

παραβλήδην (4.6),<sup>11</sup> with words intended to provoke Hera, who will predictably and angrily reject her husband's proposal and bring about the violation of the truce and the continuation of the war. Zeus thus purposefully goads Hera into delivering her violent response. He can then appear to give in to his bloody-minded wife, all the while getting his own way. To summarize: *κερτομέω* thus means 'to provoke someone into doing something', to elicit a response that one expects, anticipates, or desires, and sometimes to make someone give himself away. In fact, it is a subtle way of manipulating someone to do what you want him to do without explicitly saying so.

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. *H. Hermes* 55–6, where Hermes tries out his newly invented lyre and improvises a song, just as young men at feasts *παραίβόλα κερτομέουσιν*. The youths' oblique provocations elicit improvised counter-provocations to produce a flyting contest.

#### SIMONIDES, *PMG* 542.1–3

ἄνδρ' ἀγαθὸν μὲν ἀλαθέως γενέσθαι χαλεπὸν  
χερσίν τε καὶ ποσὶ καὶ νόῳ  
τετράγωνον ἄνευ ψόγου τετυγμένον

'It is hard to become a truly good man': so Plato's Protagoras purports to understand the first line (*Prt.* 339d), and modern interpreters of the poem have followed him without exception.<sup>1</sup> Now it may be conceded that the words could bear this sense in some contexts; but as Simonides explains *ἀγαθὸν . . . ἀλαθέως* as 'fashioned four-square in hands and feet and mind' (2–3),<sup>2</sup> and as he can hardly have conceived of a man's mind and limbs as being made on any occasion after his birth, it seems fairly clear that what I take to be anyway the more natural interpretation, 'it is hard for a truly good man to come to be', for which compare, besides line 21 *τὸ μὴ γενέσθαι δυνατόν*, *Pl. R.* 5.472d *ὅς ἂν γράψας παράδειγμα οἶον ἂν εἴη ὁ κάλλιστος ἄνθρωπος . . . μὴ ἔχη ἀποδείξαι ὥς καὶ δυνατόν γενέσθαι τοιοῦτον ἄνδρα*, 6.502c *ἄριστα μὲν εἶναι ἃ λέγομεν . . . , χαλεπὰ δὲ γενέσθαι*, 7.528b *ἐπιτάττου . . . ὄν . . . γενέσθαι χαλεπὸν*, and *Laws* 4.711d *τὸ χαλεπὸν γενέσθαι*, is to be preferred. It is hard for a perfect man to come to be,<sup>3</sup> and misfortune may at any moment destroy such distinction as a man has been able to achieve; therefore the poet will not look for what is impossible, an entirely blameless man, but considers praiseworthy any man who behaves as well as can be expected.

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<sup>1</sup> Bibliography (1928–94): D. E. Gerber, *Lustrum* 36 (1994), 139–44.

<sup>2</sup> B. Snell, *Dichtung und Gesellschaft* (Hamburg, 1965), 116 = *Poetry and Society* (Bloomington, 1961), 51, translates 'selbst wenn jemand an Armen und Beinen und Sinn . . . wohlgefügt und ohne Tadel ist': but 'selbst wenn' is plainly not in the Greek.

<sup>3</sup> *μὲν* may indicate that Simonides went on to say 'but there is no lack of men of inferior quality' or the like: cf. 37–8 *τῶν γὰρ ἡλιθίων | ἀπείρων γενέθλα*.