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### Hobbes, Desire, and the Democratization of Rhetoric

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## **Hobbes, Desire, and the Democratization of Rhetoric**

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*This article considers the modern melding of rhetoric and democracy by looking at the approach to rhetoric in the early-modern figure Thomas Hobbes. While other scholars have considered Hobbes’s approach to rhetoric in terms of humanistic, Ramistic, and Aristotelian influences, I look at it in light of the psychagogic tradition of rhetoric still active in the Renaissance. Reading Hobbes in light of the psychagogic tradition makes his approach to rhetoric less equivocal or contradictory than is often supposed, even as it helps us see in Hobbes’s work a concerted effort to democratize rhetoric. I conclude that the real tension Hobbes presents us with is not found in his approach to rhetoric, which is relatively consistent, but rather in what his work suggests about the tensions of a democratized rhetoric.*

In a recent disciplinary history, Pat J. Gehrke (2009) considers the sweep of methods, arguments, and themes that teachers and scholars of “speech” used in the past century to further their field. Rhetoric and democracy appear in this history as particularly active, and interactive, themes. “Communication and rhetoric scholars have often grounded their work on a tradition of liberal humanism and liberal democracy,” stresses Gehrke (2009, 3). In invoking humanism, Gehrke seems to have no direct intent to recall the *studia humanitatis* of early-modern Europe. Nevertheless, those sixteenth- and seventeenth-century teachers of grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry, and moral

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philosophy are certainly part of the liberal history he summons, and indeed early-modern humanists would have no trouble at all seeing speech in general, and rhetoric in particular, as integral to ethical and political life.

They would, however, struggle to see the rationale for the pivotal place of democracy that contemporary students of rhetoric now take for granted. That this particular form of human polity would have such a critical role to play for rhetorical scholars today may not have seemed peculiar to early-modern humanists—they would have known something of the Tacitian story of eloquence’s heyday amid the perturbations of Greek democracy (see Tacitus 1970, *Dialogus*, chaps. 36–41)—but it would have seemed misguided. Rhetoric and some form of republicanism, or rhetoric and some form of monarchism, would seem to early-modern advocates of rhetorical study to go hand in hand. But rhetoric and democracy? Gehrke’s study thus obliquely raises a question: how did rhetoric come to be so readily associated with democracy in modernity?

The question is complex and the historical answer far more so. Their study would demand much more than a single article, and even more than a book. Still, in the following pages I explore what I believe to be an early chapter in the modern (re)melding of rhetoric and democracy by taking up the work of the seventeenth-century English *anti*-humanist Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes, I argue, was in his own way a great democratizer of rhetoric. He manifests a conceptual effort to work against the humanistic, Ciceronian, and republican tradition of his day by arguing that rhetoric’s “natural” habitat, so to speak, is nothing else but the democratic state. That he *fears* both rhetoric and democracy is no matter, at least not with regard to his democratization of rhetoric, for one of Hobbes’s several intellectual virtues is his capacity to face his fears directly. Like those who awaken to clinically recall the nightmares they suffered the night before, Hobbes sought to give an account of that which he feared. He found in democracy an oratorical plenty—and likewise in rhetoric a natural democratic impulse.

This impulse was not only democratic; it was psychagogic. Hobbes’s approach to rhetoric has been interpreted in light of Ramistic, Aristotelian, and Ciceronian traditions (Garsten 2006; Kahn 1985; Ong 1951; Skinner 1996; Strauss 1936; Struever 2009; Zappen 1983), but only Victoria Silver (1996, 338), in her reading of Hobbes’s comments on Thucydides, has suggested that psychagogia seems to have exerted its influence on Hobbes. Such neglect is odd given that, other than the infamous “war of all against all,” Hobbes’s most noted image is of “that great LEVIATHAN” which unifies a people “by terror” rather than by “consent, or concord” (Hobbes, 1996, *L*, 120).<sup>1</sup> In this image—Hobbes’s own rhetorical apogee—he sought not only, as Victoria Kahn (1985) writes, “ideological closure” but also the possession of political subjects before an awe-inspiring artifice: the Sovereign (157). In fact, as Hobbes himself looked back into the era of Homer and Hesiod he nostalgically recalled the ways in which its rulers “preferred that the knowledge of Justice be wrapped up in fables rather than exposed to

discussion”; in so doing, citizens then “revered sovereign power . . . as a kind of visible divinity” (*DC*, 9). Similarly, in *Behemoth* Hobbes (1969a) noted that the papal clergy, by claiming “to make our Saviour’s body” from “a piece of bread,” caused the people to “stand in awe of them as of God himself, if he were visibly present”—thus severely undermining the authority and power of kings (15). Ancient commentators on oratory such as Gorgias and the so-called Longinus knew how this could be. Gorgias (2001) spoke of speech as a powerful lord. Longinus (1995) wrote of a *logos* that “inspires wonder and casts a spell,” and he considered it far superior to that which “is merely convincing and pleasing” (1.4).

As this article discusses, the neglect of the psychagogic in Hobbes is no small oversight. Hobbes understood what rhetoric’s traditions have long suggested but often kept sublimated within their more pragmatic interests: rhetoric’s power is often enacted through desire and exercised over the souls or psyches of people. Hobbes certainly felt he was witnessing as much amid the English civil wars, as Puritan preachers used their pulpits to stir their congregants into rebellion after rebellion (see Hobbes 1969a). But Hobbes, as I will discuss, had more philosophical bases on which to conceive of a psychagogic, democratic rhetoric. Specifically, he located rhetoric within a schema of “natural philosophy,” while at the same time assigning it, on a scientific basis, a clear political location: democracy. Oratorical suasion thus had for Hobbes a double life—one natural and the other artificial. The former was a psychagogic power, the latter a democratic practice. Together, Hobbes worried, they were demagogic (*DC*, 119).

My argument has at least two implications. First, with respect to Hobbes, his approach to rhetoric may not be as equivocal as is often supposed. Important contemporary critics of Hobbes seem to assume that his concern with rhetoric was largely in its humanistic idiom (Garsten 2006; Johnston 1986; Kahn 1985; Martel 2007; Skinner 1996). Hobbes, as Kahn argues (1985), was thus caught in contradiction, using “rhetoric to fight rhetoric” where the only “rhetoric” available was more or less humanistic (181). Kahn all along assumes a fundamental opposition between persuasion and command (174). Yet while Hobbes’s interest in the Ciceronian tradition should not be overlooked, neither should his effort to conceive of eloquence as a psychagogic power—that is, a persuasion that commands.<sup>2</sup> If Hobbes’s approach to rhetoric is read against a psychagogic tradition, it starts to look far less equivocal or contradictory.

At the same time, the second implication of my argument is that Hobbes helps us better understand the historical equivocations and contradictions of “democratic rhetoric.” Hobbes, I argue, challenged the assumed political conditions for rhetorical practice, removing them from an elitist republican province where men of goodwill move “the people” to a democratic province where “the people” themselves powerfully orate ad nauseam. Hobbes thus democratized rhetoric, and his work as such represents an important preface to what would become, by the twentieth century, a powerful episteme

linking rhetoric to democracy. Yet for Hobbes a democratized rhetoric called for a sustained effort to *restrain* rhetoric as much as possible. As Gehrke’s (2009) work suggests, plenty of democratic non-Hobbesians since have reached similar conclusions, summoning philosophical, legal, or pedagogical powers to contain the powers of democratic speech. Democratic rhetoric has been a social project; it has also been a social anxiety. Perhaps we can learn something about this tension from Hobbes.

This article begins with a discussion of Hobbes’s reading of Aristotle in his early paraphrase of the *Rhetoric*. For it was in Aristotle, of all ancient authorities, that Hobbes early in his career found the outlines of a basically psychagogic theory of persuasion. In fact, as I will show, this was not entirely unprecedented. Francis Bacon too turned to Aristotle to articulate an approach to rhetoric that focused on its particular power over the passions by way of the imagination. Nevertheless, Hobbes pushed the matter further by suggesting, against the humanists of his day, the ubiquity of what might be called a “natural *eloquentia*” that could produce a whole political world of phantasms. This was for him the meaning of democracy.

In the central three sections of this article, I look at Hobbes’s more mature works in light of psychagogic rhetoric, using the three traditional axes of psychagogia as an organizational guide: speech, suasion, and the soul. I first look at the way in which Hobbes situates speech within a logic of command and assent, then in the next section consider the relation of this logic to the apparitional or phantastic in Hobbes’s approach to persuasion, and finally in the third section look at the “democratic soul” of Hobbes’s conception of eloquence. Linking these discussions together are three Hobbesian themes that underlie his psychagogic, democratic rhetoric: human *desires* are the motive forces of society; human *speech* is the most “natural” means by which to variously activate or pacify such desires; and because virtually any human is up to the task of activation, politics must focus on artificial methods of pacification. Thus, in the conclusion, I reflect briefly on such Hobbesian tensions in democratic rhetoric.

## HOBBS AND THE PSYCHAGOGIC ARISTOTLE

In 1637, a decade or so before gaining his fame in Europe, Hobbes anonymously published *A Briefe of the Arte of Rhetorique*, a translation and summary of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*. As John T. Harwood (1986) argues, the *Briefe* can serve as an important marker in assessing Hobbes’s general attitude toward rhetoric early in his career, specifically as we take into account “the ways in which Hobbes changes Aristotle—through omissions, additions, rearrangements, and major shifts in emphasis and expression—to make the work his own” (13). I consider together here three such changes apparent in the first chapters of the *Briefe*: Hobbes making Aristotle to say the end of rhetoric is “victory”; Hobbes making rhetoric a necessary concession when,

due to the weak capacities of popular audiences, logic will not do; and Hobbes attributing method in persuasion to natural ability. All three modifications of the *Rhetoric* suggest that Hobbes is from the beginning fashioning out of Aristotle a psychagogic approach to rhetoric, one anticipated by a strain of psychagogic approaches to speech in the Renaissance generally and by Francis Bacon's approach to rhetoric in particular.

Most notably, Hobbes rephrases Aristotle's (1991) definition of rhetoric from the "ability, in each case, to see the available means of persuasion" (1.2.1, 1355b) to "*Rhetorique* is that Faculty, by which wee understand what will serve our turne, concerning any subject, to winne beliefe in the hearer" (B, 40). Thus Hobbes finds in rhetoric—and not just rhetoric but Aristotle's *Rhetoric*—a means of winning "beliefe" in hearers. He further specifies his meaning a page later, adding new lines to Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, calling the end of rhetoric "victory" through the winning of belief: "For as *Logicke*, where certaine and infallible knowledge is the scope of our prooffe, the *Principles* must be all *infallible truthes*: so in *Rhetorique* the *Principles* must be *common opinions*, such as the Judge is already possessed with: because the end of *Rhetorique* is victory; which consists in having gotten *beleefe*" (B, 41; emphases in original). Far from presenting rhetoric as the counterpart (*antistrophos*) of dialectic, as Aristotle does, Hobbes here suggests that rhetoric represents a concession in certain situations.<sup>3</sup> He says, in essence, when because of the weakness of audiences you cannot logically demonstrate, you must rhetorically vindicate.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, Hobbes suggests in the *Briefe* (in what may be a refutation of Ramism or merely its modification), that rhetoric is a necessary substitute for logical discourse when speaking to those who cannot handle "long *Scientificall proofes*" (39). Such a concession Hobbes offers as *politically* necessary, as otherwise "men by the advantage of natural abilities, would carry an evill cause against a good" (39).

Hobbes's reference to "natural abilities" is quite significant for what it suggests about the relationship of "rhetoric" to *eloquentia*, and each to "nature." Rhetoric and *eloquentia* are not quite synonyms for the Hobbes of the *Briefe*. While they both are suasive and both seek "victory," rhetoric tends to be much more tightly tied to "art" than *eloquentia*. It is apparent from the first page of the *Briefe* that Hobbes would offer his pupil the art of rhetoric as a means of *counteracting* the natural suasive abilities, or *eloquentia*, of "evill men." Natural *eloquentia* in the *Briefe*, like the natural state of that great war of every man against every man in the *Leviathan*, is the source of an inordinate, disruptive social force; rhetoric, like the sovereign "Artificiall Man" in the *Leviathan*, is the means of counteracting it (L, 9).<sup>5</sup> Thus at this early stage Hobbes is already pitting the artificial against the natural.

This can be contrasted with the humanistic outlook of Hobbes's day as represented by a central text of Renaissance humanism, Cicero's *De Inventione*. *De Inventione* posited the transformation of nature by means of the arts, but not its overcoming. "There was a time," Cicero related, "when men wandered at large in the fields like animals and lived on wild fare;

they did nothing by the guidance of reason, but relied chiefly on physical strength.” At some point, however, “a man—great and wise I am sure—became aware of the power latent in man and the wide field offered by his mind for great achievements if once he could develop this power and improve it by instruction.” This man “introduced them to every useful and honorable occupation . . . and then when because of his reason and eloquence they had listened with great attention, he transformed them into a kind of gentle folk” (Cicero 1968, 2). In Cicero’s account “reason and eloquence” are presented as natural powers activated by the great and wise orator, transforming latent civilizational powers to create “gentle folk.” Art can thus transform nature by tapping into latent natural capacities. This idea can be traced as far back as Protagoras (see Deneen 2005, chap. 4) and was taken up enthusiastically early in the Italian Renaissance, for example by Pico, who melded Ciceronian themes with Neoplatonic ones to suggest “prospects of near-infinite human self-improvement” through the arts (Deneen 2005, 68). Sidney (1989) pursued the idea to the point of arguing that by poesy can be grown “in effect another nature” (216, line 177). “Nature” in this line of humanistic thinking was not benign. It was a powerful force. Nevertheless, it could be tamed and transformed, even as it was imitated. In this way early Italian humanists and their Northern European counterparts after them essentially assumed a *complementary* relationship between art and nature.

Hobbes, by contrast, offers not “another nature” but art, artifice, and the artificial as the means by which to counteract nature. He thus not only breaks with Ciceronian notions of the transformational capacities of *eloquentia* but with a well-established reading of the very Aristotle he would present in the *Briefe*. For the Greek texts of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, of course, offered the art (*technê*) of rhetoric as means by which to improve upon the natural, not to counteract it:

Rhetoric is an *antistrophos* to dialectic; for both are concerned with things as are, to a certain extent, within the knowledge of all people and belong to no separately defined science. A result is that all people, in some way, share in both: for all, up to a point, try both to test and uphold an argument and to defend themselves and attack. Now among the general public, some do these things at random and others through an ability acquired by habit, but since both ways are possible, it is clear that it would be possible to do the same by a path [*bodô*]; for it is possible to observe the cause why some succeed by habit and others accidentally, and all would at once agree that such observation is the activity of an art [*technê*]. (Aristotle 1991, 1.1.1–2, 1354a)

Aristotle presented the “path” (*bodos*, from which we get *method*) drawn up by the careful observer of random or habitual natural suasive activity as the product of “art.” Art thus produces a method that improves upon

nature. In the *Briefe*, however, Hobbes substantively changes this passage, paraphrasing it thusly: “We see some men naturally are able in some sort to *accuse* and *excuse*: some by *chance*; but some by *method*. This *method* may be discovered; and to discover *method* is all one with teaching an *Art*” (B, 39). Here “method” is with “chance” *natural*; as such method is prior to art, a condition for the possibility of the latter. Art here does not improve upon nature so much as *re-create* a natural pattern on an artificial plane so as to overcome what “evil men” do naturally (B, 39). Again, we see in the *Briefe* an anticipation of what the *Leviathan* would propose: artifice as a means of transcending a hostile natural condition so as to overcome it.

It is curious, however, that Aristotle could be summoned to such a cause, for Hobbes is not only taking some liberties with the *Rhetoric* but out of step with regnant contemporary readings of Aristotle, whether those of latter-day Thomists or those of the Aristotelian, counter-Ramists like Gerhard Johannes Vossius and Thomas Farnaby.<sup>6</sup> Yet Hobbes was not entirely idiosyncratic in his reading of Aristotle. Francis Bacon, whom Hobbes admired and knew personally, also found in Aristotle an approach to rhetoric that could overcome certain “natural” propensities. Bacon presented the passions in particular as disruptive and volatile and thus prone to betray reason. Rhetoric could mitigate these wayward powers by acting on the imagination to create impressions of future goods.

For the affections themselves carry ever an appetite to good, as reason doth; the difference is, that *the affection beholdeth merely the present; reason beholdeth the future and sum of time*; and therefore the present filling the imagination more, reason is commonly vanquished; but after that force of eloquence and persuasion hath made things future and remote appear as present, then upon the revolt of the imagination reason prevaieth. (Bacon 1952, 67, emphasis added)

Rhetoric, in short, was for Bacon a means by which to activate the imagination on behalf of reason. As Lisa Jardine (1974) writes, “As logic presents arguments in such a form that reason gives its assent to the conclusions, so rhetoric presents the conclusions of the author’s reason in vivid images, whose persuasive force produces assent to the proposition, and movement towards the desired goal” (219). At least this would ideally be the case for Bacon, for he did not hold that rhetoric would necessarily serve reason. Unlike the Ciceronian humanist, Bacon saw no natural connection between reason and eloquence, *ratio* and *oratio*, just as he saw no inherent connection between the imagination and reason.<sup>7</sup> Bacon (1952) but asserted, rather than demonstrated, that “the end of Rhetoric is to fill the imagination to second reason, and not to oppress it” (66).

And this assertion was not politically innocent, for Bacon meant to advocate in *Advancement* the use of rhetoric on behalf of reason only in a very specific kind of situation: with popular audiences. Here Bacon explicitly

called upon Aristotle to support his position, anticipating Hobbes’s comments in the *Briefe*:

Logic differeth from Rhetoric, not only as the fist from the palm, the one close the other at large; but much more in this, that Logic handleth reason exact and in truth, and Rhetoric handleth it as it is planted in popular opinions and manners. And therefore Aristotle doeth wisely place rhetoric as between Logic on the one side, and moral or civil knowledge on the other, as participating of both; for the proofs and demonstrations of Logic are toward all men indifferent and the same; but the proofs and persuasions of Rhetoric ought to differ according to the auditors. (Bacon 1952, 67)

This passage contains a basic skepticism about the rational capacities of popular audiences. Bacon presented a rhetorical art that can variously activate the imagination of the masses but not engage them rationally.<sup>8</sup>

Here we see how Bacon could summon Aristotle to justify something like a psychagogic conception of rhetoric, one that hinges on the capacity of rhetoric to vanquish the popular imagination on behalf of a superior agency, reason. This Aristotelian psychagogic rhetoric differed from its Ciceronian counterpart in its conception of the chief psychic “faculty” of rhetoric. The Ciceronian strain of rhetoric made central the deliberative faculties, in other words, the mind. Hence for a Ciceronian like Thomas Wilson (2001), whom Hobbes almost certainly read as a student, “Rhetorique is an art to set further by utterance of wordes, matter at large, or (as Cicero doeth saie) it is a learned, or rather an artificiall declaracion of the mynde, in the handling of any cause, called it contencion, that maie through reason largely be discussed” (704; see also Wilson 1994, 45). But Bacon made central the impressionistic faculties, in other words, the imagination. For Bacon (1952), rhetoric is “a science excellent” pertinent to the exercising of the “Imagination or Impression,” as distinct from reason or the passions (66).

Bacon was here participating, if in his own novel scientific manner, in a larger Renaissance interest in the psychagogic power of rhetoric. Plato’s *Gorgias* was translated by Bruni in the early part of the fifteenth century (Hankins 1990, 53), followed by the translations of the *Gorgias* and the *Phaedrus* by Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola near the end of the century (Rebhorn 2000, 8). Sidney (1989) invoked Plato and the broader Greek poetic tradition in his *Defence of Poesy* to posit the psychagogic power of poetry as the “first nurse” of the nations (213, 249). Marlowe (2005), meanwhile, quoted *Gorgias* in *Doctor Faustus* (1.12), and significant Gorgian influences can be seen in the work of the English dramatist more generally (Keefer 2004, 55). The practice of epideictic, in particular encomia, was a major part of Renaissance education and literature and was associated with psychagogia to a strong enough extent that Erasmus’s (1979)

“Folly” proposes the singular psychagogic blow: “Thus, what these eloquent orators can hardly accomplish in long and carefully thought out speech—namely, to clear the mind of troubles and sorrows—that very goal I achieved in a flash simply by making an appearance” (10). In keeping with such apparitional, psychagogic power, there was in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, not the least in Hobbes, a keen and widely dispersed interest in the violent power of speech (Rhodes 1992, 8–12). There was, in sum, a persistent interest in the Renaissance in the psychagogic power of speech.

The result for Hobbes was something approximating a psychagogic reading of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*—a reading reinforced by Bacon. But Hobbes had Aristotle add to the Baconian distinction between rhetoric and logic a second distinction between rhetoric and *eloquentia*. Hobbes found in Aristotle’s rhetoric an art and artifice that could stand against, and indeed over, natural *eloquentia* to “winne beliefe.” Far from undermining the Ciceronian claim for the naturalness of *eloquentia*, Hobbes here intensified the claim, attributing to “natural abilities” an active and realized suasive force rather than a latent one; and a force of such magnitude that a powerful artificial counterforce, rhetoric, becomes necessary. In the remainder of this article I take up the three traditional axes of psychagogia in Hobbes’s work—speech, suasion, and the soul—so as to show how Hobbes’s psychagogic rhetoric became a means of democratizing rhetoric.

### COMMANDING SPEECH

Hobbes participated in the “new science” of early-modern Europe. Yet, like many of his contemporaries, he was at the same time a product of a strong humanist education (Skinner 1996). Consequently, Hobbes’s works tend to take up traditional humanistic themes but approach them from newly invented “scientific” perspectives. Such was the case with his treatment of rhetoric beginning in the 1640s, the decade after he published the *Briefe*.

As Richard Tuck has argued, Hobbes was heavily influenced by the Tacitian turn in the later part of the Renaissance (Hobbes 1996, xvi–xviii; Hobbes 1998, x–xi; Tuck 1989, 7–8, 9; Tuck 1996, 199). Like Tacitus, as I will discuss further, Hobbes associated eloquence with democracy. However, unlike Tacitus and later Tacitians, Hobbes argued not principally from history (*historia*) but from science (*scientia*).<sup>9</sup> Beginning in the 1640s, Hobbes made physics the locus of scientific “first principles” (*DH*, 35), setting upon a project that would, as he wrote in *De Cive*, work from the “body and its general properties,” to “Man and his particular faculties and passions,” and then to “the Commonwealth and the duties of citizens” (*DC*, 12–13).<sup>10</sup> Hobbes’s turn to physics was central to his opposing not only nature with artifice but also natural philosophy with civil philosophy. In the schematic

chart of the sciences he offered in the *Leviathan* (1651)—where “science” is conceived in the terms of physics as “knowledge of consequences”—“man” and “civil government,” rather than following one from the other, occupy two distinct domains: the former an aspect of “natural philosophy” and the latter of “civil philosophy” (*L*, 61). Perhaps surprisingly to his readers at the time, *rbetorique* was placed alongside “man” within “natural philosophy,” revealing that Hobbes broke with Aristotle not only by refuting the notion that humans are political animals but also by rejecting the idea that rhetoric is an ethical branch of politics.<sup>11</sup> Rhetoric, rather, was for Hobbes a function of “nature,” as *eloquentia* had been in the *Briefe*. Or, to put the matter in a Hobbesian idiom, rhetoric is the activity of humans in general rather than of political “subjects.” There is, in sum, nothing necessarily and distinctly *political* about rhetoric.

Instead, rhetoric is presented by Hobbes as a branch of the science of “speech,” itself a branch of natural philosophy. Hobbes argues that *within nature*, speech is what, along with “method,” differentiates humans from the rest of the animal world (*L*, 23; recall that Hobbes had Aristotle say in the *Briefe* that method is natural). *Rbetorique* is the branch of the science of speech specifically concerned with “persuasion,” as opposed to “magnifying,” which belongs to poetry; “reasoning,” which belongs to logic; and “contracting,” which is located within the domain of “the science of the just and unjust”—that protopolitical “natural” science that functions in Hobbes’s system as the bridge between the state of nature and civil society (*L*, 61). Here, then, we can see how Hobbes in the 1640s might push rhetoric, which in the *Briefe* stood over and against nature, back to its predeliberative psychagogic roots, even as he creates a new conception of rhetoric by sharply disassociating it from the political.

But Hobbes does not end up making rhetoric quite so primal or natural. For while in the *Leviathan* the science of rhetoric, a species of the science of speech, belongs to “natural philosophy,” we must be careful to note here that Hobbes does not mean that speech, let alone rhetoric, can be conceived in purely natural terms. For Hobbes will insist that speech is an artificial instrument of the human will, where the “will” denotes the locus of intentionality. Hobbes argues that humans, and only humans, by “human invention” develop words “to stand for the series of conceptions of things about which we think” (*DH*, 37). Thus, in an important sense words are artificial inventions intended to represent thoughts (*DH*, 38). Moreover, they are artificial in the sense that they rest on the willful and thus, strictly speaking, arbitrary imposition of *ends* on speech (*L*, 25–26). For Hobbes, both the tool and its end are the product of human artifice.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, even as Hobbes disassociates rhetoric from any political genealogy, he distances speech from any primary naturalness. Speech is a kind of secondary nature, an artifice built upon the capacity of the human animal to go one step beyond raw passion and begin to exercise a will. In this way, Hobbes retains an aspect

of the humanist sense that art transforms nature, creating a “second nature.” But Hobbes leads us to a very different sense of that second nature than we see in Pico or Sidney. It leads not to a theory of *poesis* but rather to one of *imperium* (*DC*, 12).

For the marriage of speech to will for Hobbes creates an epistemological experience unique to humans that Hobbes calls “understanding.” Understanding is conceived in *De Homine* as “a kind of imagination, but one that ariseth from the signification constituted by words” (*DH*, 38). As Hobbes explains in *Leviathan*, “When a man upon the hearing of Speech, hath those thoughts which the words of that Speech, and their connexion, were ordained and constituted to signifie; Then he is said to understand it: *Understanding* being nothing else, but a conception caused by Speech” (*L*, 30). Hobbes here conceives of understanding in impressionistic, imaginative terms. Understanding is an imagination activated by words interpreted according to that which they were “ordained and constituted to signify.” The capacity to imagine by means of words is what makes understanding unique to humans. As we read in the *Leviathan*, “[I]f Speech be peculiar to man . . . then is Understanding peculiar to him also” (*L*, 30). In this sense speech is remarkably like the *civitas*: both are artifices built upon the foundation of nature that activate new “imaginaries.” But this makes one wonder all the more why Hobbes did not follow Aristotle in conceiving of rhetoric as a branch of civil philosophy? If not rhetoric, what forms of speech do properly belong to political science? For Hobbes, there are two: law and science.

Law is a form of speech proper to civil philosophy. And law is commandment. “COMMANDING,” Hobbes writes in his *Elements of Law*, “is that speech by which we signify to another our appetite or desire to have any thing done, or left undone, for reason contained in the will itself . . . and when the command is a sufficient reason to move us to action, then is that command called LAW” (Hobbes 1969b, 52). Law here is in some respects akin to what Aristotle referred to as deliberative rhetoric: reasoned speech, the rational strength on which the quality of political action is contingent. But law is command, and command clearly seems to not be a form of deliberative rhetoric (though it may be its product). In fact, Hobbes is taking a norm of deliberative rhetoric—“sufficient reason to move us to action”—and making a certain command situation itself the sufficient reason. That is, Hobbes offers here a reason that is circumstantial or situational rather than logically demonstrative: “*when* the command is a sufficient reason to move us to action” it is law. The basic situational condition necessary for law to which he alludes is, of course, that of sovereignty. Thus Hobbes states in the *Leviathan*, “[L]aw, properly, is the word of him, that by right hath command over others” (111). For the political subject at least, “sufficient reason to move us to action” is strictly the presence of a sovereign authority.

*Scientia* is the other discourse proper to the *civitas*. *Scientia* is a higher order of knowledge than that which Hobbes refers to in the *Elements* as “knowledge original” (18–19). Whereas knowledge original is derived from “nothing else but sense,” science is “knowledge of the truth of propositions, and how things are called, and is derived from understanding” (*E*, 19). That is, science is inseparable from signification. It therefore is *learned* and must be subjected to methodological rigor in order to reliably arrive at the sorts of definitive truths to which, Hobbes holds, we must assent (*L*, 35–36; *E*, 140). Science is thus not only like speech an “artifice,” it is dependent on speech: “For *True* and *False* are attributes of Speech, not of Things” (*L*, 27).<sup>13</sup> In the civic realm, science allows citizens to arrive at definitive conclusions that in turn become objects of citizenly assent. “Moral science,” above all, takes on this citizenly function for Hobbes. He argues that moral science is the prerogative of the state, which is responsible for setting the “standards” for “virtues and vices” (*DH*, 69). The conclusions of moral science, in turn, become “laws,” and laws command our obedience.

Law and science are near-ideal speech acts for Hobbes. Indeed, the positive quality of law approximates the definitiveness of deductive conclusions. Law and science—or at least moral science—also enjoy an acute relationship to the sovereign will, so critical to Hobbes’s political philosophy. Law and science thus come very near to what is Hobbes’s archetypal speech act, the *command*, both by virtue of their positive power and their connection to the sovereign will, the two foci of Hobbes’s political epistemology and political ontology, respectively.

“Command” indeed commands Hobbes’s approach to speech. *Naming*, for example, appears in the *Leviathan* as the prototypical speech act. This has been commented on extensively by scholars as a product of Hobbes’s nominalism (Bertman 1988; Biletzki 1997; Krook 1956; Watkins 1989). “The first author of Speech was *God* himself, that instructed *Adam* how to name such creatures as he presented to his sight” (*L*, 24). Such Edenic naming was for a fictional contemporary of Hobbes, Milton’s Adam, rooted in knowledge, the product of understanding. Adam relates in *Paradise Lost* how he “nam’d them, as they pass’d, and understood / Thir Nature, with such knowledg God endu’d / My sudden apprehension” (Milton 2005, 8:349–354). But from Hobbes we learn the reverse, that understanding is a product of naming, and that naming is an *imposition*, a kind of assertion of the will via speech upon things (*L*, 24–25). Understanding is thus akin to compliance, as we have seen: “When a man upon the hearing of Speech, hath those thoughts which the words of that Speech, and their connexion, were ordained and constituted to signifie; Then he is said to understand it” (*L*, 30). Naming in Hobbes is a kind of command, and understanding a kind of obedience. Denying the sovereignty of names would seem to be Hobbes’s original sin (though, as we will see, the greater sin may be *absurdity*, inventing names that signify nothing).

Similarly, *defining*—for Hobbes the fundamental speech act of *scientia*—appears as the “settling of signification,” which for Hobbes enables inquiry to take the form of quasi-mathematical “reckoning” (*L*, 27–28). And such reckoning leads to conclusions of “truth” which themselves command our assent (*E*, 140). Even that protopolitical speech act Hobbes calls “contracting,” which seventeenth-century Calvinists conceived of as a contingent product of deliberative discourse, appears in Hobbes as an originary command: “the *Pacts* and *Covenants*, by which the parts of this Body Politique were at first made, set together, and united, resemble that *Fiat*, or the *Let us make man*, pronounced by God in the Creation” (*L*, 9–10). Thus command constitutes for Hobbes the archetypal speech act, regulating the forms of speech proper to the reckonings of both natural and civil philosophies, helping to distinguish true from false speech and legitimate from illegitimate understandings.

In this regard Hobbes’s approach to speech suggests a paradox. On one hand, according to his schema of the sciences, most species of speech—poetry, rhetoric, logic, and even contracting—are not classified as branches of civil philosophy. Rather they belong to natural philosophy. Yet, on the other hand, it is quite apparent in Hobbes’s thought that speech finds its consummation in the sovereign command, especially in law. To put this paradox another way, natural speech has its proper end in civil speech. Thus Hobbes is able to tell readers of *De Cive* that it is “not by the persuasion and advice of private men, but by the laws of the realm, [that] you will no longer suffer ambitious men through the streams of your blood to wade to their own power” (1991, 103, translation attributed to Hobbes). As I have already suggested, this movement from the “natural” to the “artificial” is quite consistent with Hobbes’s philosophical anthropology more generally. The general argument of Hobbes, repeated variously in his works, is that humans, though originating from a state of nature, best belong in an artificial political body. Indeed, the two fundamental laws of nature upon which Hobbes lands, that we should seek peace and that we should relinquish our rights, call humans out of a state of nature and into an artificial political compact (*DC*, 34; see also *L*, chap. 14). Thus, far from art engendering a second nature, Hobbes’s nature commands humans to take on artifice so as to overcome the state of nature.

We can see, therefore, why Hobbes would develop a kind of structural opposition to humanistic rhetoric: such rhetoric does not command. It is too “copious” (*L*, 25). It does not assume the form, substance, or function of law and science (*E*, 49–50, 140). And it does not produce assent but rather “controversy” (*E*, 51). Indeed, humanistic rhetoric in form, substance, and product tended to be in Hobbes’s rendering associated with “absurd speech.” A quasi-technical concept in Hobbes, “absurd speech” is the product of the capacity of words, by virtue of their artificiality, to signify nothing (unlike pure sensation, which Hobbes holds always senses *something*) (*L*, 33–34).

But isn't there a rhetoric that commands? Hobbes's account of persuasion in the *Elements of Law* is significant in this regard, for it suggests a rhetoric that in form, substance, and product closely resembles science and law. I now turn to that resemblance to argue that because Hobbes excludes rhetoric from a political genealogy, rather than in spite of it, he creates a significant space within his theory for a certain kind of rhetoric, a psychagogic oratory, a persuasion that commands. Here he can be seen as refining the psychagogic elements of the *Briefe*.

### THE SUASIVE POWER OF DISPLAY

In his critique of the "authors of rebellion" in the *Elements of Law*, Hobbes argues that it is quite possible to divide *sapientia* from *eloquentia*, *ratio* from *oratio* (17, 139). Indeed, he finds in seditious orators a combination of "mean judgment" and "powerful speaking" (*E*, 139). His argument is not that the seditious, because unwise, are therefore not truly eloquent. This would be a Ciceronian argument. Quite the contrary, he presents the rebel orators as eloquent, consistent with his conception of eloquence in the *Elements* as "nothing else but the power of winning belief of what we say" (140). This conception of eloquence echoes Bacon and closely resembles what we find Aristotle professing in Hobbes's *Briefe*: "*Rhetorique* is that Faculty, by which we understand what will serve our turne, concerning any subject, to winne beliefe in the hearer" (40). Rhetoric in the *Briefe* is the art by which one can counteract the natural suasive power of "evill men." Eloquence in the *Elements* is a more general category, encompassing art and natural capacity, that is no more and no less than an effectual, powerful speaking that wins belief.

That the discussion of eloquence in the *Elements* appears in the context of seditious speech might suggest that Hobbes's argument for the possibility of divorcing *sapientia* from *eloquentia* is intended to be critical. A Ciceronian would say that the two should not be divorced, though they seem to be by evil men. But while Hobbes attacks as vigorously as possible the "authors of rebellion," it is not their eloquence as such that he condemns but their lack of knowledge. His critique of the orator-rebel in the *Elements*, carried forward in later texts, is simply that "there be in him *sapientiae parum*, little wisdom" (here Hobbes recalls Sallust's comment on Catiline) (140, 139). Thus while Hobbes criticizes eloquence without knowledge, he does not thereby argue in Ciceronian fashion that knowledge is integral to true eloquence. Rather, eloquence remains "powerful speech" plain and simple. Eloquence therefore may be had by the knowledgeable or unknowledgeable; its power is independent of the orator's knowledge or lack thereof.

At the same time, the sort of eloquence Hobbes criticizes, typically under the banner of "copiousness," functions for him not only as an index of weak

speech but also as a sign of ignorance. Hobbes finds both the humanist orator and the scholastic philosopher guilty of being too “copious”: both extend and invent language in meaningless, ineffectual ways (*L*, 25).<sup>14</sup> Copiousness is at the heart of Hobbes’s concept of senseless, “absurd” speech: it lacks orderly method, it mixes substance and accident, words and things, it relies on “Metaphors, Tropes, and other Rhetoricall figures,” and it can invent words “that signifie nothing” (*L*, 35). But in discussing such absurdities in *Leviathan*, Hobbes is careful to absolve the richness of language itself from blame, again treating the themes of *sapientia* and *eloquentia*: “Naturall sense and imagination, are not subject to absurdity. Nature it selfe cannot erre; and as men abound in copiousnesse of language; so they become more wise, or more mad than ordinary” (*L*, 28). If wisdom and foolishness are *both* products of the abundance of speech, then it cannot be that that abundance is itself at the center of Hobbes’s criticisms. Rather, a certain form of copiousness represents for Hobbes an excessive looseness with language that is, ironically, accompanied by little care or concern for the commanding power that speech makes available.

In this way, the discussion of eloquence in the *Elements*, while appearing in the context of a critique of seditious speech, can be read more neutrally (if not positively), consistent with Hobbes’s early investment in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*. To begin with, the *Elements* suggests that a “good eloquence,” or something like it, would have for Hobbes a *form* that is consistent with Hobbes’s conception of “good speech” more generally, namely addition. When we reason scientifically, and even more when we speak scientifically, Hobbes claims that we connect one word to another and one assertion to the next—as in a syllogism—“till we come to a knowledge of all the Consequences of names appertaining to the subject in hand” (*L*, 35). Reasoning in speech is thus a kind of addition (*L*, 33). Likewise Hobbes presents “the faculty of speaking powerfully” as the “habit gotten of putting together passionate words,” as the orator adds one affectively charged word to the next (*E*, 141).<sup>15</sup> In this way, scientific demonstration, the “teaching of truth,” shares with eloquence the form of addition. Eloquence can also share with scientific demonstration a subject matter: “good and bad, right and wrong.” These are the subjects of Hobbes’s “moral science” (*DH*, 69). Finally, as argued previously, scientific demonstration and eloquence can share a common end, assent, which the former achieves through a form of deductive conclusiveness and the latter through “passionate words . . . applying them to the present passions of the hearer” (*E*, 141). Hence, neither the formal, substantive, nor functional aspects of eloquence need sharply distinguish it from scientific demonstration.

What does fundamentally distinguish one from the other? Science traffics in truth; eloquence in belief (again, as we saw in Bacon and in the *Briefe*). Scientific discourse creates long deductions, tedious to the hearer; eloquence creates captivating appearances, which take hold of the hearer.

Science concludes cognitively; eloquence concludes sensibly (*E*, 140–141). Thus Hobbes argues, “[S]uch is the power of eloquence, as many times a man is made to believe thereby, that he sensibly feeleth smart and damage, when he feeleth none, and to enter into rage and indignation, without any other cause, that what is in the words and passions of the speaker” (*E*, 141). This line of argument has been quite familiar to the European rhetorical tradition since Plato. But is the argument in step with Plato’s attack on rhetoric? Is eloquence for Hobbes a mere simulacrum of scientific demonstration, a pretender, like Gorgias, at the banquet of knowledge?

It cannot be. Hobbes’s materialist philosophy, his commitment to physics as the locus of first principles, precludes such a sharp Platonic distinction between reality and appearance, for as Hobbes investigates at length, appearances are the product of material processes. All experience is derived from sensation, and central to sensation for Hobbes is sight (*E*, 2–3). All vision is for Hobbes “apparition,” the product of the “motion, agitation, or alternation” of physical bodies (*E*, 3). We thus live a day-to-day existence filled with the phantastical, the spectral, the apparitional. Hobbes, however, does not therefore leave us in a cave of shadows. But neither does he abandon the validity of the senses (as his correspondent Descartes did). Rather, Hobbes writes, “The things that really are in the world without us, are those motions by which these seemings are caused. And this is the great deception of sense, *which is also by sense to be corrected*” (*E*, 6, emphasis added). Sensual observation, Hobbes holds, is our lot. The sensational world is for Hobbes the only one that we can know, and in which we can believe. Sensations can correct sensations; sensorially derived scientific knowledge can set straight sensorially derived ordinary knowledge; and, by extension, suasion can adjudicate suasion.

Thus, the critical distinction between scientific demonstration and eloquence does not lie in the apparitional nature of the latter; rather it is found in the grounds or cause of the appearances which we behold and which hold us in their sway. Hobbes is in this sense merely following a Cartesian distinction between that which we can claim to *know* because we have worked methodically through a process of demonstration to reach a conclusion and that which we *believe* because we took it on the word of another. The latter cannot constitute a known truth, but it can command our assent nevertheless. As Hobbes writes in the *Leviathan*,

[W]hen wee believe any saying whatsoever it be, to be true, from arguments taken, not from the thing it selfe, or from the principles of naturall Reason, but from the Authority, and good opinion wee have, of him that hath sayd it; then is the speaker, or person we believe in, or trust in, and whose word we take, the object of our Faith; and the Honour done in

Believing, is done to him onely. And consequently, when wee Believe that the Scriptures are the word of God, having no immediate revelation from God himselfe, our Beleeefe, Faith, and Trust is in the Church; whose word we take, and acquiesce therein. (49)

To trust the word of another is “to believe” (see also *E*, 20). As such, belief can be the result of rhetoric (*B*, 40; *E*, 140). But to gain the belief of another is to not only to gain that individual’s assent and acquiescence, it is to *win* or to engender acquiescence. Herein we have a theory of suasive power that begins with words, moves through trust and belief, and culminates in victory. And here we can recall Hobbes’s conception of the end of rhetoric as “victory; which consists in having gotten *beleeefe*” (*B*, 41). Here we have a rhetoric that commands.

Political philosopher Danielle Allen has argued that Hobbes is a philosopher of trust. She interprets his several “laws of nature” presented in chapters 14 and 15 of the *Leviathan* (beginning with the two primary laws of seeking peace and laying down rights, and extending to such laws as performing covenants, eschewing pride, and sharing what cannot be divided) as “laws of rhetoric, or trust production” (Allen 2004, 94). “The majority of these laws,” she notes, “prohibit or encourage certain kinds of display” (95). Such display generates reciprocity, and reciprocity in turn produces trust (95). Such trust, Allen argues, is necessary for democracies to thrive. However, she continues, “Hobbes then foreclosed the possibility of cultivating within citizens a culture of reciprocity. He abandoned the political possibilities inherent in citizenship for authoritarianism, replacing his habits of trust generation with the invention of which he was most proud: the perfectible political science of ‘that great Leviathan’” (97). Yet we must ask if the issue is really Hobbes abandoning trust production as much as it is Hobbes holding the undemocratic position that the end of trust is acquiescence, obedience, or submission; for trust in Hobbes typically ends in some form of binding, unqualified assent. If the *civitas* is founded on a contract, and that contract comes by way of reciprocal “display” among the multitude in a state of nature, then the *civitas* is founded on a primary human capacity to engender sociality by means of what can fairly be called epideictic exchange. The *civitas* rests on the capacity for display. But this for Hobbes culminates in binding assent, not democratic consent.<sup>16</sup> And once the *civitas* is established, assent is maintained by means of the “artificial” power of the sovereign, which rests on godlike acts of sovereign display productive of reverence, terror, and awe in the commonwealth (*L*, 120–121). Hobbes thus suggests a theory of trust rooted in display and culminating in assent.

There is indeed for Hobbes a persuasion that commands, an *oratio* that summons forceful assent. Hobbes suggests this power is achievable because it is in the nature of humans to be carried away, psychagogically, by words. As he tells the story in *Elements*,

The passions of man, as they are the beginning of all his voluntary motions, so are they the beginning of speech, which is the motion of his tongue. And men desiring to shew others the knowledge, opinions, conceptions, and passions which are within themselves, and to that end having invented language, have by that means transferred all that discursion of their mind . . . by the motion of their tongues, into discourse of words; and *ratio* now, is but *oratio*, for the most part, wherein custom hath so great a power, that the mind suggesteth only the first word, the rest follow habitually, and are not followed by the mind. (17)

Hobbes here suggests that common human life is dominated by an *oratio* wherein, similar to the effect of the Gorgianic *logos*, humans are carried away not by the referential meaning of words but by the sheer power of the affective habits, the structures of feeling, and the emotive additions and associations that even a single word can engender. Hobbes’s *scientia* attempts to identify and locate this primal suasive power. Moreover, importantly, Hobbes’s *scientia* in a certain sense tries to *imitate* it, conceptualizing a *ratio* that achieves the effectual power of *oratio*—even sharing with *oratio* form, substance, and function. Hence, Hobbes in no way seeks to free humans from the commanding power of speech but only to redirect it toward the end of stability and peace. Indeed, while physics is Hobbes’s first philosophy, psychology is not far behind. Hobbes’s political project, not the least his conception of a psychagogic rhetoric, rests on a *scientia* of the *psyche*, “the soul,” to which I now turn before concluding.

### THE DEMOCRATIC SOUL OF ELOQUENCE

The first thing to say about Hobbes’s soul is that he has none. If he did, he might be able to truly make rhetoric a subject of ethical and moral inquiry, in the way Aristotle did, or he might be able to base naming on understanding, as Milton’s Adam did. But Hobbes has no soul—not, at least, in the sense of *psyche* he knew of from the Aristotelian tradition, carried into Hobbes’s time especially by Thomism. That tradition, as philosopher Cees Leijenhorst writes, offered a theory of sense perception wherein an immaterial soul functions as the pivot point in the turns of experience:

First, sense perception was described [by Aristotelian scholastics] in non-mechanical terms as a process that actualized inner potentialities of the soul; and second, sense perception was seen as geared toward real qualities existing in the world. . . . [F]ollowing Aristotle, most late scholastic textbooks described sense perception as a process leading from the object, as composed of matter and form, to the reception of the sensible form (without the matter) by the immaterial soul. (Leijenhorst 2007, 84)

Hobbes, in contrast, conceived of sense perception as a mechanical system. “Sense in all cases, is nothing els but originall fancy, caused (as I have said) by the pressure, that is, by the motion, of externall things upon our Eyes, Eares, and other organs thereunto ordained” (*L*, 14). Hobbes postulated that the motions of sensible objects move into sense organs, where they are carried through “Nerves, and other strings, and membranes of the body” to the heart (*L*, 13). There the motions spring back and move outward toward the sense organs, and “[a]s this motion is extraverted, we perceive sensible qualities as actually existing outside of us, whereas in reality they are simply a reactive motion within us” (Leijenhorst 2007, 87). In this way Hobbes offers a strictly materialistic conception of sense perception, one without an immaterial soul.

While Hobbes rejected the Aristotelian account of the soul, he preserved in metaphor the Aristotelian soul for the *civitas*. In Aristotle’s view, the soul is the seat of potentiality, power, or energy. When Hobbes describes “sovereignty” in his introduction to *Leviathan* as “an artificial soul, as giving life and motion to the whole body [politic]” he meant to recall this Aristotelian idea and employ it metaphorically to account for the nature of sovereign power (9). A *civitas* without a sovereign would be in his account akin to a body without motion, and thus dead. While the vital powers of an individual body are always actualized, the product of a series of perpetual motion, *political* power, by virtue of its artificiality, can be conceived of by Hobbes in terms of Aristotelian potentiality. In *De Cive*, for example, Hobbes presents the sovereign as drawing on and making use of the “strength and faculties of each single person for public peace and safety” (1991, 225, translation attributed to Hobbes). Just as the sovereign amasses through the state’s treasury a reserve of wealth from which to operate, so the sovereign acquires a standing reserve of human resources on which to draw for purposes of government (*DC*, 118–119). Hence the sovereign is for Hobbes an artificial soul, a seat of power, both potential and actual.

Theoretically, this political soul can take on for Hobbes one of three primary forms—monarchy, aristocracy, or democracy. And it is here, in the context of Hobbes’s discussion of such diverse forms of sovereignty, that eloquence emerges most clearly as a topic of Hobbes’s *civil* philosophy. *De Cive* draws a particularly strong contrast between monarchy and democracy, as it was this distinction that was most important to Hobbes’s own political project in seventeenth-century England. What distinguishes the two, Hobbes insists in chapter 10 of *De Cive*, is not the relative degree of “liberty” each affords. To the contrary, he argues that both are equally constrictive, as both rest on the subjection of private persons and their liberties to the state (121). Nor does the difference between monarchy and democracy rest on the relative plurality of each: for by definition, Hobbes asserts, a *civitas* is “one person made out of many men, whose wills by their own contracts is to be esteemed as the wills of them all” (1991, 225, translation attributed to

Hobbes). Rather, it is the form and internal dynamics of this “one person” that differentiates monarchy from democracy. It is the nature, that is, of their respective souls.

With regard to the form and internal dynamics of democracies, Hobbes repeatedly portrays democratic polities as saturated with “orators.” Orators dominate democracies because in them political desire is diffuse. For example, he notes that all governance tends to include not only “necessary” expenditures, but also superfluous expenditures intended to enrich the “sons, kindred, favourites, and flatterers” of the sovereign (1991, 226, translation attributed to Hobbes). In a monarchy, Hobbes argues, such “lust” is more or less restricted to the court (226).

But in a *democracy*, look how many demagogues, that is, how many powerful orators there are with the people (which ever are many, and daily new ones growing), so many children, kinsmen friends, and flatterers are to be rewarded. For every of them desire not only to make their families as potent, as illustrious in wealth, as may be, but also to oblige other to them by benefits, for the better strengthening of themselves. (1991, 226, translation attributed to Hobbes)

Orators—now demagogues—dominate democracies because democracies not only tolerate but encourage a kind of free-for-all in political lust, and, given Hobbes’s belief in the commanding power of words, oratory is the best means toward satisfying such lust.

In addition, Hobbes argues that democracies cultivate orators because in them the power over life and death is made diffuse. To be sure, Hobbes admits, monarchs may exercise an arbitrary power over the life and death of their subjects. But at least in monarchies such power is contained in a singular sovereign person (*DC*, 120–121). “But in popular dominion,” Hobbes protests, “there may be as many Neros as there are orators” (1991, 227, translation attributed to Hobbes). Indeed, in democracies we see subjects not only “undeservedly slain” but those guilty of such slaying exempted from punishment by virtue of tit-for-tat pacts among persons or parties (*DC*, 120).

Third, Hobbes locates in democracies a propensity for vainglory, propelled by eloquence, that far outweighs anything the sanctimonious ceremonies of monarchs could offer. Democracies, he argues, far from making room for persons to satisfy “that desire of praise which is bred in human nature,” instead foster insult, scorn, envy, jealousy, and the like as citizens see other citizens prized over themselves (1991, 229, translation attributed to Hobbes). Democracies, offering no strong legal means by which to adjudicate status, create a political culture of competition for prestige (*DC*, 123).

Finally, and most tellingly, orators dominate democracies because democratic deliberation calls for “long, continuous speech” (*DC*, 123).

An ideal, upright democracy, Hobbes might say, would be one where orators mimic as much as possible the “long *Scientificall proofes*” he presents as characteristic of *scientia* in the *Briefe* (39). But while this might be a laudable goal, this in fact is not “the nature of eloquence.” Rather, eloquence’s nature is to “allure” rather than “inform.” To quote at some length:

Now the nature of eloquence is to make *good* and *evil*, *profitable* and *unprofitable*, *honest* and *dishonest*, appear to be more or less than indeed they are; and to make that seem *just* which is *unjust*, according as it shall best suit with his end that speaketh; for this is to persuade. And though they reason, yet they take not their rise from true principles, but from vulgar received opinions, which for the most part are erroneous. Neither endeavor they so much to fit their speech to the nature of the things they speak of, as to the passions of their minds to whom they speak; whence it happens, that opinions are delivered not by right reason, but by a certain violence of mind. Nor is this fault in the *man*, but in the nature itself of *eloquence*, whose end, as all the masters of rhetoric teach us, is not truth (except by chance), but victory; and whose property is not to inform, but to allure. (1991, 231, translation attributed to Hobbes)

Hobbes thus insists that democracies will be possessed by the rampant practice of passionate, violent, and alluring speech, contributing not only to a less efficient sovereignty but to a more fragile one, ultimately creating the conditions for “*factions*, seditions and civil war” (1991, 231, translation attributed to Hobbes). That is, as democracies cultivate “persuasion,” that branch of Hobbesian natural philosophy, so they create the conditions for a return to the state of nature wherein everyone is at war against everyone, as rhetoric *directs speech* back away from speech’s stable “civil” end in “law” to its “natural” function as an instrument of individual desire and will. For Hobbes, the soul of a democracy is thus found in the soul of eloquence, and the latter is restless, lustful, power hungry, violent, and vengeful.

And this, he claims in anti-Ciceronian fashion, is not a function of the orator. Rather, it is “in the nature of *eloquence*” itself—a claim familiar to the psychagogic tradition of rhetoric. Indeed, it is when discussing democracy that Hobbes’s psychagogic picture of oratorical suasion is most clear. Just as against the backdrop of Athenian democracy Gorgias (2001) professed “speech is a powerful lord” (45), so Hobbes finds in democracies a plethora of lords, each exercising speech to gain power and status over others. As Gorgias claimed (2001), “All who have and do persuade people of things do so by molding a false argument” (45), so Hobbes insists that “to persuade” is to break with truth and pursue instead the immediate ends of the speaker. As Gorgias (2001) sexed speech with a power akin to that of lust (45), so Hobbes finds in the nature of eloquence an overwhelming power to allure. As Gorgias (2001, 45) compares speech to rape, so Hobbes

sees in oratory violent blows to the mind. As Gorgias, in sum, speaks of a persuasion that compels, so Hobbes finds in eloquence a power that commands. Thus, in democracy, which is to say in a political culture of rampant eloquence, desire is always at risk of going off course, passions of veering off the mean, and ambitions of falling out of balance, as one commanding performance clashes with another. The result is the *civitas* falling into civil war and the state crashing back into a state of nature.

## CONCLUSION

It would be tempting, then, to conclude this article at this point and resolve, as some have done, that Hobbes simply condemns eloquence, just as he disputes democracy. But to settle the matter in this way would be to ascribe a kind of *ought* to that which, for Hobbes, simply *is*. Hobbes insists that it is the nature of eloquence to be commanding (as it is in the nature of bees to make honey), and he can offer no moral condemnation of this nature. After all, persuasion is a branch of natural philosophy, and there is, he tells us, no “common rule of good and evil to be taken from the nature of the objects themselves.” Rather, commendations and condemnations alike are “but from the Person of the man (where there is no Common-wealth;) or, (in a Common-wealth), from the Person that representeth it” (*L*, 39). Which is to say that whatever moral or political quality we attribute to the psychagogic suasive power of eloquence, we do so only from the subjective perspective of the self, or better, the *civitas*. After the political compact, sovereign speech, namely “law,” is the only possible definitive word one could have on the good or evil of eloquence. Until such a positive law dictates the goodness or wickedness of rhetorical power, Hobbes suggests, we can only further our cause in rhetorics for or against rhetoric.

Thus Hobbes confesses in his introduction to *De Cive* that his polemic against democracy and its orators in chapter 10 will be, unlike the rest of the book, but a rhetoric: “I have endeavored, by arguments in my tenth chapter, to gain a belief in men, that monarchy is the most commodious government; which one thing alone I confess in this whole book not to be demonstrated, but only probably stated” (1991, 104, translation attributed to Hobbes). That Hobbes introduces chapter 10 in an antithetical stylistic mode—reminiscent of Gorgias, and distinct from the preponderance of *De Cive*—is noteworthy in this regard.

Out of this state, every man hath such a Right to all, as yet he can enjoy nothing; in it, each one securely enjoyes his limited Right; Out of it, any man may rightly spoyle, or kill one another; in it, none but one. Out of it we are protected by our own forces; in it, by the power of all. Out of it no man is sure of the fruit of his labours; in it, all men

are. Lastly, out of it, there is a Dominion of Passions, war, fear, poverty, slovinlinesse, solitude, barbarisme, ignorance, cruelty. In it, the Dominion of reason, peace, security, riches, decency, society, elegancey, sciences, and benevolence. (1991, 221–222, translation attributed to Hobbes)

Clearly, Hobbes was quite willing to indulge in rhetorical liberties as he felt necessary. As Kahn and Garsten each argue, Hobbes everywhere was using rhetoric against rhetoric (Garsten 2006; Kahn 1985). But this rhetoric was not therefore, at least from a distinctly Hobbesian theoretical perspective, contradictory or conflicted. Rather Hobbes in his most rhetorical moments sought to construct words, rhythms, and metaphors that would move powerfully into the organs, take command of the senses, possess the imagination, and indeed violate the mind, so as to win belief from the reader and victory for the writer. Such rhetorical liberties indicate not only the intensity of Hobbes's political enterprise but his attempt to overcome a humanist conception of rhetoric with a theory that, for all of Hobbes's distaste for democracy, was a significant step toward what might be called, with *historical* and not just "scientific" justification, the "democratization" of rhetoric.

As Hobbes was writing, a dominant conception of democracy was what Sir Thomas Elyot (1967) referred to as the *Popularis potentia*, or "the rule of the comminaltie" (10). Elyot had in mind, no doubt, Aristotle's association of democracy with the "commons" or the poor. Democracy entailed the political power of the poor. Or, as the "divine right" theorist Robert Filmer (1991) wrote in 1680, but a few decades after Hobbes had reached the apogee of his career with *Leviathan*, democracy is "nothing else than the power of the multitude" (6). Importantly, Hobbes depicts the formation of the covenant in the state of nature as essentially democratic in this sense, portraying the multitude of "poor, nasty, and brutish" folk, in a moment of epiphany, come together in a compact to form a *civitas* (*L*, chaps. 13–14; *DC*, chap. 7). Democracy, which Hobbes repeatedly portrays as precariously near to falling back into a state of nature, is so fragile, it seems, because it most closely resembles in form the originary primitive condition (see Tuck 1993, 310–311). So too the prevalence of oratory in Hobbes's picture of democracy stems from this primitive imaginary, where there is a natural ubiquity of psychagogic suasion.

Hobbes thus overcame a humanist conception of rhetoric by disassociating rhetoric from civil *scientia* and therefore from deliberative forms of human action about which one can and should make qualitative political, and indeed moral, distinctions. Against the Ciceronian picture of an *eloquentia* that transforms human nature, Hobbes naturalized oratorical suasion by presenting it as a diffuse human capacity available to those without "art." But here it is important to add that Hobbes naturalized oratory according to a theory of nature quite at odds with similar ancient Greek conceptions of suasive power—such as the one represented by Callicles in Plato's *Gorgias*.

Callicles’s arguments rest on a theory of nature wherein it is possible to clearly distinguish between the strong and the weak, the naturally superior and naturally inferior (Plato 2001, 483d–e). Hobbes disavows this theory of nature, arguing to the contrary that in the state of nature all are roughly equal and that whatever natural weaknesses one human might have relative to another are compensated for by counter strengths (*L*, chap. 15). In this way, Hobbes does not merely naturalize rhetoric but democratizes it, and so critiques the Ciceronian tradition of rhetoric by removing the necessary political conditions for rhetorical practice from an elitist republican province, where men of goodwill move “the people” to a democratic province where “the people” excessively exercise their natural oratorical prowess. Hobbes’s work in this way presages the modern tradition of linking rhetoric to democracy.

But this democratization of rhetoric portended as well the paradox of a democratized rhetoric. If Hobbes overcame a humanistic conception of rhetoric by recasting the proper political province of rhetoric from an elitist one to a democratic one where “the people” themselves are tasked with the ongoing project of self-preservation, that latter task culminated for Hobbes naturally and politically (or artificially) in submission, obedience, and assent. For as Hobbes’s political subjects always carry with them the liberty to resist or disobey, if they deem their own self-preservation is threatened, the work of obedience is continual and in a certain sense active (Tuck 1993, 309; Skinner 2008, 158). And this work is decidedly rhetorical—that is, concerned with public speech, especially *restraining* public speech in the name of public order. Indeed, the real tension in Hobbes’s approach to rhetoric is not his “rhetoric against rhetoric” but that it brought with it, by virtue of its democratization, the burden of controlling speech. For Hobbes this is resolved in the artificial production of political speechlessness—awe before the political sovereign and his laws. The counteracting counterpart to ubiquitous commanding forms of speech is for Hobbes a singular, controlling, sovereign speech act.

Hobbes suggests that the logical product of radically democratizing rhetoric is not to teach citizens how to invent arguments, develop public character, and so on—all those ideals of humanistic rhetoric. Rather, it is learning how to contain one’s own and others’ natural and artificial propensities for suasive speech. Indeed, by rendering rhetoric democratic, the pedagogical priority becomes learning how *not* to use the instrument. I do not think this is an irony peculiar to Hobbes. I think it is, historically speaking, endemic to modern democratic cultures and their educational institutions. It is seen in the problem of demagoguery, which, as Patricia Roberts-Miller (2008) has discussed, motivates a multitude of democratic counterrhetorics, or rhetorics against rhetoric. It is seen as well in worries about mass communication, mass psychology, and the masses. And, indeed, it is seen in a version of the “humanistic” focus on the conjunction of ethics and politics in speech that Gehrke chronicles (and criticizes). Hobbes shows

us how controlling speech—whether through law, through rhetorics against rhetoric, or through some other disciplinary means—is a logical conclusion and practical project that can be, and indeed has been, drawn from the democratization of rhetoric.

## NOTES

1. As I will be regularly referring to several of Hobbes's texts, in parenthetically citing them I use an abbreviated title and page number format, where *L* represents *Leviathan*, *DC* represents *On the Citizen* (an English translation of *De Cive*), *DH* represents *On Man* (an English translation of *De Homine*), *E* represents *Elements of Law*, and *B* represents *A Briefe of the Arte of Rhetorique*. For *De Cive*, in general I rely on the Tuck and Silverthorne translation (Hobbes 1998); however, in some instances, for specific wording I use the translation (apparently falsely) attributed to Hobbes printed in *Man and Citizen* edited by Gert (Hobbes 1991). When using the latter I will note it with the phrase "translation attributed to Hobbes."

2. I note at the outset of my argument here that I do not intend to claim that psychagogia was the *exclusive* source of Hobbes's conception of rhetoric as a manipulative psychological power, primarily affective rather than deliberative in force. As Richard Tuck has argued, Ciceronian ideals were widely challenged in Hobbes's day by a Tacitus-inspired interest in the "techniques of manipulation" in politics. Indeed, such political philosophy, in addition to rhetorical precepts, no doubt shaped Hobbes's approach to suasion. Still, from the perspective of rhetoric's histories it is important to argue that Tacitian teachings alone do not adequately account for Hobbes's account of rhetoric and *eloquentia*. On Hobbes and Tacitian critiques of Cicero in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, see Richard Tuck's introduction to Hobbes's *Leviathan* (Hobbes 1996, xiv–xx), as well as Tuck's (1993) *Philosophy and Government*.

3. See Sorrell (1990) for an extensive discussion of the way in which Hobbes's conception of rhetoric in the *Briefe* represents a departure from Aristotle's conception of rhetoric as the *antistrophos* of dialectic.

4. Hobbes's poor view of popular audiences is discussed in Johnston (1986, chap. 5). Howell (1961) notes that the idea that logic was meant for learned audiences whereas rhetoric was best for popular audiences was a commonplace of the English Renaissance.

5. Hobbes writes at the opening of *Leviathan*, "NATURE (the Art whereby God hath made and governes the World) is by the *Art* of man, as in many other things, so in this also imitated, that it can make an Artificial Animal" (9). Hobbes here seems to be saying that art imitates nature—in keeping, for example, with Sidney's (1989) general argument in the *Defence of Poesy*, lines 157–201. However, the rest of the paragraph makes clearer what this opening line suggests: human artifice imitates God's artifice, which means that humans imitate God. This line of thinking, of course, would have been quite familiar to Christian Europe, given biblical notion of the *imago dei*, but Hobbes asserts it in a somewhat unorthodox fashion to justify the construction of the "COMMON-WEALTH, or STATE (in latine CIVITAS) which is but an Artificial Man; though of greater stature and strength than the Naturall, for whose protection and defence it was intended" (*L*, 9).

6. See Zappen (1983, 75–78).

7. Karl R. Wallace (1967) notes that Bacon does not share the assumption of Pico della Mirandola that the imagination was "more mindlike than sensory." Pico described the imagination as working alongside reason to perform broader cognitive operations (72). Bacon, on the other hand, saw the imagination merely as a kind of sensory register, upon which reason could operate, but not that which reason organically operated with.

8. Bacon's reading of Aristotle in this regard was not entirely strained. As Hawhee (2011) and O'Gorman (2005) each show, *pathê* and *phantasia* played a vital role in Aristotle's account of the topics in the *Rhetoric*.

9. The argument I make here is itself not about Hobbes's historical development—that is, I am not interested in arguing that at some historical point he "broke" with history in favor of science. Rather, it is philosophical in nature: conceptually, I argue that Hobbes's approach to rhetoric is fundamentally scientific. For two different discussions of science and history in Hobbes, see Skinner (1996, chaps. 6–8) and Johnston (1986, chaps. 1–2).

10. The aspects of physics are listed in the introduction to *De Cive* as “Time, Place, Cause, Power, Relation, Proportion, Quantity, Figure, and Motion;” and of the study of “man” as “imagination, memory, understanding, reasoning, appetite, will, Good and Evil, Moral and Immoral, and other such topics” (13).

11. See Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1359b, 10–15. See *Leviathan*, chapter 15, p. 107, for one instance of Hobbes’s refutation of the “political animal” thesis of Aristotle.

12. Consequently, Hobbes is able to present speech as but the first and foremost step in a technological continuity that passes through writing and culminates in his own day in printing (*L*, 24). Each is a human word invention, each an expression of the human will to signify.

13. This is a consequence of Hobbes’s nominalism. “Error,” he says, can occur apart from speech, but not falsity, for error is a matter of miscalculation—which can happen, it seems, in mental discourse apart from speech (*L*, 36)—whereas falsity depends on the additional attribution of meaning possible only through speech.

14. Indeed, Hobbes goes so far as to suggest that such copiousness is a product of God’s judgment at Babel, where not only the “diversity of Tongues” erupted but these tongues over time “grew every where more copious” (*L*, 25).

15. Indeed, parataxis, as Harwood (1986, 28) has shown, is a form of rhetorical addition of which Hobbes is fond.

16. I realize that *consent* is a term of controversy in democratic theory. The basic distinction I am drawing here between *consent* and *assent* need not take up these controversies. A Hobbesian sense of assent is virtually unqualified in its submission (save for a direct threat to one’s own life). In contrasting to this Hobbesian sense of democratic “consent” I mean only to point to the way in which submission in a democracy, whether to a law, a state authority, or an election result, is always qualified. Laws are sometimes broken in the name of democracy, authorities defied, and election results deemed “undemocratic.” Hobbes writes in the *Leviathan* that all political societies depend on arbitrators, the judgments of which must stand (32–33); true enough. But the *way* in which those judgments stand constitutes a critical difference between more democratic and more authoritarian societies.

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