

Hobbes and Kant: Materialism and Rhetoric

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Abstract. This article examines the subtle nuances of Hobbes's and Kant's perspectives on rhetoric and materialism, contextualising them within the broader framework of political philosophy. Despite both philosophers being critics of rhetoric, their approaches exhibit notable divergences. Hobbes, who advocated for monarchy, criticized rhetoric from the perspective of a materialist anthropology influenced by Lucretius. However, he paradoxically employed rhetorical strategies in his new *scientia civilis*. Despite critiquing both Lucretian materialism and rhetoric, Kant incorporated certain rhetorical elements compatible with his philosophical framework, particularly in relation to Epicureanism. This study analyses their interpretations of *paradiastole* and the implications for the political thought. The argument is that both thinkers, in seeking a rational foundation for the political order, anchor their notions of rationality in Epicurean materialism, by reconfiguring rhetorical elements to suit their respective philosophies. The article elucidates Kant's republican proclivities and his aspiration to maximize the citizens' autonomy, which contrasts with Hobbes's monarchical orientation. This research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the early modern political thought and its relevance to the contemporary republican and democratic theory.

Keywords: Rhetoric, Materialism, Hobbes, Kant, Epicureanism

Hobbes'as ir Kantas: materializmas ir retorika

Santrauka. Šiame straipsnyje tiriama subtilūs Hobbes'o ir Kanto požiūrių į retoriką ir materializmą skirtumai, žvelgiant į juos platesniame politinės filosofijos kontekste. Nors abu šie filosofai buvo retorikos kritikai, tarp jų požiūrių išryškėja esminių skirtumų. Hobbes'as, būdamas monarchijos šalininkas, paveiktas Lukrecijaus, kritikavo retoriką iš materialistinės, antropologijos perspektyvos. Paradoksalu, tačiau jis pasitelkė retorines strategijas savo naujajame *scientia civilis*. Kantas, nors ir kritikuodamas tiek Lukrecijaus materializmą, tiek ir retoriką, į savo filosofijos perspektyvą integravo kai kuriuos suderinamus retorinius elementus, visų pirma susijusius su epikūrizmo tradicija. Šiame straipsnyje tiriama, kaip du aptariamieji filosofai traktuoja *paradiastole* ir kokias pasekmes jų interpretacija turi jų politinei minčiai. Iškeliamas argumentas, kad abu mąstytojai, ieškodami racionalaus pamato politinei tvarkai, savąjį racionalumo sąvokos interpretavimą įtvirtina epikūrietiškame materializme, perkonfigūruodami retorinius elementus taip, kaip būtų patogų jų filosofijai. Straipsnyje išsiaiškinama, kad Kantas yra linkęs į respublikoniškas politines pažiūras; jis siekia kuo labiau padidinti piliečių autonomiją. Tai kategoriškai skiriasi nuo Hobbes'o orientacijos į monarchinę valdymo struktūrą. Šis tyrimas prisideda prie labiau niuansuoto suvokimo apie ankstyvąją Naujųjų laikų politinę mintį bei jos aktualumą šiuolaikinei respublikoniškai bei demokratinei teorijai.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: retorika, materializmas, T. Hobbes'as, I. Kantas, epikūrizmas

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Introduction

The role of rhetoric in republicanism has been a subject of intense debate throughout history. From the classical republicanism of Cicero to the emergence of modern republicanism in the works of Machiavelli and others, rhetoric has been both a defining feature and a point of contention within this political philosophy. In this context, the critiques of rhetoric offered by Kant and Hobbes emerge as particularly significant, despite their seemingly disparate positions on the political spectrum.

Kant, notably the first German-language writer to employ the term *Republikanismus* (Dann 2002), and Hobbes, whose political alignment has been variously characterised as anti-republican, and staunchly monarchist, both levelled fierce criticisms against rhetoric. Their scepticism towards rhetorical practices stemmed from concerns about its potential for manipulation and its perceived threat to the rational political discourse.

This article seeks to examine the anthropological and linguistic factors that underpin Kant's and Hobbes's critiques of rhetoric, by exploring how these criticisms both unite and divide their political philosophies. Despite their shared misgivings about rhetoric, Kant's role as a republican thinker and Hobbes's advocacy for monarchy and development of anti-republican liberal concepts place them at opposite ends of the political spectrum. This work will propose that, while Kant and Hobbes find common ground in their arguments against rhetoric and in certain ideas about sovereignty and citizenship, they diverge significantly in their visions for maximising the citizen freedom within political structures.

To develop this argument, the article will first analyse Hobbes's paradoxical relationship with rhetoric, by examining his explicit critique alongside his implicit use of rhetorical strategies. It will then explore Kant's nuanced approach to rhetoric, by focusing on his criticism of its potential for manipulation while acknowledging his selective incorporation of rhetorical elements, particularly in his engagement with Epicureanism. The concept of *paradiastole* and its philosophical implications will be examined through the lens of both thinkers, while highlighting their differing interpretations.

Finally, I will contextualise Kant's and Hobbes's views on rhetoric within their broader political philosophies, by examining the complex interrelationship between rhetorical critique, materialism, and political thought in the 17th and 18th century discourse. By doing so, this article aims to contribute to the ongoing scholarly debate on the role of rhetoric in the political theory and to offer new insights into the philosophical underpinnings of Kant's and Hobbes's enduring influence on the political thought.¹

Rhetoric in Hobbes's Work

This section examines the intricate and contradictory relationship between Thomas Hobbes and rhetoric, analysing the ways in which his critique of rhetorical practices is interwoven

¹ As I intend to show, this is recognized, among others, by Garsten (2006), but with the difference that he will not acknowledge the incorporation of elements from the tradition of Quintilian and Cicero in Kant.

with his own deployment of rhetorical strategies. This section will commence with an examination of Hobbes's initial stance against rhetoric, as elucidated in Skinner's work. Particular attention will be devoted to Hobbes's reaction to the Renaissance culture of argumentation *in utramque partem*. Subsequently, the apparent contradiction in Hobbes's approach will be addressed, with due acknowledgement of both the potential dangers and the indispensable role of rhetoric. The discussion will then move on to an analysis of Hobbes's critique of the classical republican citizenship and its reliance on rhetoric. This will be followed by an examination of his own employment of rhetorical techniques, with a particular focus on conceptual redescription. Finally, I shall examine the frequently neglected link between Hobbes's perspective on rhetoric and his materialist philosophy. I will draw on Struve's insights to elucidate how Hobbes's rhetorical theory is anchored in a biological and psychophysiological framework.² This analysis will set the stage for our subsequent examination of Kant's critique of rhetoric in the following section.

In his seminal study, Skinner (1996: 6) posits that Hobbes's perspective on rhetoric was shaped by the Renaissance culture that pervaded England during that era (Skinner 1996: 67). However, Skinner also notes that, in *The Elements of Law* (1928) and *De Cive* (1983), Hobbes was reacting against a culture that valued a form of argumentation that made it impossible to determine unequivocally in the public political debate the semantic meaning of the relevant concepts. This was because argumentation was understood in *utramque partem*, that is, as inherent in its essence, to possess a polemical and polysemic character. This, in Hobbes's view, helped to fuel the social conflict:

Nor is this fault in the *Man*, but in the nature it selfe of *Eloquence*, whose end (as all the Masters of Rhetorick teach us) is not truth (except by chance) but victory, and whose property is not to inform, but to allure. (Hobbes 1983: 137)

But an *aporia* arises in Hobbes's work: rhetoric is dangerous, but it is indispensable. In *Leviathan* (1994), Hobbes argues that the persuasive power of rhetoric would be revived and, therefore, abandoning it would be impossible. The strength of rhetoric lies in its ability to galvanise the human passions and will, a field in which logic would be sterile and ineffective. Thus, there is a Hobbes who is critical of eloquence in argumentation *utramque partem* and its potential social effects, and one who, in the interests of establishing a *scientia civilis*, demands the use of both reason and rhetoric and seeks to use the power of rhetoric to the benefit of reason (Bustamante 2021: 301–302). In this sense, Hobbes returns to the Ciceronian tradition of *ratio atque eloquentia* – that is, of putting the power of oratory at the service of winning an audience for the dictates of reason (Skinner 1996: 346).

Hobbes's view of rhetoric is ultimately a critique of the notion of citizenship in the classical republican tradition, which was inextricably linked to the use of rhetoric as a means of expression in the public space, assigning to the citizen an interpretative capacity regarding what is desirable or undesirable in civil life:

² For a more detailed development of this topic, see Bustamante (2021).

The Principles of Rhetorique out of which Enthymemes are to be drawne; are the common opinions that men have concerning Profitable, and Unprofitable; Just, and Unjust, Honourable and Dishonourable; which are the points in the severall kinds of Orations questionable. (Hobbes 1986: 41)

In this tradition, the citizen who used eloquence and oratory in public life was an active social agent, a subject *sui juris* (Wirszubski 1950).³ In attacking rhetoric in *De Cive*, Hobbes points to the notion of the *vir civilis* (La Bua 2019),⁴ the ideal citizen who uses oratory to participate in the public life, as espoused in the Renaissance ideal of *scientia civilis*. Hobbes, through conceptual decomposition, irony and logic, is interested in demolishing the notion of an active civic life lived through rhetoric (Skinner 1996: 285–286).

The paradox is that Hobbes criticises rhetoric by using a rhetorical strategy of his own. As Skinner (1996) rightly notes with respect to Hobbes's strategy of using rhetoric to his advantage, his approach involves conceptual redescription. The argumentative power of this strategy lies in its ability to arouse the passions of the audience, who must be won over through imagery and emotion rather than through the enunciative structure of the argument. The key element in winning over the passions of an audience is eloquence and, within this, *ornatus*:

Now, eloquence is twofold. The one is an elegant, and cleare expression of the conceptions of the mind, and riseth partly from the contemplation of the things themselves, partly from an understanding of words taken in their own proper, and definite signification; the other is a commotion of the Passions of the minde (such as are hope, fear, anger, pittie) and derives from a metaphoricall use of words fitted to the Passions: That forms a speech from true Principles, this from opinions already received, what nature soever they are of. (Hobbes 1983: 154)

Hobbes sees rhetoric as a two-sided coin: it poses dangers when used in *utramque partem* (Ballacci 2017: 157), but it also presents an opportunity to support his new *scientia civilis* – which he does by redescribing the meaning of liberty.

I argue that the description and analysis of rhetoric in Hobbes's work has not always taken proper account of the link with his materialism. According to Nancy Struever (2009), in the 17th century, life could be understood through one of two prisms: the non-exclusivist Aristotelian theory of the continuity of the bond between humans and other animals, and the Cartesian dualist view that refuted this continuity. Hobbes aligns himself with a kind of unorthodox Aristotelianism. His materialism manifests itself in, among other things, the defining questions of deliberation and freedom. The nature of what determines deliberation – which derives from an alternating series of desires and aversions – has a biological dimension. This explains why, for Hobbes, beasts also deliberate. The additional, non-biological factor is historical and social experience. In Hobbes's materialistic view,

³ In the Roman republican tradition, the term *sui juris* implied the possession of individual rights and, as opposed to subjection to the arbitrary will of another, was a central element of freedom interpreted as non-servitude. As Wirszubski (1950) pointed out, Roman *libertas* consisted of the capacity to possess rights and the absence of subjection with respect to Civil Law.

⁴ On the importance of rhetoric in education based on the principle of *vir civilis*, see Giuseppe La Bua (2019).

the will is interpreted as the ultimate desire or aversion, as an active process leading to X or Y. This implies that beasts also have a will. Consequently, the so-called deliberation would not be an autonomous exercise of reason, but rather the result of the oscillation of the passion.⁵

Struever (2009) argues that Hobbes's rhetoric implies a view of politics based on biological assumptions, since the force of rhetoric is grounded in the pressure that physiology exerts on psychology, which, in turn, determines the action to be taken. Hobbes's psychophysiological description of deliberation as the oscillation between aversion and desire becomes the very basis of the political practice, a foundation of politics that classifies and underlines the natural mechanics that flow from the physiology-psychology-action interaction (Struever 2009: 37–38; Bustamante 2021: 300). Thus, as an internal effect on individuals, rhetoric would not be separable from deliberation.

For Hobbes, freedom can never escape passion: rational action, free from the influence of appetites and passions, is impossible. I agree with Struever that Hobbes's critique of rhetoric and his use of it evidence a convergence of Aristotelian materialism and the Latin tradition, as in the work of Quintilian (1996), for whom the rhetorical skill *par excellence* was to arouse passions.

After the discussion of rhetoric in Hobbes's work, our focus in the next section will be on Kant's critique of rhetoric.

Kant's critique and the incorporation of rhetoric

This section examines the complex relationship between Kant's critique of rhetoric and his critical reception of Epicureanism. This section begins with an examination of Francesco Verde's (2010) analysis of the dual sources of Kant's engagement with Epicureanism. Verde's (2010) analysis encompasses both Kant's critique of 'materialistic dogmatism' and his appreciation of Epicurean anticipations of categorical structure. Subsequently, we shall examine Kant's specific criticisms of rhetoric, particularly its perceived manipulation of human passions. However, our analysis will then shift to consider Kant's acknowledgment of non-rational elements in human character, as exemplified by his treatment of the 'humorous manner'. Subsequently, I will examine the potential compatibility between Kantian philosophy and the rhetorical theory, as evidenced by Theremin's (1872) defence of rhetoric. Finally, I will analyse Kant's subtle differentiation between poetry and rhetoric. I will conclude by examining how certain rhetorical techniques, such as *paradiastole*, can be accommodated within Kant's philosophical framework despite his general scepticism towards rhetoric.

Verde's (2010) work points to two different sources for Kant's reception of Epicureanism. The first is the critique of what Kant himself designated as 'materialistic dogmatism',

⁵ Struever (2009: 37–38) draws on several passages from Hobbes, including: "[T]his alternate succession of appetites, aversions, hopes and fears is no less in other living creatures than in man, and therefore beasts also deliberate" (Hobbes 1994: 33). See: Chapter VI of the *Leviathan* (1994) and *The Elements of Law* (1928).

a term that could allude to authors such as Lucretius but which does not exclude the idea that Kant's notion of the sublime is under Lucretian influence. The second source, on the contrary, is Kant's perception of the Epicurean tradition as anticipating his own theory of categorial structure. This is linked to Kant's interpretation of *prolepsis*: "Yet the procedure of critique itself, the view of the canon and prolepsis in the CPR, as well as that of pleasure and Gemüt in CJ, are taken directly from Epicurus" (Caygill 2000: 226). Kant uses the term 'anticipation' to translate Epicurus's *prolepsis*, which designates the preconception that enables perception (Caygill 2000). Kant separates the accidental qualities – colour, taste, etc. – of an empirical act of sensation from the anticipation that each sensation will possess a degree of reality. This is the only quality that can be assumed *a priori* and forms the basis for the subsequent assignment of empirical quality. As a condition for perceiving accidental qualities, in Kant's reading, *prolepsis*, as anticipation, would have the capacity to anticipate material experience.

Significantly, Kant's critique seems to assume that rhetoric functions on a Lucretian material corporeal structure, which is a dogmatic form of materialism. To put it differently, words have the capacity to arouse passions:

Rhetoric, insofar as by that is understood the art of persuasion, i.e., of deceiving by means of beautiful illusion (as an *ars oratoria*), and not merely skill in speaking (eloquence and style), is a dialectic, which borrows from the art of poetry only as much as is necessary to win minds over to the advantage of the speaker before they can judge and to rob them of their freedom. (Kant 2001: 204)

For Kant, this is precisely what the speaker is trying to do: to win over the minds of the audience before they can judge what he is saying, which is why, for Kant, it is a robbery of the audience's freedom, because it ends up being a convened audience without any real autonomy. For him, this would explain the amoral character of rhetoric:

Eloquence and wellspokenness (together, rhetoric) belong to beautiful art; but the art of the orator (*ars oratoria*), as the art of using the weakness of people for one's own purposes (however well intentioned or even really good these may be) is not worthy of any respect at all. (Kant 2001: 205fn)

But Kant recognises the value of non-rational aspects in the character of individuals. He argues that the humorous or *Laune* manner, as a mental disposition or attunement to affective moods and the changes they undergo, does not necessarily distort the view of the world actually described but may help to reveal it in a way "contrary to the usual judgement":

The humorous manner may also be ranked as a thing which in its enlivening influence is clearly allied to the gratification provoked by laughter. It belongs to originality of spirit, though not to the talent for fine art. Humour, in a good sense, means the talent for being able to put oneself at will into a certain frame of mind in which everything is judged on lines that do not follow the beaten track (quite the reverse in fact) and yet on lines that follow certain principles, rational in the case of such a mental temperament. (Kant 2008: 164)

Moreover, although the judgement resulting from a changing affective disposition of mind may be contrary to the normal view of things, it need not be considered exclusively as being ‘in accordance’ with reason. Kant’s discussion of the humorous manner concedes, at the very least, that moods can be affective as well as rational.

As for Kant’s approach to rhetoric, Abbott (2007: 274–292) argues that Theremin’s (1872) own attack on Kant for his critique of rhetoric highlights in Theremin the possibilities and compatibilities of a Kantian rhetoric. Abbott further notes that, surprisingly, Theremin’s defence of rhetoric against Kant employs Kant’s own philosophy. This defence begins with his search for a single *a priori* principle on which to base his theory of rhetoric (Abbott 2007). As in Kant’s own search for a single principle of morality, Theremin discovers this principle in human freedom, which leads him to declare respect for the autonomy of others as the ‘supreme law’ of eloquence (Abbott 2007). Speakers have a duty to adapt the specific and transitory issues of a controversy to the fundamental and universal notions of duty, virtue and happiness (Abbott 2007):

This holiness of will is nevertheless a practical idea, which must necessarily serve as a model to which all finite rational beings can only approximate without end and which the pure moral law, itself called holy because of this, constantly and rightly holds before their eyes. (Kant 1997: 29–30)

In *The Critique of the Power of Judgement*, Kant highlights the difference between poetry and rhetoric by equating the latter with the ability to use the free play of the imagination to direct human aspects of understanding:

Rhetoric is the art of conducting a business of the understanding as a free play of the imagination [...] The orator thus announces a matter of business and carries it out as if it were merely a play with ideas in order to entertain the audience. The poet announces merely an entertaining play with ideas, and yet as much results for the understanding as if he had merely had the intention of carrying on its business. (Kant 2001: 198).

Meanwhile, poetry involves using the free play of the imagination as part of the understanding: “The art of poetry is an activity of the sensibility organised by the understanding; rhetoric is a transaction of the understanding animated by sensibility” (Kant 1978: 150). Further on, Kant writes that orators play with ideas in a way that produces an entertaining effect on the audience that is intended to lead to a particular end, which is not the case with the poet (Stroud 2011: 416–438):

But poetic art as contrasted with rhetoric differs from it only by the way understanding and sensibility are mutually subordinated: poetic art is a play of sensibility ordered through understanding; rhetoric is a business of understanding animated through sensibility. However, both the orator and the poet (in the broad sense) are inventors and bring forth out of themselves new forms (combinations of the sensible) in their power of imagination. (Kant 2006: 144)

Kant’s critique of rhetoric seems to be based on his view of materialistic dogmatism, similar to his critique of Lucretian materialism. Quintilian’s (1996) approach to rheto-

ric, however, includes moral elements as essential to conceptual description. This view suggests a speaker with moral virtues in line with Ciceronian rhetoric. These ideas are in line with the Epicurean tradition, where *prolepsis* ensures the recognition of patterns in phenomena and fundamental concepts such as freedom.

Despite his apparent rejection of rhetoric, Kant acknowledges certain praiseworthy aspects. He interprets *paradiastole* as a necessary element of conceptual application to particular contexts, which is connected to the different dispositions of individuals. This suggests that, although Kant criticises rhetoric in general, he recognises the value of some of its techniques, such as *paradiastole*, insofar as they contribute to the understanding and application of concepts in specific contexts.

The *paradiastole* problem

This section examines the rhetorical practice of *paradiastole*, with a particular emphasis on its interpretation by Hobbes and Kant. We commence by delineating the concept as elucidated by Skinner, situating it within the context of the Renaissance rhetoric and its Quintilian roots. The discussion then proceeds to examine the philosophical implications of *paradiastole*, with a particular focus on its influence on perceptions and judgments. This section analyses the manner in which this rhetorical technique intersects with broader questions of empirical judgement and discourse. The focus of this section is on the differing approaches adopted by Hobbes and Kant in their analysis of *paradiastole*. This section investigates Hobbes's nuanced view of *paradiastole* as both a potential danger and a tool for his new *scientia civilis*, particularly in his redescription of freedom. It then examines Kant's perspective, considering how his critique of rhetoric aligns with his broader philosophical positions. By contrasting these interpretations, the aim is to shed light on the complex relationship between rhetoric, philosophy, and political thought in the early modern period.

Paradiastole, a Renaissance rhetorical practice described by Skinner, refers to the reassignment of the meaning of a concept to the point of making it synonymous with its antonym, in the style of Quintilian. This process of conceptual redescription raises several problems, such as the compatibility of descriptions at different levels of specificity and the coexistence of opposing and contradictory definitions at the same level (Tinguely 2015). The central question is how the same object can be described in seemingly incompatible ways, leading to a reflection on the nature of the discourse and the definitions it seeks to elucidate.

The rhetorical tradition is constituted, in a sense, by the recognition that objects or events can support contrasting descriptions. This gives the speaker the power to reorient the perception of an object or action by conceptual redescription, as Hobbes notes: "The received value of names imposed for signification of things, was changed into arbitrary" (Hobbes 1975: 222). Quintilian (1996) exemplifies *paradiastole* as follows: "calling oneself wise instead of cunning, or brave instead of overconfident, or careful instead of parsimonious" (Tinguely 2015: 11). Although this figure of speech is most often used in

moral or evaluative contexts, its application would not be possible without the assumption that objects and situations can be described in contradictory, if not opposite, terms.

The philosophical idea underlying the rhetorical technique of *paradiastolic* redescription is that different conceptual descriptions provoke different perceptual orientations towards an object or scene, thus allowing one and the same event to carry different narrative interpretations. Rhetoric proposes indeterminacy about which terms to use in a given situation, becoming a central element in the philosophical battle over the question of empirical judgement: In order to define this particular phenomenon as X, which concepts must be considered? Therefore, *paradiastole* can be considered a rhetorical representation of the philosophical assertion that there is an intrinsic link between the manner in which an object is described, its outward appearance, and the limitations imposed on linguistic discourse concerning it.

Tinguely (2015) notes that in cases where making an explicit determination about any individual object in the empirical world is tied to implicit claims about the background framework, coming to see an object in the correct light may require a *paradiastolic* redescription of the context in which it is situated. In such cases, disputes about any particular judgement, whether one is experiencing some object or scenario correctly or incorrectly, rightly or wrongly, may take the form of a confrontation to determine the contextual conditions in which the phenomenon appears. This relates to the notion of *pathos*, one of the main modes of rhetoric, which involves a speaker's redescription of an audience's feelings in a given context. To defend the *vir bonus*, speakers, in the version of Quintilian (1996) who writes under the influence of Cicero on this point, need to possess moral conditions.

Hobbes identifies two distinct risks associated with *paradiastole*. On the one hand, it can be seen as a potentially dangerous concept when employed in a manner that is both 'for and against' (Ballacci 2017: 157). However, it also presents an opportunity to reinforce his newly proposed *scientia civilis*. This is achieved by reframing the concept of freedom in a way that aligns with his philosophical outlook. Conversely, Kant's critique of rhetoric appears to be grounded in an understanding that aligns with his critique of Lucretian materialism or materialist dogmatism. Nevertheless, the requisite elements of rhetoric as conditions for *paradiastole* are present in Quintilian's (1996) account, suggesting an orator with moral virtues aligned with the Ciceronian rhetorical tradition. This tradition, in turn, converges with the Epicurean tradition, in which *prolepsis* ensures the perception of regularities in *phenomena* and of fundamental concepts, such as freedom.

Thus, for authors such as Quintilian (1996) and Valla (1982), rhetoric is not merely a technique of communication, but a way of understanding participation and civic life. In this sense, rhetoric is a 'philosophy'. For Quintilian, the idea of the "good man who speaks well" presupposes the moral conditions of the participants in public debate. In that sense, 'truth' for Quintilian advances through a dialogue and debate between 'moral subjects', and not as something that exists externally to the participants of the debate and is discovered by them. It is therefore not surprising that Valla (1982) used Quintilian to demolish metaphysics.

Having explored the concept of *paradiastole* and its philosophical implications through the lenses of Hobbes and Kant, we can now turn to a broader examination of the relationship between rhetoric and politics in their works. This shift allows us to situate their views on *paradiastole* within the larger context of their political philosophies and their engagement with the rhetorical tradition.

Hobbes and Kant: Rhetoric and politics

This section builds upon our previous discussion of *paradiastole*, situating it within the broader context of rhetoric and politics in the works of Hobbes and Kant. In the light of the aforementioned interpretations of this rhetorical device, we now turn to an examination of the intricate interweaving of rhetoric and political thought in the 17th- and 18th-century Europe. We commence by examining the enduring influence of humanist rhetoric on early modern political philosophy, as elucidated by scholars such as Joy Connolly (2007). The discussion then analyses how both Hobbes and Kant, despite their criticisms of certain rhetorical practices (including the potential misuse of *paradiastole*), operate within a tradition that views rhetoric as integral to political knowledge. We examine their sophisticated approaches to rhetoric and materialism, by analysing how these shape their conceptions of rationality and political order. Furthermore, the section addresses the philosophical lineages of their ideas, tracing connections to Epicurean materialism, Stoic thought, and the Roman republican tradition. By examining these various strands, including the role of *paradiastole* in shaping the political discourse, we seek to elucidate the subtle distinctions between Hobbes's and Kant's political philosophies, particularly with regard to their notions of freedom, autonomy, and the role of Law in political society.

Given the importance of rhetoric and materialism in the European political thought in the 17th and 18th centuries, the nuances, differences and distinctions in their treatment of rhetoric and materialism are relevant for assessing the current interpretations of both Hobbes and Kant within political philosophy.

Connolly (2007) highlights that both Hobbes and Kant, while being critical of certain aspects and uses of rhetoric, move within a tradition in which the translation of certain assumptions of rhetoric to the conditions of the moral subject is a fundamental component of political knowledge. This tradition is evidence of the influence of a humanist rhetoric on the early modern political thought, pointing to the importance of this rhetorical legacy as a reflection on the contemporary republican and democratic theory. As Abizadeh (2018) notes, the dichotomy between rhetoric and rationality is also present in contemporary debates on the form of patriotic constitutionalism that should inspire a democratic society.

For both Hobbes and Kant, it could be assumed that a stable political order requires a rational, essentially anti-rhetorical, foundation. I argue that, for both authors, the notion of rationality is anchored in Epicurean materialism and some rhetorical elements that can be understood, in one case, as part of a new civil science, and in the other, as part of the necessary conditions for a communicative morality. Rhetoric, because of its capacity for meaningful symbolism, cannot be ignored for its persuasive capacity. Both authors

reject the abuse of rhetoric (and its consequences), while recognising the impossibility of stabilising and validating language by rational means alone. Since thought and reason are a function of language, language can never escape the conditions that give utterances their perlocutionary character. All knowledge, including mathematics, geometry and logic, can be conceptualised as a semantic network of a contingent nature. These are languages with an intrinsic logical consistency that endow them with a distinctive rationality, characterised by a distinct rhetorical structure. In this sense, all languages of knowledge may be considered rhetorical devices.

A final thought on some of the differences between the two authors, apart from rhetoric and materialism, is worth noting. Arthur Ripstein (2009) argues that Kant's innate right is inscribed in a tradition that Skinner (2008) describes as neo-Roman, since it assumes the structure of the Roman republican tradition of the autonomous subject who is granted the *sui juris* status that allows for autonomy of will and ownership of body and acts, which cannot be said of a slave. In this sense, there is in Kant a convergence of positive freedom, insofar as individuals morally need to bind their autonomous actions to the rules of morality, which necessarily implies mastery over the passions. Politically, however, what safeguards the autonomy of individuals and citizens is the form of Law.

This brings Kant closer to Stoic materialism and its notions of internal justice, which refers to the balance between reason and passion, and external justice, whereby reasoning can enable the application of an idea of universal justice to the political community. In the Roman tradition, the term *sui juris* described a citizen with rights, which one could have only if one was not subject to the arbitrary will of another. As such, *libertas* consisted of the entitlement to rights in the absence of subjection to anything other than the Law, which, in turn, referred to the autonomous members of the political community. It is a notion of freedom that implies both sovereignty and autonomy. The Roman concept of *suae leges*, which corresponds to the Greek *autonomia*, was adopted by Kant himself. Part of Hobbes's design, by contrast, is to show that monarchy does not entail a *regnum* that deprives individuals in the state of *populus subjectus* of their *libertas*. Hobbes establishes connections with the tradition of Seneca, who transfers the concept of *sui juris*, or the right of the free citizen, into *alma juris*. This concept posits that private life is the domain of individual fulfilment, whereas the public sphere and justice are subject to the authority of the sovereign, who serves as the ultimate guarantor of stability. Additionally, as previously mentioned, the sovereign is responsible for upholding the sanctity of private property and the significance of maintaining agreements. In this regard, elements of the Ciceronian tradition persist in Kant that are absent in Hobbes. With regard to the specific point of the *sui juris* necessity of citizens, Hobbes follows in the footsteps of Seneca.

Conclusion

The critical appraisal of rhetoric in the works of both Hobbes and Kant is based on a materialist understanding of human nature. In the absence of this, it would be impossible to account for rhetoric's capacity to evoke emotional responses through the use of language.

Both authors adopt a Lucretian approach to materialism, which provides the conceptual framework for understanding rhetoric in action. However, there are notable differences in their approaches. Hobbes incorporates materialism into the anthropology he defends, whereas Kant seeks an alternative form of materialism, which is also Epicurean-based but incorporates *prolepsis* as a relevant element. This leads Hobbes to not only issue a cautionary note regarding the political and social dangers of rhetoric, but also to contend that rhetoric remains the sole source of the social semantic power. Given the influence of passions on human behaviour, it can be argued that there is no clear distinction between internal rhetoric and deliberation in Hobbes's work.

Kant offers a plausible critique of rhetoric, by arguing that it is based on Lucretian materialism. This critique leads him to reject both Lucretian materialism and rhetoric as sources of amorality and irrationality. Nevertheless, this does not preclude the possibility of the existence of elements of rhetoric that are compatible with the Kantian theory. The Kantian theory incorporates materialist elements, including the concept of *prolepsis* as an anticipation of perception, which bears resemblance to Cicero's own notion of *prolepsis*. It can be assumed that the possibility of a stable political order requires a rational, essentially anti-rhetorical foundation in the works of both Hobbes and Kant. It can be argued that, for both authors, the notion of rationality is anchored in an Epicurean materialist understanding from which certain rhetorical elements are derived and reinterpreted. In one case, this occurs as part of a new civil science, while in the other, it is presented as a necessary condition for communicative morality. It can therefore be argued that rhetoric represents a structure which generates meaningful symbolism, and that, due to its persuasive capacity, it cannot be ignored. Both authors are critical of the misuse of rhetoric and its consequences. However, they acknowledge the limitations of relying on rationality alone to establish the stability and legitimacy of language. As a facilitator of thought and reason, language is constrained by the conditions that allow for the perlocutionary character of an enunciation.

It has been proposed that Kant, in his defence of the "sovereign judgements of critical reason",⁶ offers a critique of rhetoric, suggesting that it has the potential to influence its audience in a manner akin to that of a machine. Kant's recognition of the potential risks associated with rhetoric indicates an acknowledgement of human nature as materialistic and mechanical. Despite the assertions made by the rhetorical theory, the efficacy of rhetoric is contingent upon its alignment with these fundamental aspects of human nature. Meanwhile, scholars have observed that Hobbes, in assuming the power of rhetoric, employs rhetoric itself to combat rhetoric. This interpretation suggests that the divergence between Hobbes and Kant in their critique of rhetoric is limited to the former's utilisation of rhetoric to defend the sovereignty of authority, whereas the latter employs rhetoric to defend a specific conception of freedom. Both would concur in their critique of Ciceronian humanism and would be in agreement that rhetoric is a dangerous phenomenon, given that it has the capacity to move humans in a passionate manner akin to a machine. In accord-

⁶ Regarding this topic, see also Garsten (2006).

ance with Stroud's (2005, 2014) assertions, it is conceivable that certain reconstructions fail to adequately consider the nuances of both authors' perspectives, thereby limiting the potential for a more comprehensive and nuanced interpretation of their critique of rhetoric.

As previously stated, the objective of this article is to examine the anthropological and linguistic elements that situate Kant and Hobbes at opposing points on the political philosophy spectrum with Kant being a republican, and Hobbes being an advocate of monarchy and an architect of anti-republican liberal concepts. It is noteworthy that the recent resurgence of the republican tradition has not acknowledged Kant as a precursor. Despite the similarities between Kant's arguments against rhetoric and his ideas about sovereignty and the citizen and Hobbes's own positions, there is a crucial distinction between the two in terms of their intentions. Kant aimed to achieve the maximum freedom of all citizens in a future republic structured by a constitution founded on the principle of liberty, whereas Hobbes did not advocate for such an ideal.

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