and Donne's Anniversary Poems'. See Colie, 1966, p. 481. J. C. Margolin mistakenly combines the paradoxical encomia and mock defenses explicitly distinguished by Isocrates in his critique of Gorgias' praise of Helen, and then places writers of philosophical *theses*, paradoxical encomia and mock defenses under one category which he calls 'l'eloge-plaidoyer'. Because he fails to distinguish these genres, he, like Geraldine, Peters and Carey before him, continues mistakenly to make Donne a disciple of Lando. See Margolin, 1982, pp. 59-84, esp. pp. 62, 72. Anne R. Larsen has usefully stressed both Lando's and Estienne's desire to confirm orthodox opinions in their paradoxes, and has also drawn some attention to their function as forensic declamations. However, she does not observe the difference between the uncontroversial nature of the specific forensic declamation and the speculative nature of the defense of a general *thesis*. As a consequence, she does not distinguish the respective objectives of Cicero's *Paradoxa*, Agrippa's *Vanity* and Lando's and Estienne's paradoxes. See Larsen, 1997, pp. 759-774.

[123] Lando, 1593, sig. A4

[124] Lando, 1998, p. 59

[125] *Paradoxa* 5. We recall that Thomas Newton, in his commentary on this passage in his translation of the *Paradoxa*, considered this more precise rhetorical objective to be forensic. See Cicero, 1569, sig. Aii.

[126] *Paradoxa* 7

[127] Ibid., 20

[128] See Peach, 1995, pp. 101-110, esp. 102, n. 5.

[129] Agrippa, 1569, sig. Uui

[130] In his defense of the *Vanity* against the condemnation of the work by the University of Louvain and the Sorbonne, Agrippa had said, '*declamatio non judicat, non dogmatizat sed...alia joco, alia serio, alia false, alia saevere dicit...quaedam vera, quaedam falsa, quaedam dubia pronunciat...multa invalida argumenta adducit*'. See Agrippa, 1533, c. xii. See the discussions of this passage and Agrippa's seriousness in Lando, 1998, p. 19; Bowen, 1972b, pp. 11-12; and Bowen, 1972a, pp. 249-256.

[131] Peach notices the irony of a legal defense which must not employ its characteristic rhetorical devices in its arguments against the common low opinion of these devices. ' Quelle ironie d'ailleurs à faire soutenir cette "cause difficile", et qui va contre le bon sens, par un "jeune avocat" qui n'est autre que "Proces" lui-même!' (p. 109). See Peach, 1995, pp. 101-110.

[132] Estienne, 1998, p. 260

[133] Ibid., p. 260

[134] Ibid., p. 266. See also 1 Corinthians 6:1-11.

[135] Lando reminds us that Paul warned that we should avoid the 'abysme de doctrines humaines' and 'demourer en crainte, sans passer la borne d'obeissance'. In his twenty-fifth paradox, 'Qu'il vault mieux vivre en craincte qu'en asseurance', he again cites Paul's letters to the Corinthians in defense of fear and against the vain pride of human wisdom. See Lando, 1998, pp. 86, 234.

[136] Though he is correct in his rejection of Louis I. Bredvold's claim that Donne followed Montaigne in his denial of objective moral standards, Robert Ornstein underemphasizes Donne's insistence, in *Biathanatos*, on the necessity and self-evidency of first moral principles derived both from nature and from revelation. Ornstein's attempt to show that Donne 'insists that objective moral standards can only be deduced in each particular instance by reason itself, not by the unthinking application of immutable rules' fails to recognize that a deduction requires the use of a universal principle, which by definition, is a 'standard' and a 'rule' (p. 224). Furthermore, if these standards and rules are not accepted as 'objective' and 'immutable', they continue to be susceptible to the sceptical critique of first principles which Donne sought to delimit, and against which Ornstein sought to align Donne's epistemology. See Ornstein, 1956, pp. 213-229; and Bredvold, 1923, pp. 471- 502. In her often confused account of the relation between Stoic and sceptical epistemology, Rosalie Colie failed to see that Bredvold's claim that Donne followed Montaigne was irreconcilable with Ornstein's view that Donne (like the Stoics) insisted on man's ability to apprehend first principles. As a result, Colie seems to see no problem in calling Donne both a Stoic and a sceptic. As we have seen, Stoics and Academics could agree in ethics, but their epistemological differences make it necessary for critics attempting to understand Donne's paradoxes in light of these ancient traditions and their Renaissance reformulations to specify in what ways Donne could be called a Stoic or a sceptic. See Colie, 1964, pp. 145-170; and Colie, 1966, p. 415.

[137] Donne admits, 'I abstained purposely from extending my discourse to particular rules and instances, both because because I dare not profess myself master in so curious a science, and because the limits are obscure and steepy and slippery and narrow'. See Donne, 1982, ll. 5451-5454. It is worth contrasting Donne's comment here with a comment by the Anglican casuist, Jeremy Taylor, in which he declares confidently that his role as a casuist, unlike Donne's as a paradoxist, is precisely to extend his 'discourse to particular rules and instances'. He says that 'although I have not given answers to every doubt, yet have I told what we are to do when doubt arises; I have conducted the doubting conscience by such rules which in all doubts will declare her duty'. See Taylor, 1660, p. xx (quoted in Cathcart, 1975, p. 90). For more on Taylor's *Ductor Dubitantium* in the context of seventeenth-century Cambridge casuistry, see Costello, 1958, pp. 123-124.

[138] Donne, 1982, ll. 1277-1278

[139] Ibid., ll. 1457-1460, 1716-1720

[140] John Klause has argued that Donne's *Metempsychosis* was influenced by Montaigne's *Essays*, and particularly by the 'Apology for Raymond Sebond'. He does note, however, that 'Donne does not bring faith...peremptorily to the rescue' as Montaigne does (p. 440) and observes the difference between the advice of Donne's third satire to 'doubt wisely' in the interest of rational choice and Montaigne's recommedation of suspension of assent. See Klause, 1986, pp. 418-443, esp. 442 on *Biathanatos*. James S. Baumlin has argued that Pyrrhonism is the 'philosophical position informing the rhetoric...of..."Satyre III",' and that Donne, like Montaigne and Erasmus, advocated a fideist response to disputed theological questions on the basis of a radical distrust of the ability of logic to conduce to certitude (p. 52). He directs his argument against Terry Sherwood's emphasis on Donne's rationalism, but fails to acknowledge the evidence which Sherwood has compiled in support of his view that Donne recommended the use of logical reasoning to solve ethical problems. Moreover, he follows Thomas O. Sloane into the error of thinking that the declamation of *controversiae* was an intrinsicallly sceptical undertaking. See Baumlin, 1991, pp. 52-66, 119-156. See Sherwood, 1984, pp. 38-42; and Sloane, 1985, pp. 67-207.

[141] Montaigne, 1908, v. 2, p. 136

[142] See ibid., v. 2, p. 136. 'Faith, giving as it were a tincture and lustre unto *Sebonds* arguments, make them more firme and solid'. On the insincerity of Montaigne's 'Apology' and its relation to fideism and paradox, see Gray, 1974, pp. 134-145. On the sincerity of the 'Apology' and its relation to fideism and paradox, see Demure, 1983, pp. 188-208. For a discussion of Montaigne's fideism in the context of the history of Pyrrhonist scepticism, see Hiley, 1987, pp. 195-199. On Montaigne's use of irony and its relation to paradox in the *Essays*, see Bellenger, 1982, pp. 9-22.

[143] Montaigne, 1908, v. 2, p. 137

[144] See ibid., p. 181. Montaigne devotes the first quarter of the 'Apology' to the refutation of Sebond's subordination of animals to man and his comparison of man to God. See esp. pp. 142-180, 234-236. On Montaigne's anti-rationalism and its relation to the Renaissance concept of right reason, see Hoopes, 1962, pp. 114-122.

[145] Montaigne, 1908, v. 2, pp. 133-134

[146] Ibid., v. 2, p. 297. See Ornstein, 1956, pp. 213-229, esp. 223.

[147] Donne, 1982, ll. 1573-1575

[148] Ibid., ll. 1575-1580

[149] See Donne, 1982, ll. 4513-4515. Meg Lota Brown mistakenly assumes that because *Biathanatos* is a paradox, it operates according to the description of Donne's early paradoxes in his letter to Wotton which accompanied a copy of the *Paradoxes*. Her assumption, like Malloch's, Colie's and Fish's, relies on an inaccurate understanding of the traditional generic function of paradox, and leads her to conclude with Malloch that *Biathanatos* uses various and strange examples because it, as a paradox, must be disingenuous like the paradoxes of the *Paradoxes and Problems*. This conclusion further leads her to conclude that *Biathanatos* is a work which intentionally makes fallacious arguments, which, once refuted, reveal the relative nature of moral law. In her commitment to this position, Lota Brown quite irresponsibly misquotes Donne on the nature of external acts. After quoting the unedited version of Donne's statement in the introduction (pp. 22-23), she later excises 'external' from the original and dispenses with the critical distinction between internal and external deliberation which Donne makes throughout the work. In the context of her discussion of the relativism of *Biathanatos*, Lota Brown gives Donne's statement as 'Circumstances condition [all acts], and giue them theyr Nature' (p. 76, Lota Bown's brackets). What Donne actually says, and what Lota Brown had earlier quoted, is, 'there is no external act naturally evil, and that circumstances condition them, and give them their nature'. See Donne, 1982, ll. 4513-4515; and Lota Brown, 1995, pp. 22-23, 76-83. In his argument against *Biathanatos* in an academic disputation held at Cambridge some time between 1655 and 1661, Anthony Tuckney had been careful to observe the distinction between external acts (understood as morally indifferent) and intrinsically evil acts which is operative in Donne's statement on external acts. Tuckney argues, however, that suicide is not an external act, but one which is 'against God's command'. See Tuckney's comments quoted in Sprott, 1961, pp. 63-64. For Malloch's mistaken reading of this passage, see Malloch, 1958, pp. 128-129. In his doctoral dissertation, Norman Robert McMillan follows Malloch into the same errors. See MacMillan, 1971, pp. 206-210. For an accurate and brief discussion of the moral status of external acts, see Donne, 1982, pp. lxxi-lxxii, lxxxv.

[150] W. T. Costello has noted that in the seventeenth century, both the civil and canon law recognized 'the validity of custom (now regarded as a common practice enduring for some fifty years)'. See Costello, 1958, p. 139.

[151] Montaigne, 1908, v. 2, p. 210

[152] Ibid., v. 2, p. 207. Veronica Kahn examines Montaigne's discussion of the Stoic *lekton* and his debt to Sextus in her attempt to show that Montaigne's rhetoric was 'self-consuming' in the way described by Stanley Fish in his *Self-Consuming Artifacts*. See Kahn, 1985, pp. 115-151. It is worth noting that at the end of the sixteenth century and beginning of the seventeenth, the renowned scholar, Justus Lipsius, in addition to taking a genuine philosophical interest the *paradoxa* of the Stoics, utilized their theory of the *lekton* to explain the existence of incorporeal meanings. On Lipsius' Stoicism, see Saunders, 1955; on his use of the *lekton*, see Saunders, 1955, pp. 181-184.

[153] Montaigne, 1908, v. 2, p. 186

[154] Ibid., v. 2, p. 192. For a discussion of Montaigne's 'Of Phisiognomy' in the context of Erasmus' and Agrippa's praises of ignorance, see Scoodel, 1983, pp. 209-237. Scoodel's reading draws attention (though not explicitly) to the differences between Erasmus' and Agrippa's neoplatonic advocacy of the acquisition of mystical knowledge through the rejection of scholastic dialectic and Montaigne's Pyrrhonist rejection of any reliable means to acquire knowledge.

[155] Montaigne, 1908, v. 2, p. 201

[156] In his two essays on conscience, 'Of Conscience' and 'Of the Liberty of Conscience', Montaigne maintains that the individual's 'secret knowledge' of his intentions is his assurance against the threats of external authority. His sceptical critique of reason's ability to conduce to knowledge and his admiration for the diversity of humanity, however, leads him to the conclusion that the individual man's rational nature is not a reliable guide in ethical matters. He is best advised, therefore, to reconcile his intentions to the laws of his country and religion and defer to the authority of custom. See Montaigne, 1908, v. 2, pp. 47, 395.

[157] In his *La Sagesse* (1601), Montaigne's disciple, Peirre Charron, defended the benefits of Pyrrhonism as a preparation for the wise man to receive the grace of God. Once aware of the relativity of all human knowledge, one could recognize the need for grace for the attainment of true knowledge. Though the extent of Charron's scepticism is disputed, his Pyrrhonist principles earned his *La Sagesse* the reputation for being the 'breviary of the libertines'. It should be evident that Donne would have disagreed with Charron on the same grounds as we have seen he would have disagreed with Montaigne. For the view that Donne's *Biathanatos* may have been influenced by Charron's discussion of suicide in *La Sagesse*, II, xi, see Collmer, 1965, pp. 482-488; and Oliver, 1997, pp. 163-171. For a brief discussion of the similarities between the relativism of *Biathanatos* and that of Montaigne and Charron, see Sprott, 1961, pp. 20-21, 79-83. For a discussion of Charron's Pyrrhonism in light of Montaigne's, see Popkin, 1960 pp. 42-65. For an account of Charron's attempt to respond to the threat of relativism, see Schiffman, 1991, pp. 77-79. For the view that the scepticism of Montaigne's 'Apology for Raymond Sebond' was illustrated by its fulfillment of the rhetorical criterion of *copia*, see Cave, 1979, pp. 280-284. See also Sayce, 1972.

[158] Donne, 1982, ll. 2404-2415

[159] Ibid., ll. 2410-2414

[160] Montaigne, 1908, v. 2, p. 206

[161] Ibid., v. 2, pp. 212-213

[162] See *Physics* 239b5-240b7, *Problems* 969b4-6.

[163] Montaigne, 1908, v. 2, p. 232

[164] Diogenes says that Aristotle's contemporary, Eubilides of Miletus, was the first to propose the liar paradox. See Diogenes, *Lives* II, 108. For some recent discussions of the liar paradox and the problem of self-referential truth claims in general, see Quine, 1966, pp. 1-18; Burge, 1979, pp. 169-198, pp. 1-18; Sobel, 1992, pp. 51-69; Restall, 1993; Mills, 1998, pp. 197-212. Stephen Read provides an overview of the problem of the liar, an account of various logicians' attempts at a solution and a guide to further reading on the subject in his *Thinking About Logic*. See Read, 1995, pp. 148-172.

[165] Montaigne, 1908, v. 3, p. 159; v. 1, p. 192

[166] Ibid., v. 1, p. 156

[167] Ibid., v. 1, p. 156

[168] Ibid., v. 3, p. 327

[169] Harvey, 1593, p. 96

[170] Ibid., p. 117. See also *Summa* I, q. 79, a. 13; and the discussion of this passage in Donne, 1982, pp. xxviii, xci, n. 44.

[171] See for instance Donne, 1982, l. 1420; and Donne, 1967a, p. 7.

[172] Donne, 1982, ll. 3842-3846

[173] Ibid., ll. 3828-3836

[174] In *Pseudo-Martyr*, Donne uses the same image of human propogation to describe deductive arguments from first principles. 'Now, as no man can beleeue the last of these propositions [that obedience is no longer due to the king], as roundly and constantly, as the first [that a king must be

obeyed], yet it seeme to be the childe of the first, yet in it selfe, or in some of the meane parents by the way, there may be fallacies which may corrupt and abastard it'. See Donne, 1610, sig. Kk3. See also Donne, 1982, ll. 2404-2415. On the syllogistic procedure of the conscience in sixteenth and seventeenth-Protestant casuistry generally, see Camille Welles Slights, 1981, pp. 28-66. Here, Slights says that 'the relation between Puritan and Anglican casuistry...needs further investigation' (p. 28) and tentatively suggests that the reason that Puritan casuists, such as William Ames and William Perkins, emphasized logical engagement in the exercise of conscience was because of their adoption of Ramist dialectical method (p. 41). Though she does not develop the idea beyond this point, the difference which we have observed between Harvey's Ramist comments on the 'public conscience' and Donne's insistence on the variability of human law may be a promising point of departure for further inquiry into this question. For more on Perkins' and Ames' Ramism, see Ong, 1958, pp.283-284; Howell, 1961, pp. 206-212; McKim, 1985, pp. 530-517; and Keenan, 1995, pp. 105-130. Richard B. Miller may offer some insight into the difference between Anglican and Puritan casuistry in his essay on the scholastic basis of the *Ductor Dubitantium* (1660) written by of the Anglican casuist, Jeremy Taylor. Miller has shown that Taylor adhered to the same Thomist ethical principles which we have observed in *Biathanatos*. They include the divine imprint of first practical principles upon our understanding, and the probability of deductions which appear to have been validly drawn from them. Miller is careful to mention, however, that Taylor permitted God to supervene the natural law on Ockhamist grounds, which neither Donne nor Aquinas would have allowed. See Richard B. Miller, 1995, pp. 131-157.

[175] Meg Lota Brown fails to observe the distinction which Donne perceived to exist between human laws and natural and rational law. As a result, she takes Donne's dismissal of the variability of human laws as a dismissal of the variability of all laws, and concludes Donne's relativism in both *Biathanatos* and *Pseudo-Martyr*. See Lota Brown, 1995, pp. 50-53, 76-91. Lota Brown would have benefitted from a consideration of F. C. Copleston's observation regarding Aquinas' examination of discordant opinions. In defending Aquinas against accusations of relativism not unlike Lota Brown's against Donne, Copleston explains that 'differences in opinion about moral precepts and moral values do not constitute a proof of the relativist position' because, as Donne is clearly aware in *Biathanatos*, 'there might be objective and absolute values and at the same time different degrees of insight into these values.' See Copleston, 1955, p. 219. See also Copleston, 1972, p. 181.

[176] Montaigne, 1908, v. 2, p. 297

[177] Ibid., v. 2, pp. 307, 311

[178] Donne, 1982, ll. 2441-2444

[179] Ibid., ll. 1710-1714. Rudick and Battin tell us that Georgius Acacius Enenkelius was 'an Austrian nobleman and writer on classical legal and political thought', and a contemporary of Donne. See Donne, 1982, p. 214.

[180] See *Summa* II i, q. 95, a. 2. On Aquinas' view of the relation of human law to natural law, see McInerny, 1993, pp. 196-216.

[181] Montaigne, 1908, v. 2, p. 297

[182] It is important to recall, however, that Aristotle recognized that even first principles may be disputed, and therefore, claimed to be otherwise (opinions). This disputation, which he says is typical of sceptical paradoxists such as Heraclitus, may be preempted by the acceptance of certain definitions (*theses*) as known despite their potential contestability. See *Metaphysics* 1012a18-28.

[183] *Posterior Analytics* 89a6-11

[184] Donne, 1982, ll. 2-8

Chapter VI

The Augustinianism and Thomism of Donne's *Biathanatos*

1

Practical Reason, Probability and Opinion

It is important that we remember that Donne consistently maintains that opinions, though derived from our estimations of the significance of complex and variable circumstances, are able to achieve degrees of probability proportional to their proximity to the first principles relevant to their formation. As both he and Aquinas had emphasized, the further we descend from the universal principles in the deductive deliberations of our practical reason, the more likely we are to form false opinions. But though our opinions become less certain the more particular they become, they may still accord with the universal principle which determines the true position which we should take on a particular matter. Our inability to demonstrate the truth and necessity of our opinions is what makes them opinions and not knowledge, but as, Aristotle explains, this inability does not entail the indeterminacy of opinion. When he says that 'everything that is an object of opinion is already determined' and that 'opinion is not inquiry but...assertion', he assumes the precedence of criteria of truth, which though unknown to us, bear the distinguishing epistemic trait of objects of knowledge, necessity.[1] To this claim he then adds his advocacy of the inductive method of the practical reason as a means to discovering universal, necessary and primary definitions from which deductions may be drawn. He makes this claim with respect to the application of the faculty of comprehension to both universal and particular propositions within deductive arguments; the speculative reason comprehends the universal premises and the practical reason comprehends the particular premises. He says that 'in demonstrations comprehension grasps the unchangeable and primary definitions, while in practical

reasonings it grasps the last and contingent fact, i.e. the second proposition. For these are the starting-points of that for the sake of which, since universals are reached from the particulars'.[2] Obviously, the more complicated the set of particulars under the consideration of the practical reason, the more difficult it is to identify which universal principle should serve as the major premise in our deduction about our prospective action. Aquinas confirms Aristotle's description of this relation between speculative and practical reason when he says that 'the business of the practical reason is with contingent matters which are the domain of human acts, and although there is some necessity in general principles the more we get down to particular cases the more we can be mistaken.'[3] As a result, Aquinas concludes, that 'The first principles of natural law are altogether unalterable. But its secondary precepts, which we have described as being particular conclusions close to first principles, though not alterable in the majority of cases where they are right as they stand, can nevertheless be changed in some particular and rare occasions'.[4] When Donne had described the relation between those 'true propositions, which are…the issue of our light of nature and of our discourse' and the more particular, but potentially fallible, conclusions deduced from them, he adopts a doctrine of probabilism derived directly from Aristotle's and Aquinas' doctrine of the practical reason and opinion.[5]

Though Aristotle had established contingencies as the proper object of the practical reason, he did not develop a theory of ethical first principles which provided the moral agent with an infallible set of universal and necessary precepts against which the particular deductions of practical reason might be judged. Considering the nature of the deliberation of practical reason, he says that:

> in general the man who is capable of deliberating has practical wisdom. Now no one deliberates about things that cannot be otherwise nor about things that it is impossible for him to do. Therefore, since knowledge involves demonstration, but there is no demonstration of things whose first principles can be otherwise (for all such things might actually be otherwise), and since it impossible to deliberate about things which are of necessity, practical wisdom cannot be knowledge…[6]

A statement or principle which can be otherwise is, for Aristotle, an opinion. He concludes, therefore, that 'opinion is about what can be otherwise, and so is practical wisdom' and that 'practical wisdom deal[s] with things that can be otherwise.'[7] Donne's catalogue of counterexamples to the various civil and canon laws prohibiting suicide in his examination of the human law in the second section of *Biathanatos* is a result of his agreement with Aristotle on the involvement of practical reason in matters of opinion. Through the citation of particular examples, which contradict the universality of the laws against suicide, he asserts, in the relativist manner of Montaigne, that the issue of suicide is a matter of opinion.[8] Aristotle, however, did not provide a detailed account of first practical principles, which like the first principles of natural science and mathematics, could serve as reliable universal premises from which to deduce conclusions about particulars. He explains this omission when he describes the difference between the inductive process by which universal ethical principles are learned and the intuitive process of abstraction by which the first principles of nature and mathematics are known. Practical wisdom, he says, 'is concerned not only with universals but with particulars, which become familiar from experience' while 'the objects of mathematics exist by abstraction'.[9] This difference explains why it is possible to find young mathematicians and geometricians, but not young men of practical wisdom. Montaigne might have cited this passage for support against those who claim the existence of moral laws which are known immediately by all according to natural reason. Though the inductive basis of his first ethical principles exposed them to the sceptical critique and accusations of relativism, Aristotle thought that these principles constituted a reliable standard by which the man of practical wisdom should form his opinions upon particular matters of action. Such a man exhibits the 'correctness in thinking' which allows him to form opinions which correspond to the inductively grounded first principles of ethics; these opinions, however, can never attain the status of knowledge because they lack necessity by virtue of their limitation to the realm of choice.[10]

In *Biathanatos*, Donne seeks to demonstrate that assertions for or against suicide may never attain the status of knowledge, but that opinions on the matter, even paradoxical ones such as his own, may follow from a deductive process derived ultimately from first ethical principles which are apprehended intuitively by natural reason. To argue thus, Donne must reject Aristotle's claim that the first principles of ethics are inductively based, and maintain that they are known in the manner of the principles of mathematics and the natural sciences, that they have the nature of 'those true propositions, which are…the issue of our light of nature and of our discourse'.[11] The authority on which he will base his assertion of the self-evidency of first practical principles is Aquinas, although as we will see, he grants reason a priority in the analysis of both first speculative principles (e.g. law of non-contradiction) and the first principles of ethics which Aquinas denies.[12] Donne's objective is to reserve for the individual conscience not just the authority to countermand the mandates of external law, but also those of non-rational natural laws which govern the behavior of all animate and non-animate substances. This constructive element in the argument of *Biathanatos* seeks not to restrict the issue of suicide within the domain of opinion as did his observations of the variability and incompatibility of the diversity of human laws treating the subject, but to delegate to the individual conscience the power to judge the application of both the first speculative and practical principles to particular circumstances. This judgement, though it bears the mark of a conclusion deduced from self-evident principles, may be mistaken, and therefore, may be otherwise; it remains an opinion despite its derivation from first principles because of the involvement of our fallible reason. Aquinas had stated that because human reason 'is imperfect and mutable, so as well, therefore, is the law it makes, and therefore its law is the same;' the natural law on the other hand 'comprises universal commands which are everlasting, whereas human positive law comprises particular commands to meet various situations that arise.'[13] The natural law, therefore, would seem to command more universally than laws established by the reason of man. However, in so far as man is incapable of apprehending the natural law without the involvement of reason, the law of nature, if

it is to be understood by man, must be rational. Aquinas accommodates this inevitable rationalization of the natural law, by insisting that the natural law, though not restricted to the governance of rational beings, is nevertheless rational and comprehensible. Of course, this rationality does not insure that every particular intellect will comprehend it; only that those equipped with sufficient knowledge can comprehend it. Comprehension is made easier for human reason if the procedure of demonstration follows a syllogistic arrangement, from the general to the particular. This is the manner which is most natural to reason and which is associated properly with the logical procedure of the speculative reason. Because the practical reason is concerned with contingent matters, however, it has more difficulty identifying which of the first practical principles should occupy the major premise presiding over the particular circumstances occupying the minor premise. But while Aquinas admits that 'the more we descend to matters of detail, the more frequently we encounter deviations', he will insist that 'there is necessity' in the first practical principles just as there is necessity in the first principles of speculative reason.[14] It is this insistence that protects his ethics from accusations of relativism. And in so far as Donne agrees with Aquinas on this point, he is protected from those same accusations of relativism which readers of *Biathanatos* have frequently brought against him.

To begin his argument for the individual conscience's intuitive knowledge of first practical principles, Donne cites the passage from Romans which he will later cite in the *Essays in Divinity* to argue against the claims of natural theologians, such as Sebond, that reason can discern all knowledge, universal and particular, through the allegorical observation of created world.[15] In this case, however, he is interested in establishing that some invisible things (*invisibilia*), such as God's existence and the sinfulness of lust, are known to all without instruction, Christian and pagan alike. He explains that the turning of women against nature described by Paul 'is so much abhorred, not because the being against nature makes it so abominable, but because the knowledge thereof is so domestic, so near, so inward to us, that our conscience cannot slumber in it, nor dissemble it'.[16] Donne may also have had Romans in mind

when he made this critical statement about the conscience's fundamental role in the determination of sin. There Paul says:

> *Cum enim gentes quae legem non hebent, naturaliter quae legis sunt faciunt; eiusmodi legem non habentes ipsi sibi sunt lex qui ostendunt opus legis scriptum in cordibus suis, testimonium reddente illis conscientia ipsorum...*[17]

Even pagans who are ignorant of the law of God may have it written upon their hearts by nature (*naturaliter*); with this imprinted knowledge, all they must do to live in accordance with the God's law is to consult the testimony of their consciences. The first practical principles, therefore, are known intuitively according to the nature of all rational beings.[18] As Donne repeatedly emphasizes, this fundamental knowledge renders all those with reason 'inexcusable' for not pursuing the study of virtue which would eventually result both in an acceptance of the Christian faith and in a conscience informed by a broader knowledge of ethical principles.[19] If the conscience is to obey the commands of its nature, therefore, it must cultivate its rational abilities, for it is only by reason that it acquires the more detailed knowledge of ethics necessary to reveal the applicability of the first practical principles to particular situations. It is for this reason that of the three laws of nature which Aquinas says govern human conduct, the law of self-preservation, the law of generation and corruption, and the law of reason, Donne gives precedence to the law of reason.[20]

> But that natural law is so general that it extends to beasts more than to us, because they cannot compare degrees of obligation and distinctions of duties and offices, as we can. For we know that some things are natural to the species, and other things to the particular person, and that the latter may correct the first.[21]

Donne's suggestion that the ability to 'compare degrees of obligation' most accurately represents the natural law of humans makes the probabilistic analysis of conflicting opinions the most natural of all rational pursuits; and, as we have seen, such an analysis often results in the assertion of a paradox.

2

Donne and Aquinas on the Primacy of the Particular

It is not surprising, in light of his involvement in the religious controversies of his day, that Donne believed that the disputation of opposing opinions was an obligation placed upon all rational creatures by natural law. When Donne seeks the support of Aquinas in the defense of this obligation, however, he delegates more authority to the individual conscience than even Aquinas' liberal views on contention and discord would allow. Donne's claim that 'some things are natural to the species, and other things to the particular person, and that the latter may correct the first' is a reference to Aquinas' discussion of special (i.e. of the species) and individual natures in the *Summa*, in which he asks, 'are any dispositions innate?'[22] Since he is considering the disposition of humans primarily, Donne correctly orients Aquinas' inquiry toward the issue under consideration: the relation between the general subject, the human species, to the individual subject, the particular human, with respect to the their common form, reason.[23] Donne's objective is to show that the law of nature which addresses itself specifically to rational agents (i.e. 'fly evil, seek good') binds more forcefully upon humans than that law of nature which applies to all beings (i.e. self-preservation), so that he may assert that the individual conscience's 'appetition of good whether true or seeming' transforms the law of self-preservation into a rational principle which the practical reason recognizes to be the ultimate criterion for moral judgement.[24] His success in authorizing this objective on the basis of Aquinas' views on the relation of the special and individual utilization of reason is vital to the general success of his argument for the justifiability of suicide *in foro interiori* and *exteriori*. For if he can establish the individual's right to judge the rationality of taking his own life *in foro interiori* by supplanting the 'tribunal' of those casuists who have 'made all our actions perplexed and litigious' there, then both the civil and canon law may judge only secondarily (*in foro exteriori*) the validity of the individual's reason for suicide. Further, if the individual's reasons are

formed in deference to the universal laws of nature and reason, which Donne has argued are identical for rational beings ('fly evil, seek good'), then the secular and ecclesiastical authorities, though they may disagree with the individual's appraisal of the circumstances in which his decision was taken, will have to acknowledge the rectitude both of that decision and of the process of contention from which his opinion emerged.

With regard to the difference between special and individual natures Aquinas describes two types of relations:

> There are two ways in which one thing may be natural to another. It may be natural to it according to the nature of the species: as it is natural to man to be capable of laughing...Or it may natural according to the nature of the individual: as it is natural to Socrates or Plato to be sickly or healthy, each according to his constitution.
>
> Again, in each of these ways there are two further different ways in which one thing can be natural to another. A thing may be natural because wholly the work of nature, or it may be partly the work of nature and partly the work of an external agent (*ab exteriori principio*). Thus if someone recovers from an illness by his own power, his restored health comes wholly from nature; if he is cured with the help of medicine, then his recovery is due partly to nature and partly to an external agent.[25]

When, on the authority of the *Summa*, Donne says that things which are natural to 'the particular person...may correct...things [which] are natural to the species,' he conflates the two relations described in the above passage and then applies this conflation analogously as a principle to further the cause of his argument.[26] Those things which are natural to the species are conflated with things which are entirely from nature and those which are natural to the individual are conflated with things which are partly from nature. These conflations established, Donne makes the example of the sick individual returned to health by an extrinsic principle (the medical arts) analogous to a situation in which that which is natural to the individual 'corrects' that which is natural to the species. In light of the fact that he believed that rational principles become less certain the further they descend into particulars, it is unlikely that Aquinas would have agreed with Donne's interpretation of *Summa*

II i, q. 51, a. 1 that, with respect to reason, particular natures were superior to special (general) natures.

However, it is clear that Aquinas believed that these two senses of nature were connected in some way when he says further in the same article, 'There are also cognitive dispositions, at least of a rudimentary kind, which are natural to individuals. Two men may differ in intelligence because of a difference in the condition of their sensory organs, since in the activity of the intellect we make use of our sense faculties.'[27] If we oppose this statement to that concerning the natural disposition of the specific nature with respect to intellectual activity, the nature of the relation between the specific and individual intellect is exposed. He says:

> The dispositions which are natural to the species belong to the soul itself: the understanding of principles, for instance, is called a natural disposition. It is because of the very nature of his spiritual soul that a human being, once he knows what a whole is and what a part is, knows that every whole is greater than any of its parts; and similarly in other cases.[28]

The specific nature, 'the spiritual soul,' understands principles through intelligible species which Aquinas, citing Aristotle, tells us it 'receives from phantasms.' For Aquinas, phantasms are the verified sense images received from those images which are organized but unverified by the common sense (sensus communis). These verified sense images are then stored in the inner sense commonly called phantasia.[29] The intelligible species through which first principles are known, therefore, are dependent for their development on the abilities of the individual's own senses, or as Aquinas says the 'condition of [his] sensory organs.'[30] It is crucial to note that though Aquinas derived his theory of phantasia from Aristotle's discussion of perception in De Anima, he is bound by theological necessity to acknowledge the certainty of the first principles of both nature and ethics and to mitigate the uncertainty which Aristotle had claimed necessarily attended assertions ultimately informed by phantasms. Aquinas' confidence in the correspondence between the intelligible species arising from verified sense images and the first practical principles known intuitively, allowed him to disregard the Stoic

explanation for this correspondence.[31] As we have seen, the Stoic theory eliminated the uncertainty of the intelligible species by employing the notion of the *lekton* as the cognitive intermediary which insured the accurate correspondence between sense images (phantasms) and the verified and co-ordinated sensible species stored in *phantasia*.

In *De Anima* Aristotle says of perception that 'a sense is what has the power of receiving into itself the sensible forms of things without the matter, in the way in which a piece of wax takes on the impress of a signet-ring without the iron or gold'.[32] Unlike the Stoics, however, Aristotle is careful not to overestimate the power of the images retained in the soul to reflect reality accurately. Though he makes *phantasia* necessary for the mental process which produces such accurate reflections (thought), he maintains that the images of *phantasia*, unlike sensations, which 'are always true', are 'for the most part false'.[33] Aristotle is not saying that sensations always reflect external objects as they are in themselves, however, for he says that 'while the perception that there is white before us cannot be false, the perception that what is white is this or that may be false'.[34] The decision on the goodness or badness, and truth or falsity of both perceptions and the images to which they give rise is left to the faculty of thinking.

> The faculty of thinking then thinks the forms in the images...by means of the images and thoughts which are within the soul, just as if it were seeing, it calculates and deliberates what is to come by reference to what is present; and when it makes a pronouncement, as in the case of sensation it pronounces the object to be pleasant or painful, in this case it avoids or pursues...That too which involves no action, i.e. that which is true or false, is in the same province with what is good or bad...[35]

Aristotle goes on to distinguish two types of imagination (*phantasia*), the sensitive and the deliberative. The deliberative imagination is found only in animals that calculate, such as humans, and, as in the faculty of thinking, is always involved in the formation of an opinion. Because the imagination can either be right or wrong, its necessary involvement in the processes of thought threatens to undermine the

certainty of knowledge derived from syllogistic demonstrations.[36] Aristotle suggests this threat when he describes the syllogistic organization of the faculty of knowing in terms of the opinions which comprise the premises. He says that the 'faculty of knowing is never moved but remains at rest. Since the one premise or judgement is universal and the other deals with the particular (for the first tells us that such and such a kind of man should do such and such a kind of act and the second that this is an act of the kind meant, and I am person of the type intended), it is the latter opinion that really originates the movement, not the universal'.[37] Though both the major (universal) premise and the minor (particular) premise are both said to be opinions, Aristotle is concerned to show that the minor premise, being more proximately derived from the images of co-ordinated sensations, is the opinion in which the movement of assent originates.

In his commentary on the third book of the *De Anima*, Aquinas acknowledges Aristotle's description of the deliberative imagination in terms of syllogistic, and explains its role in the exercise of practical reason.

> This deliberation [of deliberative imagination] requires some sort of rule by which to reckon what most needs to be done. Clearly, a man will "follow", i.e. seek for, the better and more suitable alternative: which is always measured by some standard. We need therefore a measure for our actions, a criterion for discerning what is most worth doing. And this will be the middle term of the syllogism of the practical reason issuing in a choice.[38]

The discovery of this ethical criterion ultimately requires the involvement of the senses because, Aquinas has said, the intelligible species from which we come to recognize the universality and self-evidency of the first practical principles arise from sensible species. Of course, God's establishment of the first practical principles is sufficient to insure their universality and self-evidency, but our discovery of them as such requires the use of our senses, as Aristotle had explained in *De Anima*.[39] Aristotle had described the major premise of the deliberative imagination's syllogistic determination of ethical choice as a universal assertion stating 'that such and such a kind of man should do such and such a kind of act', but

admits that though this premise appears to be a universal and necessary principle in comparison to the particular assertion of the minor premise (i.e. 'this is an act of the kind meant, and I am person of the type intended'), its ultimate derivation from the senses restricts its status to that of opinion. Such a universal opinion may appear probable, or even be true, but its theoretical confirmation requires the imposition of a definition which artificially stabilizes its truth, in the manner which Ramus and Fraunce insisted axioms must be stabilized. Such a stabilization, Aristotle insists, is necessary to defend syllogistic demonstrations against the sceptical critique, and the abuse of paradoxists.[40] For Aquinas, however, the truth of the first practical principles is stabilized not by artificially imposed definition, but by the intelligible order imposed by God.[41]

The challenge for the human intellect is to discover these principles through the use of their senses. Aquinas' observation that 'one man, from the disposition of his organs of sense, is more apt than another to understand well' suggests that some intellects, which have less acute powers of sensory perceptions, will be less able to discover the ethical criteria necessary to regulate the determinations of the deliberative imagination and the choices of practical reason. There is no suggestion, however, that the individual with the most powerful organs of sense understands the first principles in a qualitatively more thorough way; he simply is able to receive intelligible species more effectively because the disposition of his senses is most properly directed toward an accurate perception of external objects. If an individual, whose senses are not disposed in this way, is assisted by an 'extrinsic principle' (e.g. spectacles, hearing aid) to receive intelligible species, he can be said to be in possession of these principles only partly from nature as a result of some deficiency in his sensory disposition. The relation between the specific and individual intellects consists, therefore, in the former's general and constant disposition toward knowledge of the intelligible species and the latter's particular and variable sensory dispositions.[42] When, in *Biathanatos*, Donne claims that 'some things are natural to the species, and other things to the particular person, and that the latter may correct the first' he is suggesting that there are two classes of knowledge (intelligible

species), one known to human reason generally and another known only to individual intellects, and that the former is less precise than the latter.[43] As we will see, this conclusion will serve his intention to reduce the justifiability of suicide to the individual conscience (*in foro interiori*) quite neatly, but as we have already suggested, it will also expose him to charges of relativism and libertinism.

3
Donne's Inversion of Aquinas' Three Precepts of the Natural Law

It is difficult to say whether Donne innocently misunderstood or intentionally misrepresented Aquinas on the relation of specific and individual intellects in the context of natural reason, but whatever his motivation, the statements which moved his critics to advance anti-relativist arguments in response to *Biathanatos* are dependent upon his reading of *Summa* II i, q. 51, a. 1. Donne makes two of these statements as the conclusion of his section on natural law.

> No law is so primary and simple, but that it foreimagines a reason upon which it was founded; and scarce any reason is so constant, but that circumstances alter it, in which case a private man is emperor of himself...And he whose conscience, well-tempered and dispassioned, assures him that the reason of self-preservation ceases in him, may also presume that the law ceases too...[44]

> Self-preservation, which we confess to be the foundation of general natural law, is no other than a natural affection and appetition of good, whether true or seeming...Now since this law of self-preservation is accomplished in attaining that which conduces to our ends and is good to us...yet, if for reasons seeming good to me, I may do it without violating the law of nature. If I propose to myself in this self-homicide a greater good, though I mistake it, I perceive not wherein I transgress the general law of nature, which is an affection of good, true or seeming; and if that which I affect by death be truly a greater good, wherein is the other stricter law of nature, which is rectified reason, violated?[45]

It should be evident in light of what we have said about Donne's understanding of specific (general) and individual reason that the primary place is given to that law of nature which corresponds to individual reason. He makes this arrangement explicit, however, in the paragraphs immediately preceding the above two statements. It is there that Donne most definitively identifies the first law of nature with the mandates of reason when he says that 'all the precepts of natural law result in these: fly evil, seek good, that is, do according to reason.' 'For these,' he continues, 'as they are indispensable by any authority, so they cannot be abolished nor obscured, but that our hearts shall ever not only retain, but acknowledge this law.'[46] This definition, as Donne indicates, is also accepted by Aquinas. In the *Summa*, Aquinas had said that 'this is the first command of law, "that good is to be sought and done, evil is to be avoided"; all other commands of natural law are based on this. Accordingly, then, the natural-law commands extend to all doing and avoiding of things recognized by the practical reason of itself as being human goods.'[47] The practical reason for Aquinas considers good and evil courses of actions against the standard imposed by our natural inclinations, and hence, proceeds not by judging the truth or falsity of these inclinations but by orienting the will toward what the speculative reason has determined to be a necessary logical consequence of the first practical principles. Following Aristotle, Aquinas designates speculative reason the task of judging the truth or falsity of our proper ends independent of an individual agent's volition, while the practical reason insures a correspondence in action between the will and speculative reason which results in a good intention.[48] The ends toward which our natural inclinations direct us are not considered by the practical reason within the context of a specific set of circumstances without delivering a judgement of their preferability; it is only when those ends are apprehended as goods or evils to be pursued or avoided within a specific set of circumstances that the practical reason can be said to be operative in ethical decisions. Aquinas says, affirming this description of practical reason's function, that 'as to be *real* first enters into human apprehending as such, so to be *good* first enters the practical reason's apprehending when it is bent on doing something.'[49]

Donne makes two claims in the passages quoted above which place him at odds with Aquinas on the role of the practical reason with respect to the first laws of human nature. First, he states that just as circumstances may alter the putative reason for certain human laws, such as those prohibiting loitering in front of public buildings for instance, so may circumstances alter the reason for the law of self-preservation; if there were no popular desire to loiter in front of public buildings or if such gatherings were perceived by law-makers not to injure the public interest, then the reason for the law against loitering would cease to be.[50] Second, he claims that the law of self-preservation is merely 'a natural affection and appetition of good, whether true or seeming', which is a technical mistake symptomatic of his inversion of Aquinas' ordering of the relation between specific and individual reason. The law of self-preservation, of itself, does not pertain to reason specifically, but to an inclination which Aquinas attributes to all substances. It is not the function of reason, speculative or practical, to question the universality of this inclination, although, it is within the function of the speculative reason to apprehend what both Aristotle and Aquinas claim to be the principle upon which all others are based, the law of non-contradiction. In its assertion that '"There is no affirming and denying the same thing simultaneously",' this law depends intrinsically upon the apprehension of being, which Aquinas, citing Aristotle in *Metaphysics* 1005b29, claims is the principle upon which 'all other propositions are based.'[51] The law of self-preservation is an inclination of all things which have being; it does not require for its application a judgement of its conformity to truth by speculative reason nor of its goodness by practical reason. It is akin to those propositions which Aquinas describes as 'self-evident [in themselves]' and 'known to all'. Examples given by Aquinas of such propositions are 'The whole is greater than the part' and 'Things equal to a third thing are equal to one another.'[52] There are other self-evident propositions, however, whose terms are not known to all and which are, as a result, not acknowledged by those unfamiliar with their terms as self-evident. Aquinas suggests that these less commonly known propositions may be grasped if their terms are learned. Therefore, we may liken those self-evident propositions which are

known to all to those things which are natural to the species and which are entirely from nature; those self-evident propositions which are not known to all, we may liken to those things which are natural to the individual and which require the assistance of an extrinsic principle. By making the law of self-preservation subject to the scrutiny of reason, Donne reverses the order of natural inclinations explicitly given by Aquinas in *Summa* II i, q. 94, a. 2.

> The order in which commands of the law of nature are ranged corresponds to that of natural tendencies. Here there are three stages. There is in man, first, a tendency towards the good of the nature he shares in common with all substances; each has an appetite to preserve its own natural being. Natural law here plays a corresponding part, and is engaged at this stage to maintain and defend the elementary requirements of human life.

Only after placing human's generic inclinations, those 'which he has in common with other animals,' does Aquinas mention the special inclination of humans to follow reason. The order of priority in any analysis of the justifiability of suicide, therefore, is from most universal to most particular, that is, from the law of self-preservation observed by all things which have being, to the law of generation and corruption observed by all animals, and finally, to the law of reason observed by humans.

4

First Principles, Erring Conscience and Charity

When he considers whether 'it is legitimate for somebody to kill himself' Aquinas makes explicit his reasons for unconditionally condemning suicide.[53] It is no accident that he omits irrationality from his list of the three principal arguments against suicide. The first reason he offers is a combination of the first two laws described in *Summa* II i, q. 94, a. 2, self-preservation, and generation and corruption. He says:

> Suicide is completely wrong for three reasons. First, everything naturally loves itself, and it is for this reason that everything naturally seeks to keep itself in being and to resist hostile forces [*corrumpentibus*]. So suicide runs counter to one's natural inclination, and also to that charity by which one ought to cherish oneself. Suicide is, therefore, always a mortal sin in so far as it stultifies the law of nature and charity.[54]

We may wonder why Aquinas bothers to add the mandates of charity to those of the two most general laws of nature at this stage of his argument against suicide when he has taken such pains to maintain that these supra-rational laws of nature obtain without conscious assent. In *Summa* II i, q. 100, a. 10, Aquinas explains that the law of charity, which commands that all ethical decisions be 'oriented to God' by an act of love directed primarily to Him in accordance with the first commandment, may be consciously omitted. Such an omission, as in the case described by Aquinas of the man who honors his father but who does so without charity, is worthy of punishment because the intention of the man in honoring his father is somehow corrupt. He says that:

> the act of charity can be considered as the mode of the acts of the other virtues, inasmuch as their acts are done in view of charity, which is the *end of the commandment*; for, as we have already seen, the intention of the end is a kind formal mode of the act done for that end.[55]

The '*end of the commandment*' to which Aquinas refers in 1 Timothy is stated by Paul. '*Finis autem praecepti est caritas de corde puro et conscientia bona et fide*'.[56] By grounding the intention of an act in the act of charity, Aquinas designates a place for the use of conscience in all morally relevant acts. And the use of conscience, as its etymology indicates, requires the application of some knowledge to some circumstances.[57] Aquinas explains that 'the original meaning of the word [conscience]...denotes knowledge ordered towards something, since it means knowledge-along-with-another [*cum alio scientia*].'[58] In *Pseudo-Martyr*, Donne employs this definition of conscience to attack the weakness of the mere opinion on which Catholics ground their assertion of papal supremacy in temporal affairs. As

he stresses repeatedly throughout the work, for a decision to take one's own life to be rectified, the conscience must ground the defense of its choice on a principle which it considers to be certain, and therefore, known. After quoting Aquinas' definition, Donne explains that:

> the *Conscience* euer presumes *Knowledge*: and we may not (especially in so great dangers as these) doe anything upon *Conscience*, if we doe it not upon *Knowledge*. *For it is not the Conscience it selfe that bindes us, but that law which the Conscience takes knowledge of, and presents to our understanding.*[59]

Aquinas calls this moral knowledge, *synderesis*; it is comprised of the first practical principles which, like first speculative principles, are 'known naturally prior to rational analysis.'[60]

Without any rational assistance, *synderesis* can 'incite to good and...murmur at evil,' much in the same way as Donne claimed the special mandate of nature in humans to follow reason commands us 'to seek good' and 'fly evil'. For Donne, such 'murmuring' reflects not a universal and constant delivery of the criteria for ethical judgement, but a private and often controversial assurance of one's own moral rectitude. In the *Essays in Divinity* he says that God's judgement of our conformity with the divine law is 'never certainly and infallibly produced and exemplified *in foro exteriori*, but onely insinuated and whisper'd to our hearts, *Ad informandum conscientium Judicis*, which is the Conscience it selfe.'[61] It is the private testimony of the conscience interpreted by the individual's reason which must guide his moral life, despite the fact that his decisions may never be infallibly confirmed to be just. The vital difference, of course, between Donne's first law of nature and Aquinas' *synderesis* lies in the former's assertion of the priority of the individual reason in the assessment of goodness and evil, and the latter's suggestion that the individual intellect's denial of principles self-evident to the species, such as the law of self-preservation, indicates not a superior understanding, but a mistake of practical reason. For Donne, some of the first practical principles are self-evident to all rational beings regardless of their perception of circumstances (e.g. God is to be

worshipped, unnatural lusts are evil), but others, most notably those governing suicide, are subject to the judgement of the private conscience, which utilizes the reason natural to the individual to clarify the imprecise reason of the human species generally. Aquinas, however, would not claim that self-evident practical principles which are understood by individual intellects with the assistance of an extrinsic principle are any more precise than those which are self-evident to the entire species without such assistance. Nowhere in *Biathanatos* does Donne mention the habit of *synderesis*, which, for Aquinas, imposes accountability upon the power of practical reason through its ability to influence all consciences toward good and away from evil. An erring conscience may result when the practical reason encounters a particularly complex individual case, but not as a consequence of the agent's ignorance of the first practical principles; the agent has the requisite knowledge (or can acquire it through learning), but is unable to see how that knowledge should be applied to his circumstances. It is for this reason that Aquinas can distinguish between voluntary and involuntary errors of conscience with respect to a body of knowledge which he claims one 'ought to know' and of which ignorance is 'inexcusable (*non excusante*)'.[62] Conscience's dependence upon *synderesis* for its cognitive content is crucial to Aquinas' theory of intentionalism for, as he says, 'though the habits which inform conscience are many, nevertheless they all take effect through one chief habit, the grasp of principles called *synderesis*.'[63]

It would be unjust to accuse Donne of relativism because he omits the habit of *synderesis* from his explanation of the function of the conscience. As we have seen, there is no shortage of statements which ascribe to human knowledge a natural understanding of first practical principles not unlike that understanding manifest in Aquinas' *synderesis*.[64] We will be on surer ground if we base such an accusation on his inversion of Aquinas' three laws of nature governing human affairs; by giving precedence to the most particular (and therefore least reliable) law of nature, that of reason, over the more general laws of the animal world and beings generally, Donne has delegated to the individual conscience a comprehensiveness in the determination of ethical action which exceeds that envisioned by Aquinas. However, any

ascription of relativism to the ethical system outlined in *Biathanatos* will have to be scrupulously qualified in order to accommodate its insistence on the presence of first indemonstrable principles in every human mind which may and must be followed to deduce directions for behavior in particular situations to which those principles are clearly relevant.[65] It is advisable at this point to recall Donne's language in his statement summarizing the view of the French Catholic, Antonio Sylvius Clarus, regarding the operation of practical reason. 'Though our substance of nature, which is best understood of the foundations and principles and first grounds of natural law, may not be changed, yet *functio naturae*, which is the exercise and application thereof, and deduction from thence, may and must.'[66] Donne uses this view to support his statement concerning the alterability and limitedness of Aquinas' first and most general law of nature, self-preservation; it is this statement which contains the reason for his failure to answer Aquinas' most fundamental objection to the justifiability of suicide, that it violates the law of self-preservation. He says that the 'like danger [of deriving circumstantially based conclusions from first principles] is in deducing consequences from this natural law of self-preservation, which doth not so rigorously and urgently and illimitedly bind, but that, by the law of nature itself, things may-yea, must-neglect themselves for others, of which the pelican is an instance or an emblem.'[67]

As we have seen, Donne's lack of confidence in the certainty of deductions from moral first principles relies on his utilization of an Aristotelian ethical scheme which places the judgements of practical reason within the realm of opinion (*doxa*); hence, his defense of a particular ethical choice (i.e. suicide) taken under particular circumstances makes no claim to exceed the boundaries of opinion, and remains either paradoxical or orthodox depending on the equally fallible judgement of his fellow disputants. Aquinas' insistence on the presence of first principles which preclude the considerations of practical reason upon the matter of suicide (i.e. self-preservation, generation and corruption), indicate his wish to free the conscience from the deductive deliberations which may lead it to make an erroneous choice which it is then bound to follow. For Aquinas, the issue of suicide is not a matter of

opinion. The knowledge which the conscience must apply to circumstances in

which suicide is an option does not admit exceptions because it does not pertain to

human reason primarily; and therefore, the conscience has but one choice available

to it, and cannot unwittingly err. It is because Aquinas assumes that the conscience

is necessarily in possession of such indisputable knowledge that he condemns

suicide on the grounds that it is contrary to charity. The presence of charity reflects

a love of the proper end toward which an action is directed; and because Aquinas

agrees with Augustine's view that a thing must be known to be loved, the proper end

of an action must be known if it is to be taken in charity.[68] In the case of suicide, the

proper end of action, the good, is known never to be served because the agent, as a

being, cannot but know that its self-preservation is the proximate good toward which

God, in his ultimate goodness, has ordained it.

> Now when we are discussing what a man is, we are either talking
> about his very substance and nature, in which case we all know what we are,
> namely beings made up of soul and body; and in this way all, good or bad,
> love themselves to the extent that they love their own self-preservation.[69]

The self-evidency and universality of this knowledge results in a love for oneself

which renders the decision to commit suicide categorically uncharitable, irrespective

of any rational analysis of the issue. Further, bearing in mind Aquinas' acceptance

of Paul's view that a clear conscience is necessary for a decision to be taken in

charity, it follows that it is impossible for a clear conscience to recommend suicide

because the relevant principles constituting the *scientia* of conscience in its

consideration of suicide are known to all.

Donne's inversion of Aquinas' three reasons against suicide made the

universality of the law of self-preservation subject to a rational analysis which would

determine its jurisdiction according to the particular circumstances considered by the

individual moral agent. The individual conscience, therefore, could be mistaken in

its rational analysis but still clear in its conviction that the good was ultimately being

served. Hence, Donne can, and does, maintain on the authority of Aquinas that a

suicide may be committed in charity because the good end toward which it was directed was the honor and love (*charitas*) of God, an end which Donne counts among those things which are 'so domestic, so near, so inward to us, that our conscience cannot slumber in it, nor dissemble it'.[70] According to Donne's scheme, the major premise of the deduction leading to the conclusion that one ought to take one's own life is the first commandment itself, and is correspondingly certain.[71] The minor premise, in which the particular circumstances are examined in light of the major premise, may be mistaken, however, as both Donne and Aquinas are aware. As a result, the conclusion of the syllogism fails to achieve any more than a degree of probability, and remains an opinion despite its derivation from a known major premise. As we have seen, Aquinas could permit a clear conscience to make such a mistake because he appreciated the difficulty with which the deductive procedure of human discourse proceeded toward certain conclusions upon matters of great circumstantial complexity.[72] Such mistakes, we will see, are accommodated by his theory of charity, and are the basis for Donne's constant appeals for charity in the religious disputations of his day. For Donne, positions argued in charity rarely achieve the status of knowledge. However, their derivation from the principle commanding the love (*charitas*) of God, who is known by all to be worthy of such love, requires those who would refute them to acknowledge their good intentions and to propose counter-*theses* in the same spirit of charity.[73] Such charity recognizes the fallibility of human reason and the possibility of clear but erring consciences, and is ready to consider all opinions, orthodox and paradoxical alike, as it presides over these disputations of opinion (doctrine).[74]

5

Donne on Augustine's Notion of Knowledge and Charity

When Donne comes to consider the view of Augustine on the matter of suicide, his divergence from the neoplatonism of Erasmus, Lando and Agrippa, and from the reformed Aristotelianism of Lull and Ramus, becomes clear. For while

Donne's conventional acknowledgement of the truth of divine mysteries which cannot be demonstrated using the tools of Aristotelian dialectic permits him to express his cognition of these truths in the fideistic terms of the mystical neoplatonist following in the tradition of Augustine, he is aware that the exigencies of ethics may and must be resolved in the context of dialectical disputations which, like the recommendations of the conscience, may not produce the undoubting conviction demanded by the sacred mysteries.[75] In his chapters on suicide in the *City of God*, Augustine, like Aquinas, admits no exception to be granted to an individual conscience claiming justification for the act.[76] Augustine grounds his unqualified rejection of the potential dissent of conscience in this matter on what he considers to be the absolute and universal mandate against killing made in the sixth commandment arguing that 'since the text "Thou shall not kill" has no addition [which indicates who may or may not be killed,] ...it must be taken that there is no exception, not even the one to whom the command is addressed'.[77] In an attempt to justify the self-inflicted death of Samson, Augustine's offers dispensations to suicides from the sixth commandment only upon the expressed authority of God stating that 'one who accepts the prohibition against suicide may kill himself when commanded by one whose orders must not be slighted [i.e. God]; only let him take care that there is no uncertainty about the divine command'.[78] Donne considers Augustine's defense of Samson in the last part of *Biathanatos*, but promptly dismisses the liberties he believes Augustine to have taken with the text in positing a 'special inspiration from God' secretly known to Samson alone. He says that because 'it appears not in the history, nor lies in proof, [it] may with same easiness be refused as it is presented.'[79] The crux of Donne's disagreement with Augustine is not merely a dispute over the universality of the sixth commandment, nor over the allegorical license with which Samson's defense was constructed, though he objects to both.[80] The problem rests ultimately in an epistemology which responds to the sceptical critique in a way which Donne could not approve, and which would make Aquinas' more flexible Aristotelian epistemology of greater use to his own attempts

to resolve those inevitable dilemmas of ethics to which no single solution was clearly evident.

Though Augustine, on the authority of Paul, acknowledges the unknowability of any individual's conscience to another when he says that we 'have only a hearsay acquaintance with any man's conscience [and] we do not claim to judge the secrets of the heart', he declares considerably more confidence in the reliability of a rectified conscience than Donne could admit in *Biathanatos*.[81] When he considers whether greatness of soul is ever deservedly attributed to a suicide, Augustine says that 'we rightly ascribe greatness to a spirit that has the strength to endure a life of misery instead of running away from it, and to despise the judgement of men-and in particular the judgement of the mob, which is so often clouded in the darkness of error-in comparison with the pure light of a good conscience.'[82] Augustine's confidence in the certitude of the moral knowledge apparent to the rectified conscience is a result of his view of the correspondence between charity (*charitas*) and knowledge.[83] As we have seen, Aquinas also accepted this view, maintaining that the end toward which an action is directed must be known for the intention of the will to be guided by a rectified conscience; only such an informed intention is rightly called charitable. Unlike Augustine however, Aquinas, acknowledged a variability in the degree of charity which corresponded to the variability in the degree to which the object of love is known. He explains that charity grows as the knowledge of an accidental form (in this case, the image of God in man) 'grows in one who now knows what he knew already but with greater certainty than before.'[84] The increased certitude of this charity allows its possessor more diligently to pursue the ultimate good, the love of God through conformity with his will, by making the knowledge of that good more certain, and therefore, more intelligible through the obscurities of particular ethical circumstances.

In his *Homilies on I John*, Augustine asserts that the growth of charity is a progression from fear to confidence, and that the register of this progression is the testimony of the conscience.[85] What he does not explain, however, is by what criteria the conscience is required to judge the conformity of the will with the

command to love God. He maintains with Cicero that the 'difference in the intention makes a difference in the acts', but will reveal no more than that the rectitude of intentions are 'discerned only according to their root in charity.'[86] For Donne, the conscience, as the instrument of practical reason, requires some knowledge by which to judge the conformity of the will to the demands of charity; and it is the natural reason described by Aquinas, and embraced by Donne in his identification of the laws of nature and reason in man, which discerns this knowledge. The object of charity, Aquinas explains, 'is the good as a value which is universal, such as only the intellect can grasp'; it is the 'divine good, known by intellect alone.'[87] Aquinas is careful to attribute the presence of charity in the will to the grace of God, but maintains on the authority of Paul's description of the relationship between conscience and charity in Timothy 1:5, that the acts of a good conscience 'awake' charity in ourselves and 'prepare us to receive charity from above.'[88] Though charity resides in the will ultimately as a result of the derivation of its end from God as the source of the divine good, its activation is dependent upon the initiation of conscience, which, as we have seen, is an application of the universal good apprehended by the intellect to particular circumstances.[89] As both Donne and Aquinas make clear, however, such an application may be mistaken despite the recommendation of a good conscience and the presence of charity. Augustine, on the other hand, makes no provision for moral error conceived in charity and a good conscience because he does not believe that the intellect which contemplates the intelligible forms with faith in their certitude can fail to act with the wisdom attained through such contemplation. We should recall here that Erasmus' recommendation of faith as the key to divine illumination in the *Enchiridion*, was an exhortation to follow Augustine, and that Donne could not sanction such a recommendation.

In *On the Trinity*, Augustine discusses the role of charity in the recognition of intelligibles and argues that loving God indicates the faith necessary to illuminate the reason to the universality and immutability of the patterns of 'genus and species' by which we may judge particular manifestations of them (i.e. 'righteousness' in the individual soul).[90] For Augustine, the clarity of the 'form or pattern' is obtained

through contemplation assisted by charity, and may only be maintained if charity is present. 'The only way of cleaving to that pattern is by love.'[91] This charity, however, may only be maintained through an exercise of the will in accordance with the commandments to love both God and neighbor.

> This striving or search may seem a different thing from the love by which the thing known is loved, inasmuch as the knowledge sought is yet to be realized. None the less, it is something of the same kind. It can really be described as "will": for everyone who seeks is willing to find.[92]

It is in this way, Augustine concludes, that we are to understand Paul in I Corinthians 8:3 when he says, '*Si quis autem diligit Deum, hic cognitus est ab eo*' ('someone who loves God, is known by God').[93] To enter into a clear cognitive relationship with God requires a diligent exercise of the will in accordance with the mandate of *charitas*. Though Aquinas can agree with Augustine that to love a thing, one must know it, he attributes the 'awakening' of charity to the right application of the moral knowledge possessed by the conscience naturally. Donne adopts this ordering of charity and knowledge when he says that it is the testimony of his rectified, though possibly mistaken, conscience that assures him of his 'charitable purpose' in seeking support in scripture for his defense of suicide.[94] Augustine, however, in his commitment to locate the source of moral knowledge in the divine intellect alone, must reverse the order and make charity the source of knowledge of the divine. Employing the terms of dialectic in the service of his trinitarian allegory, Augustine describes love as the argument or similitude through and by which certain moral knowledge is obtained. He calls this certain moral knowledge 'a kind of *word*, begotten by an inward speech' which 'is born when we approve the product of our thought, either for sinning or for doing right.'[95] It is the pronouncement of this word 'in the heart' which precipitates the action of the moral agent and secures his accountability, since, Augustine says, 'There is nothing we effect through the body by act or speech involving judgements of ethical value that is not preceded by the utterance of such an inner word.'[96] Thus, with respect to spiritual things whose

possession, unlike that of temporal things, is secured by the knowledge of them alone, 'this word of ours, and the mind of which it is begotten, are united by the middle term of love, which binds itself to them as a third member in a spiritual embrace without any confusion.'[97]

   If Augustine believed that certain moral knowledge could be attained through a union of charity and the mind, he also believed that the possession of such knowledge was sufficient to insure the righteousness of its possessor whether he was required to act upon it or not.[98] For Donne, the exigency of moral decisions which arose from particular circumstances in which action was unavoidable was precisely the point at which the certainty of our light of nature became obfuscated by its commingling with our discourse. Aquinas recognized the error into which discursive reasoning could lead human minds especially when encountered with circumstantially complex situations, and therefore, made allowances for consciences which erred 'after just diligence [was] used', while Augustine, following the Socratic and Stoic co-ordination of knowledge and the will, could not admit an individual who enjoyed the grace of God to perform a sinful act in charity.[99] In other words, Augustine believed that God could in no way be involved in a decision to commit a sinful act, and therefore, that such an act could not have been committed by one who possessed the knowledge and charity required to act justly.[100] It was the inflexibility of Augustine's doctrine of divine illumination with respect to matters of practical divinity which concerned Donne, a concern which troubled him all the more deeply because, he says, that 'almost all the reasons of others...are derived from...St. Augustine.'[101] We should recall that Donne's concern for the potential abuse of this absolutist epistemology by casuists was expressed with respect both to Calvin's Augustinian doctrine of the elect and to Augustine's definition of sin, and therefore indicates a philosophical aversion to the doctrine of divine illumination in preference to the naturalist epistemology of Aristotle and Aquinas.[102] Before he criticized Augustine's specific reasons against suicide for masquerading as an exhaustive list, Donne clearly states his misgivings about following Augustine in matters of ethics:

> Though St. Augustine, for sharp insight and conclusive judgement in exposition of places of Scripture, which he always makes so liquid and pervious that he hath scarce been equalled therein by any of all the writers in the church of God, except Calvin may have that honor..., have a high degree of reverence due to him, yet in practic learning and moral divinity he was of so nice, and refined, and rigorous a conscience-perchance to redeem his former licentiousness, as it falls often in such convertites to be extremely zealous-that for our directions in actions of this life, St. Jerome and some others may be thought sometimes fitter to adhere to than St. Augustine.[103]

In this passage the details of Donne's allegiance to Augustine are delineated; where scriptural exegesis is concerned, Augustine, like his disciple, Calvin, may be followed because neither the Old nor New Testaments are concerned with resolving the particular moral dilemmas which the Christian may encounter in his attempt to act in conformity with their sometimes conflicting universal precepts.[104] It is for this reason that in matters of 'practic learning' or 'moral divinity', which concern themselves explicitly with the application of principles to specific, often circumstantially complex, situations, Donne will incline to the method of practical reason described in *Nicomachean Ethics* and modified to suit Christian doctrine by Aquinas.[105]

Despite his allegiance to Aquinas' ethics, when he returns to the reasons urged against suicide in *The City of God* I, Donne does not hesitate to offer his unqualified assent. It is important that we recognize this agreement in contrast to Donne's disagreement with Aquinas' arrangement of the three first laws of nature. As we have already seen, Donne inverts the order of priority of Aquinas' laws of nature because he seeks to delegate to the individual conscience the authority to override the mandates of both the laws of self-preservation and of generation and corruption. Having delegated this authority to the conscience, Donne may then follow Aquinas' formulation of the potentially fallible and particular function of charity and conscience over against the infallibility and universality of Augustine's formulation. Hence, though Donne can agree with Augustine that 'neither to avoid temporal troubles, nor to remove from others occasion of sin, nor to punish our own

past sins, nor to prevent future, nor in a desire for the next life...[can it]...be lawful for any man to kill himself,' he can also accuse him of failing to acknowledge other reasons (other than the special commandment of God as in the case of Samson) which may justify the act.[106] Augustine's failure to acknowledge these other possible reasons is a result of his confidence in the knowledge possessed by one who in charity enjoys the 'pure light of a good conscience' and who, therefore, cannot will a sinful act. Moreover, because a sinful act cannot be willed by God, any such act must be attributed to the free will of the agent. Donne, speaking as a paradoxist in the tradition of Aquinas, can claim exceptions to general laws, such as those relating to the principle of *redde depositum*, which the practical reason must endeavor to discover and justify, and assert that 'St. Augustine hath condemned those causes which we defend not, but hath omitted those wherein it is justifiable...[which are cases that are]...hard to be discerned and distinguished from others arising from human infirmity'.[107] From this assertion, Donne, citing the Jesuit Petrus Thyraeus' *De daemoniacis liber unus* (1594), concludes that Augustine's condemnation of suicide, like his view that the devil may only possess a person by entering him by sin, 'speaks not of what must of necessity be, but what for the most part uses to be.'[108]

6
Augustine and the Certainty of Moral Knowledge

As we have seen, Donne's project as a paradoxist involves the refutation of universal claims which 'must of necessity' govern absolutely the truth or falsity of their particular members.[109] His consistent criticism of the breadth of Augustine's practical moral precepts such as his general definition of sin and his putatively exhaustive list of reasons against suicide indicate his preference for an examination of specific moral problems which begin according to the inductive process implicit in the exercise of an Aristotelian practical reason upon matters which do not appear unambiguously to be governed by a universal principle. The logical limitations of

this necessarily empirical process restrict the epistemological force of its conclusions by yielding only a degree of certainty which corresponds to the proportion of the relevant data collected and inspected. Hence, when Donne claims that Augustine 'speaks not of what must of necessity be, but what for the most part uses to be,' he is accusing Augustine's assertion that 'Christians have no authority to commit suicide in any circumstance,' of masquerading as a universal principle from which we may deduce with certainty.[110] For Donne, the statement should read: Christians have no authority to commit suicide in *most* cases; stated in this way, a conclusion deduced from this major premise could only attain a degree of probability, and would therefore require an individual considering suicide to examine as many hypothetical particular circumstances as possible to insure the greatest degree of certainty.[111] As we have seen in the Aristotelian ethics of Aquinas, the examination of particulars against first practical principles is the special province of the practical reason. Such an examination implies the lack of a first practical principle which, through revelation or self-evidency, speaks directly and unambiguously to the particular circumstances being considered; and therefore, the very existence of a work such as *Biathanatos* is an objection to the excessive confidence of Augustine in the practical moral knowledge attainable by the human mind through *charitas*.[112] Because Aquinas thought that the practical reason could deliver errant judgements which the conscience was bound to follow, Donne could remain faithful to the considerably less confident epistemological principles underlying an ethical doctrine which could admit fallible judgement without sin. However, before Donne could restrict his consideration of suicide to the fallible realm of practical reason, he had to invert Aquinas' three general reasons against suicide given in *Summa* II i, q. 94, a. 2 in order to give precedence to the mandates of reason over those delivered by the more general, non-rational testimony both of all beings and of all living beings.

In *On Free Will*, Augustine himself advocates this inversion in his dialogue with Evodius:

Ev.-To exist, to live and to know are three things. A stone exists but does not live. An animal lives but has not intelligence. But he who has intelligence most certainly both exists and lives. Hence I do not hesitate to judge that that is more excellent, which has all these qualities, than that in which one or both of them is absent...Aug.-And of these three things that is most excellent which man has along with the other two, that is intelligence.[113]

When Donne, after comparing the inclination of our sensitive nature to that of our rational nature, identifies the law of nature in human beings with the law of reason stating that the rational nature 'is that light which God hath afforded us of his eternal law, and which is usually called *recta ratio*,' he admits a decided allegiance to the view expressed by Augustine in the passage from *On Free Will* quoted above against Aquinas' ordering of the natural laws observed by the practical reason discussed in *Summa* II i, q. 94, a. 2.[114] However, because Donne inverts the order of Aquinas' natural laws so that he may claim a circumstantial alterability of the reasons prohibiting suicide which can be recognizable by the practical reason alone, he cannot permit the possibility that practical reason may always deliver universal, necessary and unerring judgements on particular moral dilemmas. In *On Free Will*, Augustine will attribute such judgements to the capacity of right reason in his attempt to locate the source of evil in the free will of human beings. He says regarding the Platonic virtues and right reason, 'No one makes a bad use of prudence or fortitude or temperance. In all these, as in justice which you have chosen to mention, right reason prevails, without which there can be no virtues. And no one can make a bad use of right reason.'[115] The claim that right reason may only lead to right action is not in itself repugnant to Donne's desire to ground the alterability of reasons for and against suicide in the shortcomings of reason, for in so far as reason exercised in a particular decision is right, it must necessarily have been well used. The problem for Donne is whether reason must apprehend a single objectively good course of action to be right. Such apprehension, as we have seen, is not guaranteed according to Aquinas' practical ethics.

Augustine, on the other hand, not only credits human reason with the ability to acquire true and immutable knowledge, but also claims that such knowledge is required for the orientation of the will toward the good through the exercise of right reason. He begins by asserting the commonality of the truth available to human reason. 'Just as the rules of numbers are true and unchangeable, and the science of numbers is unchangeably available for all who can learn it, and is common to them all, so the rules of wisdom are true and unchangeable.'[116] He goes on to maintain that it is according to these rules of wisdom that we make right decisions about particular matters. 'Of minds we say this one is not so capable as it ought to be, or it is not gentle enough or eager enough, according to our moral standard. All these judgements we make according to those inward rules of truth, which we discern in common.'[117] Finally, he identifies the possession of wisdom with the ability to judge correctly. 'No one judges it, and no one without it judges aright. Hence it is evident beyond a doubt that wisdom is better than our minds, for by it alone they are made individually wise, and are made judges, not of it, but by it of all other things whatever.'[118] Recalling Donne's approval of Aquinas' opinion of the variability of human law, and its subsequent lack of certitude and perfection, Augustine's belief in the subordination of the 'temporal' (human) law to the eternal law would seem to suit Donne's purposes in *Biathanatos* perfectly. Augustine says that 'from the eternal law are derived all just laws even when they are variable according to circumstances... those who with a good will cleave to the eternal law do not need the temporal law'.[119]

At first glance, it would seem that because Donne agrees with Augustine that any just human law must be so only by virtue of its conformity with the eternal law, he would be more likely to follow the tacit advice of Augustine to disregard the temporal law when it conflicts with the eternal law. However, Augustine never offers such advice in his discussion in *On Free Will* because he believes that human beings, with the assistance of grace, are capable of accessing the eternal law for the derivation of the temporal law. He explains to Evodius in *On Free Will* 'that there is nothing just or legitimate in temporal law save what men have derived from the

eternal law;' and this eternal law, he maintains a short while later, is 'stamped upon our minds'.[120] The possibility of human minds deriving their human laws from the infallible source of all justice, the eternal law, makes Augustine unsympathetic to those who err in spite of their belief that they are pursuing a good and just object.[121] He argues that because wisdom is the 'truth in which the chief good is beheld and possessed' and this chief good 'is one for all men', the happy (morally justified) life consists solely in pursuing this chief good through the application of wisdom. He concludes, uncharitably by Donne's standards, that whoever 'seeks that which ought not to be sought, even though he would not seek it unless it seemed to him to be good, is nevertheless in error'.[122] It will be assumed that the difference between this statement and Donne's commonly expressed view that suicide does not violate the law of nature if it is committed for reasons which 'seem' good to the perpetrator need not be further explained.

As our analysis of his departure from the ethics of Augustine should indicate, the principal issue upon which Donne believes the two most important authorities in the Christian tradition (Augustine and Aquinas) disagree is epistemological. Specifically, it concerns points of ethical knowledge which lie at the heart of late sixteenth-century reformation controversy. Donne's claim that the Calvinist doctrine of 'impenitibleness' stands 'proportionally and analogally to their other doctrine' which, upon the authority of Augustine, asserts the determination of the elect and the damned by the foreknowledge of God, indicates quite early on in *Biathanatos* that he is going to reject the Platonic epistemology of Augustine.[123] Because of its derivation from Plato's theory of recollection, Augustine's doctrine of divine illumination could not be reconciled with the Aristotelian empiricism incorporated into the natural philosophy of Aquinas; this movement toward Aristotelian epistemology, in turn, resulted in the possibility of the re-emergence of the sceptical critique of the certitude of moral knowledge. Aquinas was able to disregard sceptical arguments against his natural theology by arguing that its first principles, against which the sceptical critique of Stoic and Peripatetic syllogistic is consistently directed, are delivered by divine revelation in scripture. However, with respect to

those issues to which scripture does not unambiguously address itself, such as that which the third part of *Biathanatos* claims suicide to be, our intellects, and the increasingly fallible knowledge of particular ethical matters which it produces, must be utilized.[124]

As the testimony of 'Divine Meditation I' attests, Donne was no more prepared to dispense with the notion that grace was necessary for salvation than Aquinas; nor was he more inclined than Aquinas to repudiate Augustine's entire doctrine of grace. What he had to deny was that part of Augustine's epistemology which permitted Calvin to assert (against Augustine himself) that the weakness of the human intellect that resulted after the fall was so severe that nothing but the unsolicited grace of God could guarantee salvation.[125] Hence, where Calvin thought that Augustine's doctrine of divine illumination overemphasized the part which the human being could play in his own salvation by functioning in accordance with a shared 'co-operating' grace which gave some degree of power to human beings in their own salvation, Donne suspected (with the Pelagians) that this same doctrine admitted the possibility that moral perfection could be achieved through the independent exercise of the free will. It is in the light of this suspicion that we must understand Donne's comments regarding illumination and grace, for these terms cannot be employed in a work such as *Biathanatos* without resonating their Augustinian connotations. After providing the mitigating conditions for Augustine's categorical condemnation of suicide, a position which needs 'moderation' because it 'speaks not of what must of necessity be, but for the most part uses to be', Donne may employ Augustine's terms in as novel a way as he had employed Aquinas' terms earlier in the work (i.e. three precepts of the natural law). To his now familiar pseudo-Thomist formulation of the freedom of the conscience in decisions 'where there is [not] a proper court', he adds a pseudo-Augustinian formulation which results a short while later in the startling claim that suicide may actually be the consequence of the grace of God, a claim which would likely have upset any Christian irrespective of the extent of their loyalty to Augustine.[126] He says, 'So that, if there be cases wherein one may assuredly, or probably, after just diligence

used, conclude upon an illumination of the spirit of God, or upon a ceasing of the reason of the law at that time in him, that man is *sui iuris*.'[127] After what we have learned about Augustine's confidence in the knowledge of a mind illumined by God, Donne's use of the term 'probably' to describe a conclusion reached 'upon an illumination of the spirit of God' must appear problematic. Before we explain how Donne solves this problem, however, we must first identify the grounds on which Augustine based his rejection of probabilism.

7
Augustine's Rejection of Probabilism

Augustine's rejection of scepticism is recorded in *Against the Academicians*, which he wrote as a response to the doubts into which he had fallen while still a disciple of Academic philosophy.[128] His rejection of scepticism was, in part, a consequence of his denial of the doctrine of probabilism advocated by Cicero and his master, Carneades, a doctrine, which seemed to Augustine to provide an excuse for the error that leads to sin. He says:

> I am utterly at a loss to know how he sinned, if whoever does what seems probable is not guilty of sin, unless perhaps they [the Academics] say that to err is one thing, while to sin is another, and that they intended by those precepts [which lead to the suspension of assent] that we should not err, but that they thought that committing sin is of no great consequence.[129]

Augustine's main objection to the Academics, as they are defended by Cicero in the *Academica*, is that in maintaining that what is probable is like the truth (*veri simile*), the sceptic committed to withholding assent to propositions which claim to be true or false tacitly admits knowledge of the very truth he wishes to assert only probably. Augustine illustrates this inconsistency in Academic epistemology when he asks his young interlocutor, Licentius, how someone who does not know his father can appear anything but foolish if he claims that his brother is like his father. Licentius,

though a bit slow to grasp the intention of Augustine's illustration, eventually manages to conclude that the 'analogy proclaims aloud that your Academicians ought to be ridiculed, who say that they are striving in this life after what is like the truth when they do not know what truth itself is.'[130] After stating confidently that while the Academics believe that it is probable that 'truth cannot be found', he believes that it is probable that it can be found, Augustine begins to demonstrate how he believes some truths can be proven. Integral to his demonstration is the combination of his beliefs that it is absurd to claim that the wise man can be ignorant of wisdom and that wisdom can be nothing.[131] He maintains this belief upon the assumption that wisdom is something, and if it is, the wise man, by definition, knows it. Despite the fact that Augustine claims only that he believes that it is 'improbable that the wise knows nothing,' his doubt (if indeed he intends to express any) is not about the knowledge of the wise man but about whether wisdom is something, which is tantamount to doubting whether there is objective truth. After briefly praising Alypius' admission of the necessity of divine aid 'to show man what is true', he delivers what he believes to be the decisive logical proof against the comprehensive doubt of the Academics.[132]

> I hold as certain that there is or is not one world; and if there is not one, there are either a finite or an infinite number of worlds. Carneades would teach that that opinion resembles what is false. I likewise know that this world or ours has been so arranged either because of the nature of bodies or by some providence, and it either always was and will be or that it began to exist and will by no means cease existing, or that it does not have its origin in time but will have an end, or that it has started to remain in existence and will remain but not forever, and I know innumerable physical phenomena of this type. For those disjunctions are true nor can anyone confuse them with any likeness of what is false.[133]

In this passage Augustine is combating the view propounded by Carneades that our perception is unable to distinguish between true and false impressions. He appeals to the principle of non-contradiction, as do the Stoics, Aristotle and Aquinas, as the evidence that disjunctive propositions such as 'a thing either is or it is not' can

be asserted with complete certainty.[134] However, this proof is merely a refutation of the sceptical claim that the mind cannot be said to be know anything certainly; Donne was familiar with Sextus' critique of the Stoic unprovables in the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* and *Against the Mathematicians*, and therefore would have also known that a disjunctive proposition does not establish a necessary relation between its two terms; nor do universal propositions which predicate one term of another, such as Donne would have known from his study of Aristotelian syllogistic, provide any information about the actual (metaphysical) nature of those two terms. For instance, when Augustine claims that the wise man knows wisdom, he says no more than that the wise man is wise, which, of course, is simply to predicate wisdom of this man twice. The proposition which underlies these claims, and the truth of which the sceptic denies can be demonstrated, is 'a man is wise'. As Cicero had urged against Zeno in the *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, the reason for this uncertainty is simply that we are unable to prove that wisdom or virtue or pain bear any relation to the subjects of which they are predicated that extends beyond the definitions which we have devised for them. Augustine rightly accuses the Academics of contradicting themselves when they claim that the wise man assents to nothing because they themselves assert that such a man exists (i.e. the man who assents to nothing) while maintaining that he knows nothing, not even wisdom.[135]

However, Augustine's solution to the problem of the relation of sense perception to reality, the most persistent problem raised by scepticism, provides nothing that Aristotle and the Stoics had not provided before him.[136] His interior sense (*interior sensus*) as described in *On Free Will* functions in the same manner as Aristotle's 'common sense,' by co-ordinating the images gathered by the five external senses and producing a unified perception.[137] Unlike the sceptics, Augustine does not believe that this unified perception is peculiar to each individual perceiver. 'In spite of the fact that my sense and yours are two different things, what we actually see need not be two different things, one of which I see while you see the other. There is one object for both of us, and both of us see it simultaneously.'[138] We are never told, however, by what mechanism the unified perceptions assembled

by the individual interior senses of individual perceivers are grasped in common by them all. The Stoics, as we have seen, provided such a mechanism in the form of a cognitive intermediary called the *lekton* which carried the notes of a true perception from the object perceived to any who could perceive it, but Augustine's use of a concept corresponding to the *lekton* (*dicibile*) is restricted to his discussion, in *De Dialectica*, of signification in language alone.[139] With respect to the signification of non-verbal signs, however, he seems to see no problem in leaving his assertion that we all perceive the same objects in common unsupported, and indeed he meets no resistance from his interlocutor, Evodius. However, he does anticipate sceptical objections to the claim that we know abstract truths in common, such as those expressed in mathematical principles, because he does not believe that such truths are the product of an inductive process dependent upon the bodily senses, interior or exterior. He says:

> The double of any number is found to be exactly as far from that number as it is from the beginning of the series. How do we find this changeless, firm and unbroken rule persisting throughout the numerical series? No bodily sense makes contact with all numbers, for they are innumerable. How do we know that this rule holds throughout? How can any phantasy or phantasm yield such certain truth about numbers which are innumerable? We must know this by the inner light, of which bodily sense knows nothing.[140]

Despite the undeniable but circular reasoning which informed his argument for the certainty of disjunctive propositions, the success of Augustine's response to the Academics, as this passage indicates, ultimately rests on his doctrine of illumination. In *The Teacher*, he closely examines the relation of words understood as signs to those objects which they are supposed to signify (*significabilia*) and concludes after considerable dialectical inquiry that words merely remind us of things of which our minds are already in possession.[141] Hence, with respect to sense knowledge, words remind us of objects which we have perceived through the external senses, co-ordinated into images by the internal sense and 'imprinted on...[our] memory'.[142] With respect to that abstract, intellectual knowledge (e.g. mathematical principles)

which he had denied could be derived from the bodily senses in *On Free Will*,
Augustine concludes that the teacher merely leads his pupil so that he may 'look
upon [it] in the inner light of truth which illumines the inner man and is inwardly
enjoyed.'[143] This inner light shining inwardly in the inner man must ultimately be
derived from God who will make universal truths 'manifest' to those who direct
their wills in accordance with the command of charity.[144] Those who do not direct
their wills in this way, however, may in no way blame God for allowing them to fall
into error. Augustine explains that it 'often happens that a man, when asked a
question, gives a negative answer, but by further questioning can be brought to
answer in the affirmative.' 'The reason' for this discrepancy, he continues, 'lies in
his own weakness. He is unable to let the light illumine the whole problem.'[145]

In light of Augustine's association of error and sin, we may now return to
Donne's innovation of the doctrine of illumination in his statement that 'if there be
cases wherein one may assuredly, or probably, after just diligence used, conclude
upon an illumination of God,...that one is *sui iuris*.' As we have seen, probability is
achieved through an inductive process which indicates the likelihood of a universal
principle through the accumulation of particular bits of evidence which indicate its
universality. As the paradoxist knows, only one exception need be discovered to
reduce a universal principle masquerading as certain to a mere probability.
Augustine also knew that principles reliant upon inductive reasoning could not attain
the degree of certainty which he believed was characteristic of knowledge conceived
in the bright light of grace. It is for this reason that he denied the knowledge of
mathematical principles an inductive basis when he dismissed the possibility 'that
numbers [could] make their impression on our minds not in their own right but
rather as images of visible things, springing from our contacts by bodily sense with
corporeal objects'.[146] He felt similarly about moral principles.[147] Their truth was
authorized by God himself; and therefore, no exception to them could be claimed
which would reveal their underlying inductive basis. Just as in mathematics, when a
theorem is shown theoretically to admit no exceptions, it is called a universal proof
and need not be verified with respect to particular cases, when a moral principle is

asserted to be without exception, it can never be said merely to be probably true. In *Against the Academicians*, Augustine considered the threat of probabilism and its empirical (inductive) treatment of ethics and law extremely serious. He explains that 'this is of vast importance, this is appalling, this ought to be feared by every good man, namely, that he may commit every kind of sin not only without the blame of crime but even without the blame of error if this probable line of reasoning will be (followed)'.[148] Hence, when Donne permits probability to coexist with illumination, he does so in order to provide a place for excusable ignorance in error, but he can do so only by compromising the foundations of Augustine's theory of moral knowledge.[149]

8
Degrees of Certainty and Degrees of Charity

We have seen that Donne believed the knowledge of God's existence and the obligation to worship him to be common to all rational creatures, Christian and pagan alike, and that those who deny this knowledge represent the *'inexcusabiles'* condemned by Paul in Romans 1:20-21. Both his inversion of Aquinas' three precepts of the natural law and his incorporation of a limited form of probabilism into Augustine's doctrine of illumination represent his attempt to establish a class of moral dilemmas which are sufficiently ambiguous to allow the individual conscience to claim an excusable ignorance of the means to ascertain their solution with certainty. When we encounter such a dilemma, Donne explains, we must endeavor to identify which of the conflicting principles speaks most authoritatively. In ethical matters, this identification is facilitated by the arrangement of the Decalogue into those commandments of the First Table (1-3) which concern 'the honor of God and faith', and those of the Second Table (4-10) which are 'directed upon our neighbor by charity.'[150] Of course, the commandments of the First Table must be followed before those of the Second Table; and hence, if we must choose to 'do an act of idolatry or kill', Donne explains, that we are 'bound to the latter'.[151] Later, Donne

argues that because the commandments of the First Table impose a 'necessary obligation which lies always upon us, of preferring God's glory above all human respects', we may deduce 'mediately and secondarily' from them other laws which permit the transgression of the commandments of the Second Table.[152] As both Donne and Aquinas acknowledge, these secondary laws may be mistaken because they are the 'issue of our light of nature and of our discourse', but so long as they are derived from that first principle of which no one may claim an excusable ignorance, the glorification of God, they have been deduced from the knowledge necessary to insure a rectified conscience, which, in turn (according to Aquinas' arrangement), insures a charitable will. As Moses had explained to the Israelites, keeping the ten commandments is the means to following the general commandment to love God.[153] When there is no conflict between the interests of God and of our neighbor, we may claim with Augustine that we exhibit our love for God when we show love for our neighbor, but in cases in which there is such a conflict, it is our knowledge that God's glory is to be preferred to the interests of our neighbor that insures that our decision is taken out of love for God, and is therefore, charitable.[154] With regard to ourselves, Donne concludes that if the sixth commandment (Thou shalt not kill) may be countermanded by any of the first three, and is an instance of our love for God asserting its priority over our love for our neighbor, then our love for ourself, for which there is no explicit commandment in the scriptures, may be assumed also to be subordinate to our love for God.[155] Aquinas, though he places the love of one's own soul before the love of neighbor, orders the objects of the commands to love placing God first, our own soul second, our neighbor third, and our own body last.[156] Augustine also recognizes this arrangement, but, as we have seen, does not provide the epistemological or logical mechanisms by which these variabilities in the degree of charity can result in variablilities in the degree of knowledge or proof.[157]

After stating that the lesson of I John 3:16 provides us with 'a true understanding of charity,...[and of] a contempt of this life in respect of it', Donne follows Aquinas on the relation of the degrees of charity to those of knowledge when he concludes that this 'true understanding' compels us to accept that 'as He did in

perfect charity, so we, in such degrees of it as this life and our nature are capable of, must die by our own will, rather than His glory be neglected'.[158] Our nature, which, we have seen, Donne identifies with reason, is capable of the knowledge that God's glory is to be exalted above all else. From this 'true understanding', we may deduce that under certain circumstances, we must take our own lives in order to follow the command to love God. This deduction, as it is the product of our fallible practical reason, may be mistaken, but is nonetheless without sin because we have reached it employing the highest degree of knowledge of which our nature is capable. It is this highest degree of knowledge, this certainty, which results in the highest degree of charity of which we are capable. As an illustration of a charitable but erroneous conclusion which may be deduced from the certain truth of the command to love God, Donne cites Paul's wish 'to be separated from Christ' if such separation results in the salvation of his brothers.[159] Donne agrees with Calvin that though this wish was contrary to the will of God, and therefore sinful, Paul's intention was deduced from his knowledge that God is to be glorified before all else. This knowledge secured that highest degree of charity which, Donne claims, excused the sinful wish; Paul's deduction that his wish was a means to glorify God was mistaken, but for Donne, 'remains as an argument to us that charity will recompense and justify many excesses which seem unnatural and irregular and enormous transportations.'[160]

In his declaration that his intention in *Biathanatos* is to show how suicide 'may be free, not only from those enormous degrees of sin, but from all', Donne reveals that he will attempt this proof according to Aquinas' formulation of the relation between charity and knowledge, the same formulation, which, we have seen, is operative in his defense of Paul's sinful wish.[161] After the defense of his paradoxical *thesis* has 'delivered...[us] from the tyranny of...prejudice', he explains, 'our judgement may be brought nearer to a straightness, and our charity awakened and entendered to apprehend' that, like Paul, those who commit suicide out of a perceived conformity with the command to love God have done so with the rectified conscience necessary to secure their charitable intention.[162] As Aquinas had said, the conscience which possesses the universal practical principle to 'fly evil' and 'seek

good' apprehends the knowledge which initiates its identification of God with the good. Once such an identification is made, our charity is awakened and our will strives to do the will of God despite its uncertainty that particular decisions taken under specific circumstances actually conform with the universal good.[163] Donne's refutation of the orthodox, and categorical, position against suicide by the enumeration of counterexamples in combination with his constructive deductive proofs for the identification of the laws of nature, reason and God are intended to bring our judgment 'nearer to a straightness', to raise its awareness of the universal command to love. By this awareness, charity is awakened, not only in our own pursuit of the good in our ethical lives, but in our readiness to exonerate those who, out of their charitable will to follow the command to love God, have committed acts which, according to our own potentially erroneous rational discourse, appear to be sinful. What is critical, as Donne insists in *Pseudo-Martyr*, is that we diligently exercise our practical reason in the service of charity, because 'whatsoever appears true to the Iudgement, seemes good to our will, and begets a desire to doe it.'[164] This desire to do good fulfills the criterion for a charitable intention, and though it must be remembered that Donne continues to require only a 'seeming' good to present itself to the judgement, a rectified conscience must endeavor to apply its knowledge with a view to discovering truth, elusive as it may be.[165] Donne explains to those English Catholics who would sacrifice their lives by refusing to swear the Oath of Allegiance that 'our *Conscience*, whose office is to apply our *knowledge* to something, and to present to us some law that bindes us in that case, cannot binde us to these heavy incommodities [of a suicide mistaken for martyrdom], for any matter, but that, which wee therefore beleeue that wee know'.[166] The potential conflict between the doubt implicit in belief and the certitude required for knowledge, represented in the final clause of this statement of Donne's allegiance to Aquinas' theory of the conscience, reflects a compassion for erring human reason which could not accord with Augustine's confidence in the conscience rectified by charity.

Unlike Augustine, Aquinas admitted that charity may be present in the intention of the will but fail to succeed in its pursuit of the good. This failure, he

says, is the result of 'the changeable condition of the subject', a condition which, he had explained earlier, makes a constant perception of the divine good impossible in this life.[167] Our practical reason may try to serve the end of the divine good in its particular deductions, but it is bound to fail, at least occasionally, to observe the true order of goods by preferring, albeit unwittingly, some temporal to a spiritual good. Aquinas explains that 'a disordered affection about things subordinate to an end does not destroy love for the end itself. Hence charity towards God can remain side by side with a mortal sin, which has been committed through a disordered love for some temporal good.'[168] Donne's presentation of *Biathanatos* as a paradox which in all earnestness exposes the uncertain basis of the opposing orthodox position, is an illustration of the difficulty with which our rational discourse apprehends the correct relative order of the conflicting ends among which we must choose in this life. We have only a few precepts which we can claim to know with certainty, and our deductions from them are bound to descend into the fallible realm of probability. First in the order of priority is the command to love God; the more particular the circumstances to which we attempt to apply this precept, the more likely we are to fall into error. Hence, Donne concludes his *thesis* defending the conditions under which suicide may be deemed preferable, with an acknowledgement of its nature as an opinion, a nature which, though changeable and uncertain, reflects the difficulty with which we all must contend in our rational efforts to bring our will into conformity with the command to love God. If we refuse to involve ourselves in this struggle with a consciousness both of our desire to discover the truth and the fallacy which may impair that discovery, we diminish the value of the disputation of paradoxes which Harvey had praised, and which Donne implicitly approved in both his *Paradoxes* and *Biathanatos*. Those innovators, who seek to obscure the truth, those sceptics, who deny that it can be discovered, those dogmatists, who do not recognize their own fallibility, and those wits, who draw on these authors to affect the appearance of learning, all may enlist the service of the paradox as a vehicle to convey their misinformation. What they all lack, and what ultimately makes their paradoxes contemptible, is the rigor to 'vex' or 'raise an alarum to' truth in the hope

that the means to act in accordance with it, and hence with the command to love God as the source of truth, will more clearly be discerned by reason.

Notes to Chapter VI

[1] *Nicomachean Ethics* 1142b12, b14-15

[2] Ibid., 1143b1-b5

[3] *Summa* II i, q. 94, a. 4

[4] *Summa* II i, q. 94, a. 5. See also *Summa* II i, q. 91, a. 3. 'The practical reason is concerned with practical matters, which are singular and contingent, but not with necessary things, with which the speculative reason is concerned. Wherefore human laws cannot have the inerrancy that belongs to the demonstrated conclusions of the sciences.'

[5] This probabilism is here opposed only to the certain conclusions derived from known first principles. It does not describe the probabilism of the sixteenth-century Dominican casuist, Bartolome de Medina. Donne opposed this doctrine, which maintained that a course of action was justified if it attained even a lesser degree of probability. See Donne, 1977, p. 13. Dwight Cathcart observes Donne's doubts concerning the reliability of deductions, but seems uncertain as to whether Donne's scepticism resulted in his adherence to Medina's doctrine of probabilism or to the orthodox Anglican doctrine of probabiliorism, which maintained that a course of action was justified only if it appeared to attain the greatest degree of probability. His uncertainty stems from his failure to distinguish between the constructive scepticism of the Academics and the destructive scepticism of the Pyrrhonists. See Cathcart, 1975, pp. 33-88, esp. 44-45, 54, 87, 119, and 153-154.

[6] *Nicomachean Ethics* 1140a30-1140b2.

[7] Ibid., 1140b27-28, 1141a1-2

[8] We recall that in their criticisms of *Biathanatos*, both John Adams and Charles Moore criticized Donne for his destructive use of examples, but failed to acknowledge that such a destructive procedure is proper to the defense of a paradox. See Moore, 1790, Part VI, pp. 19-21; and John Adams, 1700, pp. 133-144.

[9] *Nicomachean Ethics* 1142a14-15, 1142a17-18

[10] See ibid., 1142b7-15.

[11] For a discussion of Aquinas' use of the Aristotelian method of analyzing problems (*dubitationes*) in his consideration of the application of first principles to particular questions, see Gilson, 1983, pp. 62-76.

[12] This diversion from Aquinas may represent the 'false thread…not easily found' which Donne claimed, in his 1619 letter to Robert Ker, readers of *Biathanatos* from 'both Universities' had suspected. See Donne, 1977, pp. 21-22.

[13] *Summa* II i, q. 97, a. 1

[14] *Summa* II i, q. 94, a. 4. In a 1647 lecture, the Anglican casuist, Robert Sanderson, affirmed this Thomist view of the interaction of the speculative and practical reason in the operation of conscience. Sanderson explains that the practical reason 'doth agree with the *Speculative* in this, that it doth look on *Truth*, and with the *Will* in this, that it inclineth to operation'. See Sanderson, 1660, p. 25 (quoted in Camille Welles Slights, 1981, p. 11). Sanderson also wrote a manual of logic, *Logicae Artis Compendium* (1615), and it is noteworthy that in it, he attempted to reformulate scholastic logic making explicit critical reference to Ramus' reformulations. For a discussion of Sanderson's response to Ramus, see Howell, 1961, pp. 299-308.

[15] See Romans 1:20-21. In Donne's Christmas Day sermon of 1629, he explains that 'I can see God in the creature, but the nature, the essence, the secret purposes of God, I cannot see there'. See Donne, 1953, IX, p. 134.

[16] Donne, 1982, ll. 1630-1634

[17] Romans 2:14-15 (my punctuation). I would like to thank Dr. Roger Rees for helping me to understand the grammar and syntax of this passage.

[18] In his reading of *Sermons* V, in which Donne states that 'there is nothing in grace, that was not first in nature', Jeffrey Johnson has explained that Donne believed that grace, like the first practical principles, is available to all through the natural exertions of their faculties. See Johnson, 1999, pp. 131-139, esp. 133. See Donne, 1953, V, p. 176.

[19] See for example Donne, 1967a, p. 8. Donne derives his notion of 'inexcusable igorance' from Romans 1:20-21. There Paul says, '*Invisibilia enim ipsius a creatura mundi per ea quae facta sunt intellecta conspiciuntur* [to human beings] *sempiterna quoque eius virtus et divinitas, ut sint inexusabiles quia cum cognovissent Deum non sicut Deum glorificaverunt aut gratias egerunt, sed evanuerunt in cogitationibus suis et obscuratum est insipiens cor eorum*'. The punctuation is my own. Thanks again to Dr. Roger Rees for his assistance. In the 'Argument' of Book V of *Paradise Lost*, Milton explains that 'God *to render* Man *inexcusable sends* Raphael *to admonish him of his obedience, his free estate, of his enemy near at hand; who he is, and why his enemy, and whatever else may avail* Adam *to know*.' God commands Raphael to reveal these things to Adam 'Lest wilfully transgressing he pretend / Surprisal, unadmonish't, unforewarned' (V, ll. 244-245). Milton is clearly referring to the same passage in Romans. See Milton, *Paradise Lost*, V, 'Argument', ll. 244-245.

[20] See *Summa* II i, q. 94, a. 2.

[21] Donne, 1982, ll. 1682-1687

[22] See *Summa* II i, q. 51, a. 1. Donne cites this passage at Donne, 1982, l. 1687.

[23] For a discussion of Aquinas' view on this relation, see Lisska, 1996, pp. 95-101.

[24] Donne, 1982, ll. 1701, 1784-1785. For a discussion of Aquinas' views on true and seeming goods, see Copleston, 1955, pp. 184-187.

[25] *Summa* II i, q. 51, a.1

[26] Donne, 1982, ll. 1685-1687

[27] *Summa* II i, q. 51, a. 1. See also *Summa* II ii, q. 93, a. 2.

[28] *Summa* II i, q. 51, a. 1

[29] For Aquinas there are four inner senses, common sense (*sensus communis*), imagination (*phantasia*), estimation (*cogitative*) and memory (*memorativa*). He derives this number and ordering from Averroes. See Wolfson, 1935, pp. 69-133, esp. 122; and Gilson, 1983, pp. 36-53, 188-189. For Aquinas' understanding of the delivery of the intelligible species through phantasms, and its relation to his realism, see Kretzmann, 1993, pp. 128-159; Eco, 1988, pp. 170-171; and Gilson, 1983, pp. 172-193.

[30] *Summa* II i, q. 51, a. 1

[31] On the relation of the Donne's love poems to Aquinas' theory of analogical correspondence, see McCanles, 1964, pp. 313ff., esp. 421-422. For a general discussion of the relation of analogy, metaphor and paradox, which seems completely unaware of the long philosophical tradition (examined by McCanles and many others) that has addressed this relation, see Brooks, 1965, pp. 315-328; and Brooks, 1949, pp. 3-20.

[32] *De Anima*, 424a18-21

[33] *De Memoria* 449b31-450a1. See also *De Anima*, 428a11-12. Though Aquinas was far from denying the ability of *phantasia* to represent external objects accurately, he recognized, with Aristotle, their potential fallibility. See Aquinas, *In III De Anima*, viii, 790-792; and Henle, 1956, pp. 321, 436, n. 32.

[34] *De Anima*, 428b21-22

[35] Ibid., 431b2-11

[36] For a discussion of Aristotle's view of the relation between *phantasia*, opinion and knowledge, see Engmann, 1976, pp. 259-265.

[37] *De Anima*, 434a16-19

[38] Aquinas, *In III De Anima*, xi, 841

[39] For more on the role of God in the establishment of first principles in Aquinas' Aristotelian logic, see Gilson, 1955, pp. 378-380.

[40] See *Metaphysics* 1012a18-28.

[41] See also *Summa* I, q. 2, a. 2; q. 29, a. 3; q. 109, aa. 1-2; *Summa* II ii, q. 1, a. 5; *Summa Contra Gentiles* I, caps. 2-4. For a discussion of the relation between revealed and rationally derived moral knowledge in Aquinas, see Copleston, 1972, pp. 178-191.

[42] For a discussion of Aquinas' view that varying powers of sense result in varying degrees of understanding, see Copleston, 1955, pp. 156-157. For a discussion of Aquinas' view that universals (intelligible species), and the first principles which govern their natures, are not known to everyone, see MacDonald, 1993, pp. 160-195, esp. 180-185.

[43] Donne appears to contradict this view when he says that though human laws are 'not so very near to this crown of certain truth and first light' of our rational nature, he believes them to be 'nearer, and to have more of that blood royal in them, than the resolutions of particular men, or of schools'. Though he concedes that parliaments, councils and courts should be 'more diligent for the delivery and obstetrication' of valid deductions from the first principles of nature, he is careful to make the 'obligation *in foro interiori*', which can only be determined by the individual conscience, the ultimate standard by which human laws are judged to be in conformity with the 'crown of certain truth and first light'. See Donne, 1982, ll. 2416-2430.

[44] Donne cites *Summa* II ii, q. 88. a. 10 for support of this view, and reiterates it in *Pseudo-Martyr*. There, he says regarding the reasons for or against a Pope's right to choose his successor, that they depend 'upon such reasons, and circumstances, as are alterable, and when they cease, this law of nature ceases too.' See Donne, 1610, sig, V3. Rudick and Battin have observed the commonality of this 'Thomistic doctrine' and noted its presence in Gregory Sayre's *Clavis regia sacerdotum, casuum conscientiae, sive theologiae moralis thesauri...authore R.P.D. Gregorio Sayro Anglo* (Venice, 1605), III.,i., 5. See Donne, 1982, p. 215. It is important to recognize that this argument quite explicitly does not deny immutability to all reasons, and therefore, does not entail the relativity of all laws. While 'no law...a reason upon which was founded' is a proposition in which the term 'law' is distributed, the second assertion, 'scarce any reason is so constant, but that circumstances alter it', is a proposition in which the term 'reason' is not distributed, because the relative term 'scarce' does not restrict the denotation of the term 'reason' in the same way as we have observed that superlatives such as 'most' may restrict denotation. Therefore, when we cast the argument in the form of a syllogism, we would find it unable to entail any more than the likelihood that a given law has arisen from a reason derived from changeable circumstances. The syllogism follows below with its conversion in parenthesis:

> 1. No law is not founded upon a reason. (All laws arise from reasons.)
> 2. But few reasons are unaffected by circumstances. (But most reasons arise from circumstances.)
> 3. Therefore, few laws are unaffected by circumstances. (Therefore, most laws arise from circumstances.)

Though Donne clearly believes that most laws (including laws of nature) arise from reasons which are as mutable as the circumstances from which they were derived, he does not recognize the possibility that because his middle term 'reason' is not distributed in his second premise, it is possible to object that the conclusion does not follow, for it is still possible to claim that all laws are derived from those few reasons which are unaffected by circumstances. Because his argument against the immutability of the law prohibiting suicide depends on its derivation from reasons which are affected by circumstances, Donne disregards this objection when he paraphrases what he believes his syllogism concludes. In the 'Distribution' of *Biathanatos* (l. 297), he summarizes what he believes the syllogism contained in this crucial passage (ll. 1736-1738) concludes. 'The reason of almost every law is mutable'. Thus, Donne asserts that though it is probable that any given law has arisen from a reason derived from mutable circumstances, not every law may be said to arise thus. Charles M. Coffin fails to notice the particularity of this assertion, and claims that for Donne, obedience to law was always contingent upon circumstances. See Coffin, 1937, pp. 253-259. John Carey also fails to notice this particularity, and concludes that Donne was promoting an extreme relativism which allowed people 'to pick and choose which laws to obey' and which ultimately would cause

society to 'collapse in chaos' (p. 192). See Carey, 1981, pp. 190-195. Finally, Meg Lota Brown also fails to observe the limitation of Donne's syllogism, and, like Carey, deploys it as evidence of his relativism. Though she is careful to mention Donne's own reservations about the exemptions from a law which one may justifiably claim, she does not make explicit his insistence on the absolute inviolability of certain natural, rational and divine laws. See Lota Brown, 1995, pp. 21-23, 76-83. Coffin, Carey and Lota Brown may have reconsidered their opinions had they compared Richard Hooker's comments on the relation of particular laws to the reasons (ends) upon which they are based. Hooker says that 'the nature of every law must be judged by the end for which it was made, and the aptness of things therein prescribed unto the same end.' The involvement of reason in this judgement is precisely the process which Donne argues reveals the circumstantial complexity of the reason of the law. See Hooker, 1850, III, x, I (quoted in New, 1964, p. 54).

[45] Donne, 1982, ll. 1783-1803. Donne derives his view that the pursuit of an apparent good is ethically justifiable from *Nicomachean Ethics* 1113a15-1115a6. There Aristotle says, 'Those who say the apparent good is the object of wish must admit that there is no natural object of wish, but only what seems so to each man. Now different things appear so to different people, and, if it so happens, even contrary things'.

[46] Donne, 1982, ll. 1700-1704

[47] *Summa* II i, q. 94, a. 2. This law was also observed by Lactantius and Augustine. See also Lactantius, *Divine Institutes* III, 8; and Augustine, *On Free Will* II, 26. It continued to be observed by the Anglican casuist, Robert Sanderson. See Sanderson, 1660, pp. 131, 132, 133 (cited in Camille Welles Slights, 1981, p. 21).

[48] See *Nicomachean Ethics* 1112a5-17, 1140a24-1145a11. Lisska says, 'Practical reason pursues the goods which lead to human well-being. To do the opposite would be to act irrationally. Acting irrationally is opposed to the rational disposition central to the essence of the human person. Furthermore, this is opposed to what we are as human beings. Hence, the ends which make up the human essence, determined by the theoretical [speculative] reason and pursued by practical reason, establish the obligatory actions for human beings' (p. 109, my brackets).

[49] *Summa* II i, q. 94, a. 2 (translator's emphasis)

[50] Donne considers these circumstantial alterations in the second and third sections of *Biathanatos* in which he examines various civil, canon and divine laws against suicide. See Donne, 1982, ll. 2710, 2770, 2795, 3060, 3350, 3362, 3800, 3900, 3935 and 4512.

[51] *Summa* II i, q. 94, a. 2. Aquinas recognized a hierarchy of being in the phenomenal world which could be apprehended by the intellect through its perception of the analogical correspondence governing the relations of various substances. This correspondence is perceptable through various modes of analogy (e.g. of being, of proportionality, of attribution), which are derived from Aristotle's discussion of the relation between substance and accident in the *Metaphysics*. It is necessary to acknowlege Aquinas' debt to Aristotle in this area of his metaphysics in order to avoid mistakenly locating his theory of analogy in the tradition of Platonic metaphysics, which both Aquinas and Aristotle explicitly rejected. For Aquinas, analogical correspondences between substances co-ordinated within the hierarchy of being reflected their univocal reference to a common predicate, as 'healthy' can be predicated univocally (by analogy of attribution) of medicines and of certain types of food. Without the univocity secured by analogical correspondence, our deductions from the first universal principles of both speculative and practical reason cannot avoid the fallacy of four terms; nor would our observations of substance/accident and genus/species relations be reliable, thus rendering the common predicates, which serve as the middle terms of our syllogistic analysis of the created universe, undistributed. For a discussion of the difference between univocal and equivocal reference in various types of analogy, see Anderson, 1967, pp. 30-45. For a discussion of Aquinas' theory of analogy and its relation to the problem of univocal reference, see McInerny, 1996, esp. pp. 32-35; and Wippel, 1993, pp. 85-127. On Aquinas' rejection of Platonic Idealism and its derivation from Aristotle's critique of Plato in the *Metaphysics*, see Henle, 1956, pp. 324-400. F. C. Copleston has observed similar Platonic elements in Aquinas' thought, but is also careful to emphasize the critical differences between Aquinas' theory of analogy and the Platonic Idealism adopted by

Augustine. See Copleston, 1955, pp. 121-142. He has also observed it as the basis for Aquinas' rejection of Anselm's ontological argument. See Copleston, 1972, p. 196.

[52] *Summa* II i, q. 94, a. 2. For a discussion of Aquinas' characterization of universal, self-evident principles in *Summa* II i, q. 94 and elsewhere, see Gilson, 1983, pp. 34-39.

[53] *Summa* II ii, q. 64, a. 5

[54] *Summa* II ii, q. 64, a. 5

[55] *Summa* II i, q. 100, a. 10

[56] 1Timothy 1:5

[57] Veronica Kahn has failed to notice the reliance of charity upon a conscience active in its application of knowledge (*scientia*), and consequently, mistakenly opposes charity to prudence on the grounds that charity is a function of contemplation, and prudence of action. The root of her error is her incorrect opposition of the speculative and practical reason. See Kahn, 1985, pp.60-62, 84-85.

[58] *Summa* I, q. 79, a. 13. For a discussion of this passage in relation to the casuistical practice to which *Biathanatos* referred, see Donne, 1982, pp. xxviii, xci, n. 44.

[59] Donne, 1610, sig. Mm. The use of Aquinas' definition of conscience was commonplace among Protestant moral theologians. See Perkins, 1612-1613, II, 11; and Sanderson, 1660, p. 7 (quoted in Camille Welles Slights, 1981, pp. 16-17). For more on Perkins' view of the conscience, see Keenan, 1995, pp. 105-130.

[60] *Summa* I, q. 79, a. 12

[61] Donne, 1967a, p. 7

[62] *Summa* II i, q. 19, a. 6

[63] *Summa* I, q. 79, a. 13. On Aquinas' theory of *synderesis* and its relation to the erring conscience, see Sigmund, 1993, pp. 217-231. On the tradition of casuistical treatment of the subject of the erring conscience with which Donne would have been familiar, see Donne, 1982, pp. xxx-xxxiv.

[64] Camille Welles Slights has observed that seventeenth-century Protestant casuists utilized *synderesis* in their accounts of practical reason, but she does not locate or discuss its source in Aquinas. See Camille Welles Slights, 1972, p. 90; and 1981, pp. 11, 20.

[65] We recall, however, that Donne was reluctant to offer instances of such properly casuistical exercises in *Biathanatos*. See Donne, 1982, ll. 5451-5452.

[66] Ibid., ll. 1716-1720. Donne cites Sylvius, *Commentarius ad leges regias, Praefatio*, cap. 1. For more on Sylvius, see Donne, 1982, p. 212.

[67] Ibid., ll. 1721-1725

[68] See *Summa* II ii, q. 27, a. 1; and Augustine, *On the Trinity* X, I.

[69] *Summa* II ii, q. 25, a. 7

[70] Donne, 1982, ll. 1633-1634

[71] See Donne, 1953, VIII, pp. 222-223 in which Donne says, 'It is impossible to love anything till we know it: First our Understanding must present it as *Verum*, as a Knowne truth, and then our Will imbraces it as *Bonum*, as Good, and worthy to be loved' (quoted in Stanwood and Asals, 1986, pp. 149-150).

[72] On Aquinas' admission of probable justification in dialectical analysis, see MacDonald, 1993, pp. 160-195, esp. 179-180.

[73] On Donne's belief that the knowledge and reason natural to all men must be tempered by charity because of their fallibility, see Donne, 1953, VIII, pp. 313-314, 316-317 (quoted in Stanwood and Asals, 1986, p. 107).

[74] Wesley Trimpi has observed, 'What equity is in Roman testamentary law, charity is in Scriptural testamentary law: in each, the letter, the *scriptum*, must be put aside to reveal the *voluntas* of the writer of the will. It is precisely in this sense that we may say with St. Paul that charity is the *fulfilling* of the law (*Rom.* 13.10).' Trimpi has argued that equity is determined by the consideration of *theses*; though he does not expand on charity's relation to the *thesis*, we may assume that it functions in the same manner as equity. See Trimpi, 1974, p. 107. Brian Vickers has noted that humanist commentators on Cicero's *De Officiis* (esp. I, 43, 153) advocated his praise of an active participation in the ethical life of one's society because it contributed to the fulfillment of one's Christian duty of charity. Vickers also observes that this charitable social involvement requires the

diligent cultivation of moral knowledge with an eye towards its application in the practical afffairs of Christian society. See Vickers, 1988, pp. 273-276.

[75] Donne's Augustinianism has been understood as a consequence of the Pyrrhonist scepticism embraced by Montaigne. As we have seen, Donne's moderate scepticism permitted him to recognize the indemonstrabilility of some principles of religion, but not all. For a discussion of Donne's Augustinianism, Pyrrhonism and fideism, see Bredvold, 1925, pp. 193-232. Terry Sherwood has challenged Bredvold's view that Donne's Augustinianism consists in their shared 'anti-intellectualism' by claiming that both Augustine and Donne advocate the powers of reason against the sceptical critique. While he is correct to say that Augustine refuted the sceptical arguments of the Academics by a rational appeal to the certitudes which reason discovers in disjunctive propositions, and that Donne made use of Augustine's argument in the 'Elegy upon the untimely death of the incomparable Prince Henry' (ll. 77-80), Sherwood does not distinguish Augustine's view that rational certitude is ultimately derived from the illumination of the Spirit through the inner teacher from Aquinas' view that this certitude can be attained through a rational examination of natural law alone. As a result, Sherwood appears to make Donne a disciple of Augustinian epistemology with almost no mention Aquinas' influence. When Aquinas is mentioned, no attempt is made to reconcile his Aristotelianism with Augustine's neoplatonism. See Sherwood, 1984, pp. 30-62; and Sherwood, 1972, pp. 353-374. In Sherwood's doctoral thesis, however, he argues that Donne followed Aquinas' epistemology and not Augustine's (p. 41). Though Sherwood sometimes confuses the details of these two epistemological systems in his thesis, his study of Donne's use of Aquinas to counter the sceptical critique is more convincing than his later view that Donne followed Augustine in his response to scepticism. See Sherwood, 1969, pp. 40-139.

[76] See *City of God*, I, 17-27.

[77] Ibid., I, 20

[78] Ibid, I, 26

[79] Donne, 1982, ll. 5113ff. Earlier in *Biathanatos*, Donne had called such a defense 'poor and improbable'. See Donne, 1982, ll. 4023-4025.

[80] On the authority of the precedent of I Kings 20:35, Donne claims that had God commanded the suicide of Samson, he would have been 'pleased to deliver it plainly and expressly'. For a discussion of Donne's account of Samson's suicide and its influence on Milton's view in *Samson Agonistes*, see Butler, 1997, pp. 199-219.

[81] *City of God*, 1, 26. See also I Corinthians 2:11.

[82] *City of God*, 1, 22. Donne claims that Augustine objects to suicide primarily because it is a violation of the virtue of fortitude. See Donne, 1982, ll. 3140-3141.

[83] For discussion of Augustine's intolerance of error and its relation to Pelagianism and charity, see Hoopes, 1962, pp. 63-72.

[84] *Summa* II ii, q. 24, a. 6. See also *Summa* II ii, q. 24, (p. 50, n. c. of Blackfriars).

[85] See *Homilies on I John* 9, 2. In *Biathanatos*, Donne notices Augustine's assertion that 'the perfection of charity...[is] to be ready to die for your brother' (*Homilies* 5, 4), and argues that if Paul could wish for his death out of perfect charity, then 'there is a degree of charity above that, which is to do it.' See Donne, 1982, 4718-4719.

[86] *Homilies on I John* 7, 7-8

[87] *Summa* II ii, q. 24, a. 1

[88] *Summa* II ii, q. 24, a. 2

[89] In his discussion of charity in *Biathanatos*, A.E. Malloch fails to recognize the intellectual rigor demanded by the command to love. See Malloch, 1958, pp. 144-146.

[90] See *On the Trinity* VIII, 10-14.

[91] Ibid., VIII, 9

[92] Ibid., IX, 18

[93] The punctuation is mine. Lindsay A. Mann has criticized Mary P. Ramsay's failure to notice Donne's reliance, in his sermon preached at Paul's Cross, 24 March 1616/1617 (Donne, 1953, I, pp. 184-185), on Aquinas' formulation of the relation between the loved and the lover in the third book of his commentary on Peter Lombard's *Sentences* (*III Sent.*, d. 27, q.1, a.1). See Mann, 1971, p. 287.

[94] See Donne, 1982, ll. 4723-4727.

[95] *On the Trinity* IX, 12-13 (translator's emphasis)

[96] Ibid., IX, 12

[97] Ibid., IX, 13. For a discussion of Augustine's adoption of Platonic Idealism in his account of the role of love in the comprehension of the similitudes which participate in the divine trinitarian pattern, see Gilson, 1961, pp. 210-224.

[98] See *On the Trinity* IX, 14. 'The man, for example, whose knowledge and love are perfect, *is* thereby righteous, even though there be no occasion for an outward and bodily act displaying it' (translator's emphasis).

[99] Donne, 1982, l. 3053

[100] Augustine's inflexibility upon the issue of the certitude of moral knowledge depends largely on his response to the sceptical critique of knowledge detailed at length in *Against the Academicians* and *On the Free Will*. His reliance on Stoic logic and the notion of the *sensus communis* to ground his doctrine of the free will, will allow him to argue an accurate correspondence between external objects and their represenation in the mind. Not surprisingly, he will assert by allegorical correspondence the doctrine of divine illumination which states that knowledge of moral truths can be gained by the examination of disjunctive propositions (which are certain, and therefore, according to Augustine, refute the sceptics) in the co-ordinating light of God which is a type of *sensus communis* enjoyed by rational beings alone. For further discussion of Augustine's use of Stoic logic against the sceptical critique, see Kneale and Kneale, 1962, pp. 173-174; B. Darrell Jackson, 1969, pp. 9-49; and Baratin, 1981, pp. 260-268.

[101] Donne, 1982, ll. 2855-2856

[102] See Donne, 1982, ll. 1331-1350, 1410-1451.

[103] Ibid., ll. 2862-2874

[104] For the often repeated view that Donne followed Augustine in his principles of biblical exegesis, see Quinn, 1962, pp. 313-329; Sherwood, 1972, pp. 353-374, esp. 363-367; Vessey, 1993, pp. 173-201, esp. 189.

[105] For a discussion of the anti-rationalism of both Luther and Calvin, its debt to Augustine and Richard Hooker's Aristotelian/Thomist reaffirmation of the constructive role of reason in the discernment of the harmony of natural and divine law, see Hoopes, 1962, pp. 96-114, 123-132; and Camille Welles Slights, 1981, pp. 20-21. Unfortunately, Hoopes follows Bredvold in placing Donne in the sceptical tradition of Montaigne, and fails to observe his scholastic affinities with his fellow Anglican divine, Hooker. A. E. Malloch makes the same mistake when he concludes on the basis of a comparison between a passage from *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* and Donne's *Paradoxes*, that Donne and Hooker were opposed on the issue of scholastic theology. Of course, Malloch's conclusion is necessitated by his view that *Biathanatos* was a parody of scholastic methods of reasoning. See Malloch, 1958, pp. 79-80. John F. H. New's comments on the commitment of Donne, Hooker and Anglican's in general to the application of reason in matters to which scripture does not explicitly address itself are illuminating on this point. See New, 1964, pp. 8-12, 20-21, 28-29, 54-55.

[106] A few pages after offering his agreement to Augustine on these points, Donne seems to contradict himself when he asks, 'May not I accuse and condemn myself to myself, and inflict what penance I will, for punishing the past and avoiding like occasion of sin?' (ll. 3002-3004). Donne, however, never answers this question because it is used merely to set up a rhetorical inquiry into the right of popes, sovereigns and judges to pronounce both temporal and spiritual judgements upon themselves, an inquiry which seeks only to expose a double standard, and not to advocate a positive position (e.g. that if popes, sovereigns and judges may inflict punishments upon themselves 'for punishing the past and avoiding like occasion of sin', so may anyone.). See Donne, 1982, ll. 3002-3004. See also the comments of Rudick and Battin on this passage, in Donne, 1982, pp. lxvii-lxviii.

[107] Donne, 1982, ll. 2901-2905. The issue of *redde depositum* is examined by Aquinas in *Summa* II i, q. 94, a. 4., and by Donne in Donne, 1982, ll. 1705-1710.

[108] Donne, 1982, ll. 2929-2930

[109] See *Prior Analytics* 66b16.

[110] *City of God* I, 20

[111] Richard B. Miller has shown that, in his *Ductor Dubitantium*, the Anglican casuist, Jeremy Taylor, objected to Augustine's claim that lying is evil under all circumstances on the same grounds as Donne objected to his absolute condemnation of suicide. Their allegiance with respect to Augustine's reluctance to admit exceptions, as well as their similar adoption of Aquinas' principles of the practical reason, suggest a solution to the problem of 'the relation between Puritan and Anglican casuistry' which Camille Welles Slights has noticed. See Camille Welles Slights, 1981, pp. 28-66, esp. 41. See Richard B. Miller, 1995, pp. 131-157, esp. 145-152. Coleridge may also offer some help in understanding Slights' problem. In his comments on Donne's sermons, he had noted that both Donne and Taylor had a 'Taste for the Fathers, and all the Saints and Schoolmen before the Reformation [which] amounts to a dislike of the Divines of the Continental protestant Churches, Lutheran or Calvinistic.' This taste for the Fathers, Colerdige claimed, caused 'prelatic Divines' such as Donne to use (what Coleridge considered to be) 'forced and fantastic analogies...by which they sought to distinguish themselves from the Puritans.' Coleridge did not believe Donne to have always used such fantastic analogies in his scriptural interpretations, however. He observed, though guardedly, Donne's preservation of the literal meaning of scriptural allegories through the exposition of the univocity of its symbolic or typological meaning. See Brinkley, 1955, pp. 163, 171, 177-178.

[112] F. C. Copleston's discussion of Aquinas' Aristotelian empiricism in relation to his theory of first principles is useful for understanding his approach to ethical problems. See Copleston, 1955, pp. 32-33, 56-57, 72-73, 109-110, 198-204, 223-226.

[113] *On Free Will* II, 7

[114] Aquinas believed that the sensitive appetite should also direct towards the good. See *Summa* II i, q. 24, a. 3. In his fourth paradox, 'That Nature is our worst Guide', Donne expresses the Augustinian and Platonic disdain for the sensitive nature, which we find implicit in *Biathanatos'* exaltation of the rational nature and its inversion of Aquinas' ordering of the three laws of nature. There he says, 'Alas how unable a guide is that which follows the temperature of our slimy bodyes?' See Donne, 1980, p. 7, ll. 15-16. For an overview of Aquinas' ordering and its relation to the sensitive and rational nature, see Copleston, 1955, pp. 177-180, 198-226.

[115] *On Free Will* II, 50. See also Plato's formulation in *Charmides* 174c.

[116] *On Free Will* II, 29

[117] Ibid., 34. Remarking on Augustine's doctrine of illumination, Etienne Gilson says, 'Ethical knowledge is a particular case of the divine illumination which itself is an effect of the divine ideas. The definitions of the circle or the sphere are eternal and necessary truths, which judge our thought and by which, in its turn, our thought judges particular circles or spheres. But moral truths are just as immutable, necessary and eternal as speculative truths. In their case too, each man sees them in his own mind, and yet they are common to all.' See Gilson, 1955, p. 77.

[118] *On Free Will* II, 38

[119] Ibid., I, 31

[120] Ibid., I, 15. For discussion of Augustine's view on the relation between the eternal law and human knowledge of it, see Gilson, 1961, pp. 127-136.

[121] This is not to say that Augustine thought that human beings always succeeded in deriving their temporal laws for the management of their various earthly cities from the eternal law. In the *City of God* XIX, 17, he considers specifically the problem of 'discord' between the heavenly and earthly cities and maintains the authority of temporal laws only in so far as 'it limits the harmonious agreement of citizens concerning the giving and obeying of orders to the establishment of a kind of compromise between human wills about the things relevant to mortal life'. In cases where the religious laws of the Heavenly City were threatened by those of the earthly, he states that 'she was bound to dissent from those who thought differently and to prove a burdensome nuisance to them'. As Eugéne Portalié has indicated, however, Augustine does not detail many particular points of dispute between temporal and eternal laws; in the *City of God* XIX, 17, he is discussing only the polytheism of pre-Christian Rome versus the monotheism of contemporary Rome. Portalié says of Augustine, 'Mais s'il affirme les droits de l'autorité civile dans sa sphère, il maintient aussi

l'independence de la conscience en face du prince qui envahit le domaine de foi.' See Portalié, 1924, col. 2440.

[122] *On Free Will* II, 26-27

[123] Donne, 1982, ll. 1340-1341

[124] Etienne Gilson has described the manner in which Aquinas' division of the soul and body according to the Aristotelian form/matter distinction complicated the Platonic relationship between the Augustinian intellect and the intelligible world. 'By becoming the immediate form of the body, the human soul loses its Augustinian aptitude to the direct apprehension of the intelligible...Our intellect does not provide us with innate intelligible species; it cannot even directly receive them from the separate substances, nor from God; itself a form, it feeds on other sensible forms. Its highest function is the cognition of primary principles; these are pre-existent in us, at least virtually, and they are the first conceptions of the intellect. It is the perfection of the agent intellect to contain them virtually and to be capable of forming them, but it is also its weakness to be able form them only in connection with our perception of sensible things. The origin of human knowledge is therefore in the senses; it results from the collaboration between material things, senses and intellect.' Commenting on the developments of scholastic epistemology after it fully recognized the vulnerability to sceptical dissent to which Aquinas had exposed it, Gilson summarized the protection which Augustine's doctrine of illumination provided against scepticism. 'So long as the master adhered to the doctrine of divine illumination, he could distrust sense knowledge without falling into skepticism; his certitude came to him from on high, not from sensations.' See Gilson, 1955, pp. 377-382, 447. See also Gilson, 1961, pp. 71-76; Copleston, 1955, pp. 25-57; and Copleston, 1972, pp. 33-49. For a discussion of Aquinas' Aristotelian metaphysics with respect to Platonic and modern notions of Idealism, see Gilson, 1983, pp. 129-215. R. J. Henle has shown that Aquinas tacitly attacked Augustine's Platonic epistemology when he attacked the Platonists generally, but that he sought to preserve the authority of Augustine by interpreting Augustine's views in a way amenable to his own Aristotelian epistemology. See the discussion of *Summa* I, q. 84, a. 5 in Henle, 1956, pp. 381-396, 424.

[125] For a discussion Donne's view of grace in the context of the views of Augustine, Aquinas, Luther and Calvin, see Klawitter, 1991, pp. 137-149.

[126] See Donne, 1982, ll. 3056, 3078-3080; and p. lxvi .

[127] Ibid., ll. 3052-3055

[128] For his own account of his conversion from Manichaeism to Academicism, see Augustine, *Confessions* V, 10. For an account of Augustine's affiliation with the Academics after his repudiation of Manichaeism, see Gilson, 1961, pp. 38-43, 229-230.

[129] *Against the Academicians* III, 35

[130] Ibid., II, 19

[131] See ibid., III, 12.

[132] Ibid., III, 13

[133] Ibid., III, 23. Augustine is referring here to Carneades' objection to Zeno's definition of truth as that which 'has no notes in common with what is false' and its communication through the *lekton*. See ibid., III, 18; and Cicero, *Academica* II, 34, 112.

[134] On Augustine's use of the Stoic unprovables, including arguments of implication such as 'if there are four elements in the world, there are not five' and of conjunction such as 'The same soul cannot both die and be immortal', in his refutation of scepticism in *Against the Academicians*, see B. Darrell Jackson, 1969, pp. 9-49, esp. 34-36. See also Kneale and Kneale, 1962, pp. 173-174.

[135] *Against the Academicians* III, 17

[136] See *De Anima* 425b24-25, 428a2-3, 429a4-5, 431a14-17; *Metaphysics* 1027b29-30; Diogenes, *Lives*, VII, 110 (cited by Wolfson, 1935, pp. 78-79, esp p. 71, n. 12).

[137] See *On Free Will* II, 9. See also *De Sensu et Sensibili* 449a3-10 (cited by Wolfson, 1935, p. 78).

[138] *On Free Will* II, 16

[139] Brain Stock has suggested *dicibile*, as it is used in Augustine's early and unfinished work on dialectic, *De Dialectica*, may have been an equivalent for the Stoic *lekton*. Whether Augustine intended such an association or not, he abandons the notion that language can independently convey

truth in *The Teacher*. See Stock, 1996, pp. 138-145. B. Darrell Jackson examines the similarities between Augustine's *dicibile* and the Stoic *lekton* more closely, and uses them as evidence that Augustine inherited his sign theory from the Stoics. See B. Darrell Jackson, 1969, pp. 9-49, esp. 46-49. Catherine Atheron has also commented briefly on the simlarities between the Stoic *lekton* and Augustine's *dicibile*. See Atherton, 1993, pp. 289-298, esp. 294, n 68. See also Kneale and Kneale, 1962, p. 188. Marc Baratin discusses the relation of the Stoic solution to the problem of object-word correspondence to Augustine's solution. See Baratin, 1981, pp. 260-268. He says that 'les Stoïciens se donnent la notion de représentation cataleptique, c'est-à-dire de représentation exacte du monde, principe indémontrable. Mais l'hypothèse sceptique de la non-coïncidence ne conduit à rien dans cette perspective du langage comme système de substitution' (p. 267). He explains that Augustine's solution avoids both the Stoic and sceptical positions through the doctrines of recollection and illumination. 'Le langage n'a lui que le mince pouvoir de rappeler une information dont l'origine est ailleurs, révéllé par ce Maître intérieur par quoi Augustin conclut le *De Magistro*' (p. 268).

[140] *On Free Will* II, 23

[141] For an account of Augustine's view of the relation between the senses and the intelligibles, see Gilson, 1961, pp. 66-105.

[142] *The Teacher*, 39. Noralyn Masselink argues that Donne's theory of memory was derived from Aquinas, and that the choice of Aquinas reflects a preference for his sense-based Aristotelian epistemology over Augustine's neoplatonic epistemology. Though her discussion overestimates the value of sense knowledge for both Donne and Aquinas, particularly their ability to reveal information about the nature of God through the allegorical interpretation of creation, her attention to Donne's awareness of the epistemological incompatibilities of Augustine and Aquinas deserves note. See Masselink, 1989, pp. 57-88.

[143] *The Teacher*, 40

[144] On Augustine's confidence in the power of love (charity) to lead the reader/listener to an understanding of the unequivocal meanings hidden within language, see Louth, 1989, pp. 151-158. For more general discussion of Augustine's view of charity with respect to his ethics, see Gilson, 1955, pp. 79-80; Gilson, 1961, pp. 31-33, 136-142, 165-173, 237-239; and Bigham and Mollegen, 1955, pp. 371-397.

[145] *The Teacher*, 40. On Augustine's view that errors in belief and understanding originate in the weak disposition of the student, see Stock, 1996, pp. 157-173.

[146] *On Free Will* II, 21. See also *On the Trinity* IX, 9.

[147] Etienne Gilson observes, 'Whether it is a matter of the theoretical or practical order, of number or wisdom, truths are necessary, immutable and common to all minds which contemplate them.' See Gilson, 1961, p. 16.

[148] *Against the Academicians* III, 36

[149] In his discussion of Poggio's *De avaritia* (1430) and Valla's *De vero falsoque bono* (1441), David Marsh observes both the influence of Cicero's sceptical dialogic form (*in utramque partem*) and of Augustine's anti-sceptical critique of it in *Against the Academicians*. He attributes the coexistence of these apparently conflicting influences to a transition in the fifteenth century from 'Ciceronian eclecticism to humanist syncretism.' In our examination of the neoplatonic and Augustinian influences on sixteenth-century humanists such as Erasmus and Agrippa, we have also observed this syncretism. Donne's rejection of Augustine's response to probabilism, as well as his critique of the neoplatonic basis of anti-scholastic epistemology, represents his rejection of this syncretism. See Marsh, 1980, pp. 4-10, 56-62. For more on the unsceptical quality of humanist syncretism, see Schmitt, 1972, p. 53.

[150] Donne, 1982, ll. 4347-4349

[151] Ibid., ll. 4350-4351

[152] Ibid., ll. 4368-4373. For Aquinas' ordering of the Decalogue, see *Summa* II i, q. 72, a. 4; II ii, q. 39, a. 2. Scotus also recognized this order, and applied a comparative analysis of the degrees of obligation imposed on the conscience by the two tables of the Decalogue according to the logical principles of necessity (first table) and contingency (second table). Like Donne, he finds that the sixth commandment may be countermanded in compliance with the command to love and glorify

God. See Scotus, 1986, pp. 269-287, 481-501. For a discussion of Scotus' casuistical application of the Decalogue, see Copleston, 1972, pp. 226-229; and Shannon, 1995, pp. 3-24. William of Ockham utilized the superlative in a way similar to Anselm and Lull to establish the perfection of God's nature. That established, he could then claim that reason's assent to God's perfection would naturally lead to the conclusion that He is to be loved to a correspondingly superlative degree, hence, insuring compliance with the command to love. See Ockham, *Scriptum in I Sent.*, d. 1, q. 4. For a discussion of this passage in relation to Ockham's ethics, see Marilyn McCord Adams, 1995, pp. 25-52. For a brief discussion of the differences between Scotus and Ockham on the command to love, see Copleston, 1972, pp. 254-255.

[153] See Deuteronomy 6:5. See also *Summa* II ii, q. 44, a. 1. 'All Ten Commandments are directed to the love of God and our neighbor. Therefore the commands to love are not enumerated among them but are implicit in them all.'

[154] See *On Christian Doctrine* I, 22, 27; *Homilies on I John* IX, 10.

[155] Donne, 1982, ll. 5409-5414

[156] See *Summa* II ii, q. 44, a. 8.

[157] See *On Christian Doctrine* I, 23. 'Although there are four kinds of things which may be loved-first, the kind which is above us; second, the kind which constitutes ourselves; third, the kind which is equal to us; and fourth, the kind which is below us-no precepts need to be given concerning the second and the fourth. However much a man departs from the truth, there remains in him the love of himself and of his body.'

[158] Donne, 1982, ll. 4924-4931. See also ll. 4922-4923.

[159] Donne, 1982, l. 4955. See Romans 9:3. A. J. Smith considers Donne's treatment of this passage in relation to his discussion of self-homicide in *Biathanatos* and *Pseudo-Martyr*, but fails to recognize that the comparative analysis of degrees of obligation based on the two tables of the Decalogue frees the moral agent seeking to advance the glory of God from a purely relativist consideration of apparently equal circumstantial claims. See Smith, 1982, pp. 21-38.

[160] Donne, 1982, ll. 4963-4965. In his *Golden Grove* (1608)), which contained fifteen chapters on suicide, William Vaughn uncharitably rejected the opinion of 'many of our moderne divines, that if a man laying before his eyes the glory of God onely do kill himselfe', his suicide is free of sin. See Vaughn, *The Golden Grove* (1608), I, xiv-xxix.

[161] Donne, 1982, ll. 1277-1278

[162] Donne, 1982, ll. 1274-1276. In a dialogue entitled 'Whether it be Dampnation for a man to kill himself', dated 1578, which is included among the British Museum's collection of Sir John Harrington's papers, Saul's suicide is defended on the grounds that a justifiable motivation for the act can be judged by God alone; and therefore, fallible human judgements upon the rectitude of a decision to kill oneself must be drawn in charity. See S. E. Sprott's discussion of this dialogue in Sprott, 1961, pp. 15-16.

[163] See *Summa* II ii, q. 24, a. 2.

[164] Donne, 1610, sig. D

[165] See Donne, 1982, ll. 1784-1785.

[166] Donne, 1610, sig. Mm2. See Klause, 1994, pp. 206-207; and Malloch, 1962, pp. 72-73.

[167] *Summa* II ii, q. 24, a. 12. See also *Summa* II ii, q. 24, a. 8.

[168] *Summa* II ii, q. 24, a. 12

Conclusion

A 'sweete and gentle Interpretation': Charity Excuses the Paradox

Because *Biathanatos* was argued with this rigor, Donne claims that he is 'excusable in this paradox' if, in fact, he is mistaken, just as similarly rigorous thinkers, such as Cassianus, Origen, Chrysostom and Jerome, were excused for the mistake of 'following Plato's opinion that a lie might have the nature of medicine, and be admitted in many cases, because in their time the church had not declared herself in that point, nor pronounced that a lie was naturally ill.'[1] Those prejudiced opponents of Donne's paradox, who out of 'contempt' for the apparent 'weakness' and 'misdevotion' of his arguments 'have not been pleased to taste or digest them' have acted contrary to the mandate of charity in their unwillingness to engage as rigorously in the disputation of an issue so grave as suicide.[2] These 'malicious, prejudged' men, as well as the 'lazy affecters of ignorance', will be left 'to their drowsiness', to remain unaware of the true value of the disputation of paradoxes as a means to the awakening of charity.[3] In *Pseudo-Martyr*, Donne warns of this laziness in the investigations of Catholics into the issue of the jurisdiction of the Pope, complaining that the 'blind assent, which you [Catholics] were used to heretofore to giue to the spirituall supremacy [of the Pope]…brought you into a drowsie and stupid adoration of the Pope'.[4] This drowsiness, like that which has prevented charitable interpretations of suicide, has prevented those English Catholics who dogmatically follow the rule of the Pope from appreciating the gravity and complexity of the issues of martyrdom and papal authority. Most importantly, it has blinded them to the weakness of the arguments upon which Catholic polemicists have grounded their opinions, arguments which proceed 'onely by *probabilities*, and *verisimilitudes*, and *equiualences*', and which conclude uncharitably with a severity reserved for those indisputable laws of nature, reason and God which constitute the

first practical principles.[5] The conclusion that a king may cease to be obeyed contradicts, Donne argues, the first principle from which it was drawn and which states axiomatically that a king must be obeyed. Because of this contradiction, Donne maintains that the conclusion 'degenerates and rebels, and we may not adhere to it. And if the first [principle] may still consist without it, though this seeme orderly and naturally deduced from thence, yet it imposes not so much necessity upon us, as the first doth; for that bindes peremptorily; this [conclusion], as it is circumstanced and conditioned.'[6]

In *Pseudo-Martyr*, a work which Donne was confident in publishing and which he dedicated to his fellow Anglican controversialist, King James, Donne urges English Catholics to return to first principles over against the circumstantially alterable conclusions of their apologists. He says of the claim of one of these conclusions to be a law of nature that it 'depends upon such reasons, and circumstances, as are alterable, and when they cease, this law of nature ceases too.'[7] We recall that in *Biathanatos*, a work which Donne perceived to be sufficiently unorthodox to prevent him from publishing it, the same argument was brought against human laws prohibiting suicide.[8] But as Donne's protestations of its value in his letter to Herbert attest, *Biathanatos* reveals no more than would *Pseudo-Martyr* one year later, that Donne had 'a just and Christianly estimation, and reuerence, of that deuout and acceptable sacrifice of our lifes, for the glory of our blessed Sauiour.'[9] The difference, of course, is that in *Pseudo-Martyr*, the obligations to the king are advanced as more binding than the reasons for suicide defended by the Catholics, while *Biathanatos*, delineates on what grounds an individual conscience may countermand all external authority, even the king's.[10] In both works, however, the functions of conscience and charity with respect to complex ethical issues are represented with a consistency which is still present in Donne's consideration of Esther's decision to allow herself to be killed in his sermon on Esther 4:16.[11] No position (*thesis*) which can be advanced on these complex ethical issues achieves more than the status of opinion, and therefore, any *thesis* can be made to appear to be a paradox by its antagonist, just as Aristotle had observed in the *Sophistical*

Refutations. Donne recognized this variability in the appearance of opinion, and like Cicero in the *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, attempted to render the potentially paradoxical *theses* of *Biathanatos* and *Pseudo-Martyr* amenable to the common opinion. Of the common opinion to which the Catholics claim to adhere, however, Donne observes that 'though this be understood of the opinion of such men as are intelligent and understanding, and conuersant in the matter in question, yet oftentimes, amongst them, both sides say, *This is the common opinion*; and who can iudge it?'[12] As the fallacious arguments of the *Paradoxes* were intended to alert the reader to the fallacies which may be encountered in deductive arguments, this warning is intended as 'an alarum' to the truth of first principles, which may be fallaciously contradicted by opinions deduced from them. Despite the efforts of Wilson and Blundeville to disarm these fallacies by teaching Aristotle's methods of refutation, or of Lull and Ramus to eliminate them through the development of a supposedly infallible dialectic, or of Sebond, Agrippa and Erasmus to combat them by dispensing with Aristotelian dialectic altogether, or finally of Montaigne, to embrace them with the equanimity taught by Sextus, the value of disputing *theses*, extolled by Cicero, Quintilian and Aphthonius, remained evident to Donne.

But the necessity of arguing both sides of an issue (*in utramque partem dissere*) in charity was no less evident to him, as he explains in the preface to *Biathanatos*.

> But in all such intricacies [of suicides and martyrs], where both opinions seem equally to conduce to the honor of God, His justice being as much advanced in the one as His mercy in the other, it seems reasonable to me that this turn the scales: if on either side there appear charity towards the poor soul departed.[13]

In this statement, Donne acknowledges that contradictory opinions may both be deduced as a perceived consequence of the certain first principle commanding honor and love to God. In cases such as these, Donne recommends that the charity in which these opinions were derived, be acknowledged by both parties. Opinions deduced from this common premise deserve the 'sweete and gentle Interpretation'

which Donne guarantees 'to all professors of Christian Religion, if they shake not the Foundation'.[14] However, in the interest of securing the rectified conscience necessary to achieve a charitable will, all diligence must be used in the investigation of the *thesis* under dispute; and this diligence is exercised, as *Pseudo-Martyr* and *Biathanatos* attest, in the attempt to convince one's antagonists by deductive argument of the necessity or likelihood of one's own position and of the contingency or unlikelihood of their position.[15] Hence, Donne is merely following charity's command to exercise the practical reason when, after condemning the 'iniquities' of Gratian's *Decretum*, he explains that 'in Charitie towards them, which are carried with an implicite Faith in *Canons*, in which the name *Gratian* is enwrapped, we are bound to tell you how unworthy he is, to bee relied upon by you.'[16] Here, Donne's charity consists in his attempt to unite the divergent opinions of his antagonists with those of the Church of England. It is in this attempt that the disputation of paradoxes finds its highest expression, for to argue paradoxes which seek to promote division and disagreement, as had Gorgias and the innovators condemned by Donne in *Ignatius His Conclave*, is to act in direct opposition to charity.

In his condemnation of the schismatic Donatists, Augustine observed, 'If your love is for a part only, you are sundered: if sundered, you are not in the Body [Church]: if not in the Body, you are not under the Head [Christ].'[17] This observation is informed by his identification of the unity of Christ achieved by the love shared by the members of the Trinity with the unity of the Catholic Church achieved by its members' common love for each other.[18] When a member of the Church dissents from this unity, Augustine explains, his dissent can only indicate a lack of charity and the intent to promote schism. To the Catholic critics who would accuse Donne of instigating schism in *Pseudo-Martyr*, Donne responds with a declaration of that charity with which he undertook his argument. 'I haue no other shelter against these Imputations but an appeale to our blessed Sauiour, and a protestation before his face, that my principall and direct scope and purpose herein, is the unity and peace of his Church.'[19] As we have seen, however, Augustine does not provide the epistemological or logical flexibility necessary to allow the

conscience freedom to dissent from the common opinion of the Church without disobeying the command to love.[20] This lack of flexibility results in a notion of charity which lacks the compassion implicit in Donne's 'sweete and gentle Interpretation' of divergent opinions and in his effort to achieve reconciliation through debate.[21] Augustine describes how the charitable should deal with such dissension in terms that reveal clearly the 'rigorous' conscience which Donne thought made him unfit as a guide in 'practic learning and moral divinity'.[22] Augustine advises, 'You may rebuke, but that will be the act of love, not of harshness: you may use the rod, but it will only be for discipline; for the love of love itself will not suffer you to pass over the lack of discipline in another.'[23]

Donne's uncertainty upon matters of doctrine and discipline is among the most conspicuous aspects of his devotional writing, and so we would be surprised if Donne could accept Augustine's advice without reminding him that one man's lack of discipline is another man's orthodoxy. Augustine's lack of sympathy for divergent opinions regarding religious discipline would have led him to condemn both Donne's accommodating notion of charity as well as his defense of the profitability of paradox. Commenting on the danger of the Pelagian heresy, Augustine dismisses such opinions because of their paradoxicality in terms with which he would have been familiar from his reading of Cicero's *Paradoxa Stoicorum.* '*Haec sunt sententiarum portenta vestrarum, haec inopinata mysteria dogmatum novorum, haec paradoxa Pelagianorum haereticorum, mirabiliora quam stoicorum philosophorum.*'[24] To comply with the mandate of charity, therefore, Donne relied on the flexibility which Aquinas permitted his notion of charity; it was this flexibility that accommodated Donne's investigation of the 'perplexity and flexibility in the doctrine' of self-homicide in both *Biathanatos* and *Pseudo-Martyr*.[25] In his examination of discord, Aquinas provided the conditions under which division could coexist with charity, conditions which Donne makes necessary in his representation of the rectified conscience and the charitable will. Aquinas explains:

> Take the case then when the intention of several people is to achieve some good pertaining to God's honour or their neighbour's benefit. And if one of them thinks this particular good will serve and another thinks the contrary, the discord against God and neighbour's good here would be indirect. It would be neither sinful nor go against charity unless an error about things necessary for salvation or too much obstinacy were involved.[26]

In *Biathanatos*, Donne had argued that under certain circumstances suicide may be construed in charity as a particular good conducing to the honor of God, and insisted that an error in this judgement need not have been about those self-evident and fundamental truths which both he and Aquinas could agree 'were necessary to salvation'. Nor did Aquinas think that contention, which concerns itself specifically with matters of doctrine, was contrary to charity. He claimed that 'if it means an attack on falsity with a judicious amount of acrimony, then it is laudable' and went on to defend the contention of disciples on the grounds that 'each was defending what he thought was true.'[27] Even Job's contention with God is defended because, Aquinas explains, he 'had no intention of attacking the truth-he was looking for it'.[28] Donne's approval of the benefits of contention and discord continued even after his ordination. As late as 1629, Donne could proclaim in a sermon that 'it is not alwayes unlawfull to sowe discord, and to kindle dissention amongst men; for men may agree too well, to ill purposes.'[29] Schism is still detested for being opposed to charity, but because not every dispute results in the sundering of the unity of the church, opinions, both orthodox and paradoxical, may be disputed without upsetting that common foundation which Donne sought to protect in both *Biathanatos* and *Pseudo-Martyr*.[30] The will to protect this foundation consists in following the commands of charity, which require the practical reason to endeavor to convince the conscience that the particular choice it has deduced from the knowledge of the first practical principles is valid and, at least, probable. This rational process, as we have shown, is characteristic specifically of the logic of Aristotle, and forms the basis of the method of the *thesis* described by Cicero and Quintilian, and adapted to the purposes of rhetoric by Aphthonius. What characterizes it finally, is its struggle with uncertainty, a struggle which cannot but result in discord, contention, and, as

Donne's ninth paradox, 'That by Discord things increase' testifies, uncommon opinions.[31] If Donne was concerned that the discord by which he increased the number of his paradoxes could have been misinterpreted to promote schism and division in either the commonwealth or the church, his conviction in the charitable use to which he believed the disputation of the paradox could be applied, was his consolation.

Notes to Conclusion

[1] Donne, 1982, ll. 5476-5482
[2] Ibid., ll. 5483-5485
[3] Ibid., ll. 1144-1145, 5485-5486
[4] Donne, 1610, sig. C3
[5] Ibid., sig. Rr3-Xx. We recall that Donne referred to the interpretive practice of Catholic doctrine as 'a piece of poetry'. See Donne, 1839, III, p. 318 (quoted in Sprott, 1949-1950, p. 344).
[6] Donne, 1610, sig. Kk3
[7] Ibid., sig. V3
[8] See Donne, 1982, ll. 1736-1738.
[9] Donne, 1610 sig. A3. See also sig. E3. 'And Almightie God himselfe...hath been so indulgent to our nature, and the frailty thereof, that he hath affoorded us a meanes, how wee may giue away our life, and make him, in a pious interpretation, beholden to us for it; which is by deliuering ourselves to Martyrdome, for the testimony of his name, and aduancing his glories'.
[10] It should be noted that in *Biathanatos*, Donne never claims that an illegal act committed in good conscience ought not to receive the prescribed penalty; his aim is merely to show that a conscience rectified *in foro interiori* may be in conflict with a judgement made *in foro exteriori*. See Donne, 1982, ll. 1745-1757. For a discussion of James' conception of the relationship between the individual conscience and external authority, and Donne's intentionally ambiguous estimation of it in his *Eclogue* and *Epithalamion* (1613), see Goldberg, 1979, pp. 379-398.
[11] See Donne, 1953, V, p. 225. Meg Lota Brown and Jeanne M. Shami acknowledge that Donne is emphasizing the necessity for practical reason to determine which of two competing commands has greater authority in his sermon on Esther, but neither relate this necessity to the tradition of the disputation of paradoxes or *theses*. See Lota Brown, 1995, pp. 91-97; and Shami, 1983, pp. 62-64.
[12] Donne, 1610, sig. Kk3. In a letter to Sir Henry Goodyere in 1609, Donne had recognized that upon the issue of the Oath of Allegiance, there is 'a perplexity (as farre as I see yet) and both sides may be in justice, and innocence'. He went on to complain of an unidentified Catholic controversialist's deceitful 'miscitings' and 'mis-interpretings' in the interest of his own position. See Donne, 1977, pp. 160-161. See also Annabel Patterson's discussion of this letter in Patterson, 1982, pp. 39-53.
[13] Donne, 1982, ll. 1173-1178
[14] Donne, 1610, sig. B2. Charles M. Coffin maintains that 'the scholastic method of disputation was [odious] to Donne', and that his choice of the Anglican position was informed by this hatred. He argues that Donne's interest in 'the new philosophy' and the 'heathen' learning of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, betrayed a dissatisfaction with scholastic methods of analysis, a dissatisfaction which, Coffin claims, resulted in Donne's belief that the Anglican position was the least contentious of all parties involved in the religious controversies of the day. These mistaken claims lead Coffin to create the impression that *Pseudo-Martyr* was not a controversial work which relied on scholastic methods. Donne's 'sweete and gentle interpretation', he concludes, indicates his unwillingness to succumb to the pedantry of the schoolmen. Coffin's conclusion, however, is contradicted by his

accurate observations of Donne's typically Anglican consultation of scholastic sources (pp. 75-76, 216). See Coffin, 1937, pp. 214-229.

[15] Donne continued to observe this relation between disputed problems of doctrine (opinion) and points 'necessary to salvation'. We recall that in a 1629 sermon preached upon Whitsunday, Donne had warned against 'paradoxicall opinions, or schismaticall, or...problematicall opinions' which masquerade as 'certain and constant truths' because they seek to undermine the true foundations known commonly by all Christians and which are 'necessary to salvation'. Appropriately, Donne cites Augustine against the use of rhetoric and the art of disputation to weaken the true foundations of religion. See Donne, 1953, IX, pp. 94-95; X, p. 148 (IX, pp. 94-95 quoted in Stanwood and Asals, 1986, pp. 271-272).

[16] Donne, 1610, sig. Qq. Gratian's *Decretum* was observed as an authority by the papal curia and was included in the *Corpus Iuris Canonici*.

[17] *Homilies on I John* IX, 8

[18] Ibid., 3. For a discussion of Augustine's description of the role of charity in the individual's understanding of scripture in Book I of *On Christian Doctrine*, see Stock, 1996, pp. 194-196.

[19] Donne, 1610, sig. B2. Donne remarked in a letter to Henry Goodyer in 1612, 'I doe (I thank God) naturally and heartily abhorre all schism in Religion so much, as, I protest, I am sorry to finde this appearance of schism amongst our adversaries the Sorbonists'. See Donne, 1977, p. 132. For more on Donne's condemnation of schism and his Anglicanism, see Grierson, 1948, pp. 305-314.

[20] Thomas O. Sloane recognizes Augustine's lack of tolerance for disputation as a feature of his theory of charity, but does not recognize that Aquinas' theory provided for a form of disputation which did not contradict the command to love. As a result, in his attempt to illustrate Donne's debt to Augustine, he cannot accommodate Donne's 'controversial' mode of thought, which Sloane finds indicative of Donne's scepticism. See Sloane, 1985, pp. 100-111, 145-207, esp. 200.

[21] In his discussion of the relation of Donne's application of Augustine's trinitarianism to his own theological views, Jeffrey Johnson fails to observe that Donne could oppose schism as against the command to love on other than Augustinian grounds. As a result, he does not notice Donne's epistemological divergence from Augustine on the conformity of opinion and the doctrinal unity of the church. See Johnson, 1999, pp. 32-36, 85-88.

[22] Donne, 1982, ll. 2865-2866

[23] *Homilies on I John* IX, 7

[24] Augustine, *Haeresis Pelagianae defensorem, libri sex*, III, iii. Later in the same chapter, Augustine says of the Pelagian opinions, '*mira sunt quae dicitis, nova sunt quae dicitis, falsa sunt quae dicitis*'. For more on Augustine's distrust of opinion, see Stock, 1996, pp. 174-181.

[25] Donne, 1982, ll. 1096

[26] *Summa* II ii, q. 37, a. 1

[27] *Summa* II ii, q. 38, a. 1

[28] *Summa* II ii, q. 38, a. 1

[29] Donne, 1953, IX, vi, p. 167 (quoted in Shami, 1983, p. 65)

[30] For Aquinas' condemnation of schism, see *Summa* II ii, q. 39.

[31] See Donne, 1953, VI, pp. 318-319 for Donne's mature view of the relation between syllogistic reasoning and arguments '*contraria opinantem*' (quoted in Stanwood and Asals, 1986, pp. 114-116).

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