Knowledge is Memory, or, Finding Hobbes’s Plato

Aidan Fusco | ORCID: 0009-0000-4809-9132
Researcher, Department of History, University College London, London, UK
aidan.fusco.20@ucl.ac.uk

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Abstract

This article attempts to identify Hobbes’s reading and understanding of Plato’s writings by looking at the first seven direct references to Platonic dialogues in the Hobbesian corpus, which range from 1629–42, including Hobbes’s unpublished manuscript writings. By analysing these references it is determined that Hobbes is likely to have had first hand knowledge of Plato, from a Latin and/or Greek edition of Plato’s complete works. The references to Plato’s works in Hobbes’s writings are eclectic and philological for the most part, and serve to demonstrate the depth and range of his reading of Plato. It is only by 1642 that Hobbes makes a clear statement of his commitment to a Platonic principle, viz. that knowledge is memory. In the second half of the article I shall then argue that this principle is a foundational aspect of Hobbes’s philosophy, and that its Platonic origins thus help us to understand both Hobbes’s philosophical system and the different ways in which an “Oxford Platonism” emerged in the seventeenth century.

Keywords

Introduction

Thomas Hobbes calls Plato the ‘best philosopher of the Greeks’ (ew iii, 668) in Leviathan (1651). A few years later Plato appears as ‘the best of the ancient philosophers’ (ew vii, 346) in Hobbes’s Six Lessons (1656). Aristotle, on the other hand, is treated scornfully by Hobbes in the very texts where Plato is praised. It must be said then that Plato appears to have some special significance for Hobbes’s estimation of ancient texts. But scholars hitherto have had little to say about Hobbes’s precise reading of and engagement with Plato. In the introduction to her 2008 critical edition of Hobbes’s Historia ecclesiastica (posthumously published in 1688), Patricia Springborg observes that the impact of Platonism on Hobbes’s writings has been ‘systematically underestimated.’ We have very little understanding of which Platonic dialogues Hobbes may have read, let alone what he may have thought of them. With the notable exception of Karl Schuhmann, who was the first to identify some of the examples are listed below, no historian has attempted to characterise the range and depth of Hobbes’s reading of Plato’s dialogues.

1 By ‘direct reference’ I mean an occasion in which it is indisputable that Hobbes is referring to Plato, either because he cites a Platonic dialogue or a concept otherwise strongly associated with Plato (like amensesis).

2 References to the Molesworth edition of the English Works are given bracketed as ew, and to the Molesworth Opera Latina as ol. Similarly, Stephanus numbers are given bracketed within the text. Whenever I provide my own translation of a text I footnote the original for comparison, otherwise I indicate the translator of the text. I have opted to translate Plato not from the original Greek. Instead, I have hoped to preserve something of the Renaissance sensibility of Plato by translating from Jean de Serres’s (alias Serranus) and Ficino’s Latin translations of Plato’s complete works. In the case of the Serranus translation, there is only one edition (of 1578, in three volumes). It is the Greek of this edition that to which the Stephanus numbers refer. With Ficino, there are many editions of his translation of the complete works to choose from, and so I have chosen the bilingual edition nearest in time to the period in which Hobbes is writing.

3 For example, on the following page (ew iii 669), we hear that ‘I believe that scarce anything can be more absurdly said in natural philosophy, than that which is now called Aristotle’s Metaphysics; nor more repugnant to government, than much of what he hath said in his Politics, nor more ignorantly, than a great part of his Ethics.’


5 Cf. Karl Schuhmann, ‘Hobbes and the Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle’ in Selected Papers on Renaissance Philosophy and on Thomas Hobbes, eds Piet Steenbakkers and Cees Leijenhorst (Dordrecht, 2004), 191–218. Schuhmann claims that Hobbes only refers twice explicitly to Plato’s dialogues, in the Elements and in the Tractatus Opticus ii. He is aware of the references to Plato in De cive and in Hobbes’s De motu, Loco, et Tempore (which is not discussed in this article) but does not believe that they came from first-hand reading of Plato. The references to Plato in Hobbes’s biography of Thucydides and in the Briefe and its Chatsworth ms original are not mentioned in Schuhmann’s list.
Renaissance philosophers who engaged in depth with Marsilio Ficino (who is perhaps the figure most responsible for the revival of Plato in the Renaissance) such as Tommaso Campanella have featured prominently in studies of Hobbes's philosophy by Karl Schuhmann and Gianni Paganini. But those philosophers have principally been considered in those articles in the context of their Hermeticism rather than their relationship with Platonism. The same is true of Taming the Leviathan (2007), where Jon Parkin has illuminated the polemical relationship between Hobbes and leading members of the so-called Cambridge Platonists, such as Henry More and Ralph Cudworth. But he has had little to say about Hobbes's engagement with Plato himself. Recently, in the world of political science, Teresa Bejan has suggested a Platonic reading of the theory of education espoused in Leviathan. However, the very introduction in which Springborg identifies this lacuna remains the only tentative step towards a general historical survey of Hobbes's relationship with the writings of Plato.

What follows is a catalogue of what I believe to be the first seven references to specific passages of Plato's dialogues in Hobbes's works. In every case I try to show what the passage referred to is, and how Hobbes may have encountered it and used it for his own purposes. The catalogue begins with his translation of Thucydides in 1629 and ends with his De cive in 1642. It must be noted that the final reference to Plato treated here is by no means the last occasion on which Hobbes alludes to a specific passage of the Plato's writings. I end my catalogue of references at this point because there is, I contend, a suggestive conceptual difference between the reference to Plato in 1642 and the ones that precede it, and that difference requires explanation. The references to Plato before De cive are eclectic and are more philological than philosophical. It is their variety that makes them so useful as evidence of the range and depth of Hobbes's reading of Plato. But it is also that very quality that means that it is impossible to describe a single Platonic argument stretching from 1629 to the penultimate reference listed here, in Third Set of Objections in 1641. However, the proposition attributed to Plato in De cive, viz. that knowledge is memory, is, I shall argue, a foundational and Platonic element of Hobbes's philosophical system. A

7 Jon Parkin, Taming the Leviathan (Cambridge, 2007), 197–9.
consistent and novel reinterpretation of Hobbes’s corpus as a whole can be derived from the connection of Hobbes with Platonic anamnesis. It is thus, of all the Platonic topics treated here, the most significant for understanding Hobbes’s philosophy at large and represents, arguably, the culmination of those decades of reading Plato into a single philosophical point.

I have only included in this list only places where Hobbes either names Plato’s writings or otherwise refers to a specific phrase, concept, or individual strongly associated with them. What is left is a body of accurate references to a wide range of exclusively authentic Platonic dialogues. This is in itself unusual, as English Platonism (at least insofar as it can be represented by the Plato that was printed in England) at that time relied in large part on Pseudo-Platonic works. The simplest explanation for Hobbes’s accuracy is that he had direct access to a reliable edition of Plato, in Greek or Latin (and most likely both).

Plato in Hobbes’s England

Certainly, Hobbes was a skilled humanist translator with Greek and Latin learning, and had the ability to navigate not just Plato’s texts, in the original or in translation, but also the countless Renaissance commentaries and commonplace books, which featured sentences from Plato on almost every topic with which he is concerned. However, Hobbes could not reliably derive an authentic and accurate body of Platonic sentences from commonplaces and commentaries alone for the simple reason that he would not have been able to discern the accurate sentences from the frequent misattributions without at least some first-hand knowledge of Plato.

For most of Hobbes’s life very few Platonic dialogues were printed in England. In 1587, the year before his birth, an edition of the Menexenus was printed for Thomas Thomas. This was the first time an authentic Platonic dialogue had ever been printed in England, (and the first time a Greek text of any kind was ever printed at Cambridge.) Thomas Thomas’s Menexenus presents Plato’s Greek without any translation. There are a few brief marginal notes and a slim Latin argumentum, in which the text is called an ‘exhortation to love and protection of fatherland.’ Nothing but the contents of the funerary

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10 The rare glimpses that we have into the Tudor Oxford university classroom, such as John Rainolds’s lectures on Aristotle’s rhetoric, suggest that in some quarters of Oxford at least there was a much livelier and deeper engagement with than the printed materials from the period suggest.

11 Thomas Thomas in Menexenus (Cambridge, 1587): ‘Continet Menexenus Exhortationem ad patriam amandam atque colendam.’
oration within the dialogue are considered in the *argumentum*. Indeed, that the *Menexenus* is a dialogue is not mentioned at all in the critical apparatus. The work is treated instead as an exemplar of Greek oratory. Amazingly, the second time an authentic Platonic dialogue would be printed in England was almost a century later, in the final decade of Hobbes’s life, with the printing of a selection of dialogues in the Greek and Latin edition of the *Platonis de rebus divinis dialogi selecti* (1673). In France, by contrast, over a hundred different editions of authentic works by Plato were printed from 1485 to 1603. In her article on ‘Thomas Jackson, Oxford Platonist, and William Twisse, Aristotelian’, Sarah Hutton suggests that ‘[i]t was not until the mid-seventeenth century […] that any native English Platonic philosophy appeared.’ Moreover, this philosophy, as Hutton notes, is generally associated with Cambridge. In Oxford, Corpus Christi College appears to have been an oasis of the continental Platonic revival between the late sixteenth and mid-seventeenth centuries. Joseph Mede, Benjamin Whichcote, and, as we shall see, John Rainolds, are all figures with considerable knowledge of Platonism connected with that college. Other figures connected with Oxford whom Hobbes knew personally, such as Robert Burton and Lord Herbert of Cherbury, were also well read in Plato in much the same way that Hobbes was. Unfortunately, we know very little about what kind of education Hobbes received during his time at Magdalen Hall at the start of the seventeenth century, but it is very likely that conversations there were the seeds of the interest in Plato that occupies his later writing. That Hobbes’s engagement with Plato does not look like that of the “Cambridge Platonists” is one of the reasons, I believe, that we have overlooked it. In the 1620s when Hobbes first wrote about Plato there was not an established English Platonism for him to argue for or against. A figure of Hobbes’s startling originality and eccentric temperament would have been capable of employing Plato and Ficino in ways that appear strange to us. In 1642, as we shall see, Hobbes uses Plato’s theory of recollection to defend his own nominalism. Plainly, this does not mean that Hobbes thinks of Plato as being a nominalist but rather shows his capacity to isolate a singular Platonic concept and integrate into his own, nominalist philosophical system.

However, from an English perspective the gap in printed Platonic dialogues between 1587 and 1673 may not have been obvious. In 1592 Edmund Spenser published his English translation (from Herman Rayan’s Latin edition of 1568)

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14 Hutton, *Oxford Platonist*, 635.
of Xenocrates's dialogue, the *Axiochus*, under the doubly misleading title\(^\text{16}\) of *Axiochus. A most excellent dialogue, written in Greeke by Plato the philosophe*. This effort was mirrored by Mary Sidney, who in 1607 published her *Six excellent treatises of life and death*, an English version of Philippe de Mornay's popular French translation of Xenocrates's dialogue in his *Discours de la vie et de la mort* (1585). The 1607 edition introduces the work somewhat carelessly as ‘[a] Dialogue, written by PLATO, or by some other heathen Philosopher’\(^\text{17}\). The *Axiochus* had been identified as Pseudo-Platonic by Marsilio Ficino himself 1484.\(^\text{18}\) The writers of these texts, however, either lacked access to continental philological developments or (as is more likely) were concerned with Plato in literary rather than philological terms.

At the same time, Plato routinely featured as a source of commonplaces on a variety of subjects in English florilegia. In many cases these quotations were Pseudo-Platonic and came from some other classical or even biblical source. A significant florilegium for the Elizabethan understanding of Plato was Aelius Claudius's *Varia historia*, translated into English in 1576 by Abraham Fleming under the title *A register of hystories*. Plato is named 89 times in the work. Many of these references are misleading. For instance, under the heading ‘Of hope’ we hear that ‘P[la]to had this sentence in his mouth […] [h]ope is the dreme of men whiles they are wakeing.’\(^\text{19}\) The origin of this quotation is Diogenes Laërtius, who attributes the quote to Aristotle. Another example is offered by John Larke’s *Boke of Wisdom* (1561). The quotations ascribed to Plato there include his apparent endorsement of the seven corporal works of mercy (as listed in Matthew 25:31–46):

> Plato sayth, that the person can not have a more profytable thyng [thing], then the Vertue of Mercie, that is to saye, to vysyte [visit] the sycke, to feede them that be hungry, to gyve them drynke, that be thrystye [thirsty], vysyte [visit] the prysoners, clothe the naked, lodge them that doe lacke lodgynge [lodging]. And to burye the deade persons.\(^\text{20}\)

The available commonplaces were thus unreliable, and could not be used to derive a set of accurate Platonic quotations unless one already had some first hand knowledge of Plato. An illustrative example of a work that appears to have been written with an only second hand understanding of Plato is the

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\(^\text{16}\) The translation was from a Latin translation of a Pseudo-Platonic text.


\(^\text{18}\) Sears, *Plato*, 124.


1620 edition of the anonymous *Horae subsecivae, Observations and Discourses*. This is a work of disputed authorship, but which is now generally accepted to have written in at least part by William Cavendish (1590–1628). However, the work was likely written using materials from the Hardwick Hall library, i.e. the same library that Hobbes used (and indeed curated) when in the service of the Devonsires. In the *Horae*, Plato is quoted on two occasions. In the essay ‘Of Ambition’ we find out that ‘Scientia quae est remota a iustitia, calliditas potius quam sapientia est appellanda, saith Plato. Knowledge separated from that which is upright, is rather called craft, then wisdome.’ The quotation comes in fact from Cicero’s *De officiis* (1.19.63), where the sentence is indeed attributed by Cicero to Plato. This kind of second hand quotation is characteristic of writers using commonplace books for their Platonic sentences. Hobbes, by contrast, generally refers to Platonic dialogues rather than commonplaces or commentaries.

The second occasion in which Plato appears in the *Horae* is in *A Discourse of Lawes*, where the *De legibus* (ix.874e-5a) is quoted at length, and for the most part translated verbatim from Marsilio Ficino’s Latin translation into English:

Plato affirms the necessity of Laws to be so great and absolute that men otherwise could not be distinguished from unreasonable creatures: for no man naturally is of so great capacity, as completely to know all the necessities, and accidents which are required for a common good.

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21 It has sometimes been suggested that this work (and especially the “Three Discourses” within it) is written by Hobbes. I am not convinced by this. See Timothy Raylor, *Philosophy, Rhetoric, and Thomas Hobbes* (Oxford, 2018), 53–64 for the case for attributing the *Horae* to William Cavendish (1590–1628), as well as a recapitulation of the complicated debate concerning the initial attribution to Hobbes.


The extract from the *De legibus* begins and ends at the very same point that it does in Joseph Lange’s *Polyanthea nova* (1607), and the very same quote from *De officiis* can be found there as well. This is unsurprising, as Timothy Raylor has done extensive work to show that Lange’s *Polyanthea* is one of the principle sources for commonplaces in the *Horae*. By contrast, as we shall see, Hobbes always paraphrases Plato and never lifts quotations in this manner.

**The First Reference: Eight Bookes of the Peloponnesian Warre (1629)**

It is in the biography ‘Of the Life and History of Thucydides’ that prefaces Hobbes’s translation of Thucydides’s history that we find the first reference to a Platonic dialogue in his published work. Hobbes writes that

Plato in Menone, maketh mention of Milesias and Stephanus, sons of a Thucydides of a very noble family; but it is clear they were of Thucydides the rival of Pericles, both by the name Milesias, and because this Thucydides also was of the family of Miltiades, as Plutarch testifieth in the life of Cimon.

EW VIII, xx

In this case we can pinpoint the reference to a single section (94c) of the dialogue because Thucydides of Melesias is only named once in the *Meno*. It is worth noting that the section of the *Meno* to which Hobbes refers comes not long after the famous discussion of Plato’s theory of recollection in

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25 Plato in Joseph Lange, *Polyanthea Nova*, (Lyon, 1604), 656, trans. Marsilio Ficino, ed. Joseph Lange: ‘Plato, dicebat necesse esse leges hominibus ponere, ut secundum eas vivant, aloquin nihil a feris discreparent. Huiusque rei causam esse, quod nullius hominis ingenium ita natura institutum est, ut quae ad publicum humanae vitae bonum censerunt, sufficienter cognoscat: & si cognovit, ut optimum id quod novit semper agere possit ac velit.’ N.B. Though the commonplaces mentioned here do not change between editions, it is worth noting that the edition of the *Polyanthea* held at Hardwick Hall was the 1607 edition.

26 Cicero in Lange, *Polyanthea*, 632: ‘Praeclarum illud Platonis, Scientia quae est remota a iustitia calliditas potius quam sapientia est appellanda.’

which Socrates proposes that ‘learning is reminiscence’ (81d), so it may well be that Hobbes first encountered Platonic anamnesis in the 1620s. Naturally, it is difficult to determine whether or not this information is gleaned from direct reading of Plato or from another source. Certainly, in his biography of Thucydides Hobbes is concerned with demonstrating his Greek learning. We are given the impression that he has considerable control over his classical sources, cross-referencing as he does Plato with Plutarch.

The general impression we are given is that of a serious philological enterprise undertaken by a skilled Latinist and Hellenist. Indeed, Hobbes distinguishes his translation from earlier English, French, and Italian ones by virtue of his working directly from Thucydides’s Greek. He recounts that Thucydides ‘was exceedingly esteemed of the Italians and French in their own tongues; notwithstanding that he be not very much beholden for it to his interpreters.’ (EW VIII, ix.). Textual authenticity, then, is one of Hobbes’s primary concerns as a translator. It is difficult to imagine him muddying the authorship of the *Axiochus* in the manner of Spenser and Sidney. According to Hobbes, Thucydides’s interpreters have hitherto all suffered from the same problem, viz. ‘that whereas the author [Thucydides] himself so carrieth with him his own light throughout, that the reader may continually see his way before him, and by that which goeth before expect what is to follow; I found it not so in them [...] [t]he cause whereof, and their excuse, may be this: they followed the Latin of Laurentius Valla, which was not with out some errors; and he a Greek copy not so correct as now is extant.’ (EW VIII, ix). Hobbes is particularly critical of Thomas Nicholls, who in 1550 translated Thucydides from Claude de Seyssel’s 1527 French edition of the work:

[O]ut of French he was done into English (for I need not dissemble to have seen him in English) in the time of King Edward the Sixth: but so, as by multiplication of error he became at length traduced, rather than translated into our language.

EW VIII, ix

It is in response to the apparent traducement of Thucydides that Hobbes ‘resolved to take him immediately from the Greek, according to the edition of Æmilius Porta.’ (EW VIII, ix).

The biography also gives us valuable information as to where Hobbes may be finding his classical materials. Almost every one of the classical sources cited in the biography are listed in the “Old Catalogue” of Hardwick Hall, Chatsworth MS HS E/1/A. This is a catalogue of the Devonshire’s library spanning from 1608
to the 1630s, written in Hobbes's own hand.\textsuperscript{28} Among the sources listed is a 'Platonis opera. Gr. Lat. fol.'\textsuperscript{29} The pressmark (in this case organised by three letters a number indicating bookcase, shelf, and the location on the shelf) shows that the \textit{opera} was bound into a single volume.\textsuperscript{30}

Scholars have been content hitherto to point out that it is difficult to determine to which edition of Plato this refers.\textsuperscript{31} This is certainly true. But whilst it is impossible to say with certainty which edition of Plato Hobbes had access to, it is possible to exclude many editions and isolate a range of likely ones that have important characteristics in common. It is worth noting, in the first instance, that no Renaissance edition of Plato works contains the words \textit{Platonis opera} in its title unless it is a complete edition of Plato’s work. James Whildon’s catalogue of the of books at Hardwick Hall (Chatsworth HS ADD/1), composed in the period 1657–8, likewise records a 'Platonis opera. Graeco Lat fol'. Given that Whildon does not copy Hobbes’s entry verbatim\textsuperscript{32} but nonetheless retains the \textit{Platonis opera}, it is reasonable to conclude that \textit{Platonis opera} is the title of the work rather than shorthand.\textsuperscript{33} This means that we can exclude any partial selection of Plato’s dialogues and say that in all likelihood Hobbes had access to a version of the complete works in Greek and Latin.

Translations of individual Platonic dialogues in the Renaissance tend to use the name of the dialogue itself in the title, alongside a description of it, as in the following editions: the 1495 edition of Rudolphus Agricola’s \textit{Axiochus [Axiochus Platonis de contemnenda morte]}, the 1544 edition of Marsilio Ficino’s translation of the \textit{Timaeus [Platonis philosophorum omnium seculorum longe principis Timaeus]}, the 1552 edition of Petreius Tiara’s translation of the \textit{Sophist [Platonis Sophistes]}, and the 1614 editions of Ficino’s translations of the \textit{Phaedo}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{28} Richard Talaska, (ed.) \textit{The Hardwick Library and Hobbes’s Early Intellectual Development} (Charlottesville, 2013), 5. N.B. Talaska’s transcriptions are, unfortunately, an unreliable guide to the catalogue itself, containing as they do numerous errors and omitting the pressmarks.
\bibitem{29} Hobbes, Chatsworth MS HS E/1/A, 102.
\bibitem{30} Hobbes, Chatsworth MS HS E/1/A, 102: ‘[s]. 11.’
\bibitem{31} This is Richard Talaska’s claim in his edition of \textit{Hardwick Hall Library}, 101, where he claims that '[s]ince works of classical or medieval or important authors prior the 1630s went through numerous editions by Hobbes’s time, it is of no use to attempt to guess at an edition'. This claim is taken up as recently as 2018 by Teresa Bejan in her chapter on ‘First Impressions: Hobbes on Religion, Education, and the Metaphor of Imprinting’ in \textit{Hobbes on Politics and Religion}, eds Laurens van Apeldoorn and Robin Douglass (Oxford, 2018), fn. 49, where Bejan cites Talaska in support of her own claim that ‘it is difficult to determine precisely which edition of Plato’s \textit{Opera} Hobbes would have had to hand.’
\bibitem{32} Cf. Hobbes’s aforementioned ‘Platonis opera. Gr. Lat. fol’ in Chatsworth MS HS E/1/A.
\bibitem{33} Chatsworth MS HS ADD/1.
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and Epinomis [In Platonis dialogum, qui Phaedo seu de animorum immortalitate inscribitur, and In Platonis Epinomidem, seu Philosophum, respectively]. The first ever edition of Plato’s works to bear the name Platonis opera is the 1517 edition of Ficino’s translation of the complete works of Plato. Subsequently, the words ‘Platonis’ and ‘opera’ appear together in the title of editions of Ficino’s translation of the complete works in 1518, 1532, 1533, 1548, 1550 (as Divini platonis operum), 1556, 1557, 1571, 1592, and 1602.

There were only two other Latin translations of Plato’s complete works printed in the Renaissance, and it may surprise readers to learn that only one edition of each of them was ever printed. These are Janus Cornarius’s Platonis opera (1561), and Jean de Serres’s Platonis opera (1578). Hobbes’s catalogue cannot be referring to the former, as it does not contain Plato’s Greek. Serranus’s edition, meanwhile, is superficially more plausible. It contain Henri Estienne’s edition of Plato’s Greek, which remains the authoritative version of the Greek of all of Plato’s dialogues today. The first volume also contains a dedication to Elizabeth I and thus comments on English political life, which may have made it more appealing to Hobbes. However, crucially, the Serranus edition is in three volumes. Neither Hobbes nor Whildon record more than one volume for the Platonis opera in their catalogues. That they do not do so makes it more likely than not Hobbes is using one of the many Greek and Latin editions of Plato’s works containing Ficino’s Latin translation and commentary. If Hobbes is relying on Ficino, then this would explain the accuracy and range of his references, as well as his avoidance of Pseudo-Platonic works like the Axiochus.

The Second and Third References: Chatsworth MS HS D/1 (c. 1633) and A Briefe of the Art of Rhetorique (1637)

Now, I am not suggesting that Hobbes avoids using secondary sources for information on Plato’s works. Rather, he appears to be able to combine his own reading of Plato with these sources to provide accurate philological analyses of Plato’s relationship with other texts. The Briefe of the Art of Rhetorique is a digest of Aristotle’s Ars rhetorica, published anonymously in 1637. Although

34 Naturally, the edition may have been rebound into a single volume and so we cannot conclusively rule out the Serranus edition. But the weight of evidence nonetheless points to Ficino.
its authorship has been contested, it seems to have been written by Hobbes.\textsuperscript{35} Whilst the book nowhere features Hobbes’s name, the Stationers’ Register entry for the 1st February 1636 [/11th February 1637] records that the publisher, Andrew Crooke, has ‘[e]ntred for his Copie […] a Booke called \textit{A breife [sic] of the Art of Rhetorique} […]’ by T. H.\textsuperscript{36} This suggests at the very least that Crooke presented Hobbes as the author. Moreover, the handbook is a more or less faithful English translation of an earlier Latin manuscript housed in Chatsworth House (Hobbes ms D1) that still remains unpublished. This manuscript, entitled only by way of an initial chapter heading that begins ‘ex Aristots. Rhet. Lib.;’\textsuperscript{37} is a 143 page paraphrase of Aristotle’s \textit{Rhetoric} that is written for the most part in the third Earl of Devonshire’s hand, with autograph corrections and additional passages by Hobbes (then the third Earl’s tutor). Large sections appear to have been left to have been filled in Hobbes. For example, in chapter 21 of the second book, ‘Of example, similitude, and stories;\textsuperscript{38} the first paragraph is in the 3rd Earl’s hand, the next four are in Hobbes’s, and the final two are in the Earl’s. It thus appears that the digest, if not a straightforward dictation exercise, was certainly written under Hobbes’s close supervision.

The manuscript and the \textit{Breif}e thus collectively provide a unique window into Hobbes’s life as a humanist educator in the 1630s. Whilst Hobbes and Devonshire follow the structure and order of the chapters of the three books of the \textit{Ars rhetorica} very closely, they freely condense material and also make significant interpolations to explicate the text. One such interpolation is found in chapter 24 of the second book, ‘Of the places of true, demonstrative enthymemes’\textsuperscript{39} There, among a list of the topics of these enthymemes listed in a section written in Devonshire’s hand, is listed ‘[a]nother from definition, as that of Socrates: a demon is either God or a work of God, he does not deny God exists, therefore, who affirms that demons exist.’\textsuperscript{40} In the \textit{Breif}e the passage is translated into English verbatim. (\textit{EW} vi, 479). The original Greek, however, does not attribute this example to Socrates. Instead, the relevant passage of the \textit{Ars rhetorica} (1398a8) merely introduces ‘Another [topic] from definition, such as [‘\textit{Ἀλλος ἐξ ὁρισμοῦ οἷον} […]’] before stating the example.

\textsuperscript{35} The case for the attribution of the \textit{Breif}e to Hobbes is made persuasively by Timothy Raylor in the appendix to his \textit{Philosophy, Rhetoric, and Thomas Hobbes} (Oxford, 2018), 281–92. The arguments that I adduce in favour of Hobbes’s authorship can be found in greater detail there.

\textsuperscript{36} Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers, Vol. 4, 346.

\textsuperscript{37} Chatsworth HS ms/D1, 1.

\textsuperscript{38} Chatsworth HS ms/D 1, 84–5.

\textsuperscript{39} Chatsworth HS ms/D1, 89: ‘Ca24 de locis enthymematum verorum et demonstrativorum.’

\textsuperscript{40} Chatsworth HS ms/D1, 91 ‘Alius ex definitione ut illud Socratis Daemonium vel Deus est vel Dei opus, non igitur negat Deus esse qui affirmat esse daemonia.’
This suggests that Hobbes may well have taught Devonshire that this example is derived from Plato’s *Apologia Socratis* (27c–d), in which Socrates defends himself against the charge of atheism by arguing that atheism is inconsistent with his well attested belief in demons. In the *Apologia*, Socrates argues that ‘[i]f therefore I should be of the opinion that demons exist, as you say, [and] if the gods are indeed demons, that would evidently be, I affirm, you are trifling with obscure words, when you say I do not believe the gods exist, and judge against the gods ‘existence, seeing that you confess that I believe demons exist.’41 The source for this connection between Socrates’s trial and the topic from definition is probably not any direct encounter with Plato but simply borrowed from Theodore Goulston’s 1619 Latin and Greek edition of the *Rhetorica*, whose Latin appears to be the material “digested” in the paraphrase. Whilst Goulston is authentic to the Greek in omitting any mention Socrates from the main body of his translation, in the margins he footnotes ‘[f]rom definition, e.g. […] from Plato on the *Apology of Socrates*, the definition of a demon is used for the declaration of his innocence.’42 This shows how Renaissance philology lent itself to the acquisition of accurate information concerning Plato’s writings from commentaries on other classical Greek texts. Hobbes was thus not averse to borrowing from other authors, but that he does so pointedly and accurately points to the fact that Hobbes is able to verify that Goulston is correct.

An illuminating comparison with Hobbes as a private tutor of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* is found in John Rainolds’s public lectures on Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* at Corpus Christi College, Oxford. It is worth pausing to note that the capacity for *argumentum in utramque partem* was understood in the Renaissance to be one of the shared properties of rhetoric and dialectic in the Aristotelian tradition. Aristotelian dialectic depends upon [ἔνδοξα], i.e. those ideas ‘which commend themselves to all.’43 This kind of dialectic thus produces arguments whose material is human opinion, and are constrained by a particular view of human psychology (i.e. Aristotle’s theory of the affections). In this sense it acquires a quasi-rhetorical aspect, insofar as the dialectician is compelled to think about which opinions are likely to commend themselves to other people. Indeed, this

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is Aristotle’s observation in the first line of his *Ars rhetorica*, where he states that

[r]hetoric is the counterpart [ἀντίστροφος] of dialectic. For both pertain to such things whose understanding is, in a sense, common to all, and not restricted to one single body of knowledge.44

The exact status of the relationship between the arts was the subject of considerable debate amongst Aristotle’s sixteenth and seventeenth century commentators. John Rainolds’s lectures on Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, heard at Corpus Christi College, Oxford45 from 1571 to 1578, exemplify the humanist approach to that question whilst citing the leading authorities on the subject. They are also the only complete lecture notes to survive from the Tudor university classroom. Rainolds starts by commenting that ‘[t]here are as many interpretations of this little word [ἀντίστροφος] as there are interpreters.’46 He notes that Cicero takes the term to mean that rhetoric ‘answering [dialectic] from the other side [ex altera parte respondens].’ This opinion is confirmed, as Rainolds notes, by Ermolao Barbaro’s *Rhetoricorum Aristotelis libri tres* (1545), where Barbaro affirms that ‘[t]he art of rhetoric responds, as it were, from the other side to dialectic.’47 Carlo Sigonio alludes to this view in his *De arte rhetorica libri tres* (1577), where he confirms that ‘rhetoric responds to dialectic.’48 Rainolds follows Johann Sturm’s 1570 commentary, *Aristoteles rhetoricorum libri IIII*, in paraphrasing this view as the position that ‘rhetoric looks back from the other side, as in a chorus.’49

Rainolds, however, also suggests a contrary view, one that he ascribes to Aristotle’s Greek and Arabic commentators, but which had gained popularity in sixteenth-century Europe after its endorsement by Italian philologists such

44 Aristotle, *Commentarii in tres libros Aristotelis, De arte dicendi* (Florence, 1548), I. 1–3: ‘Ἡ ῥητορική ἐστιν ἀντίστροφος τῇ διαλεκτικῇ· ἀμφότεραι γὰρ περὶ τοιούτων τινῶν εἰσὶν ἄ κοινὰ τρόπων τινὰ ἀπάντων ἐστὶ γνωρίζειν καὶ οὐδεμιᾶς ἐπιστήμης ἀφωρισμένης.’

45 For greater detail on Corpus Christi’s status as an oasis of new Platonic learning in Oxford, see Sarah Hutton’s ‘Thomas Jackson, Oxford Platonist, William Twisse, Aristotelian’ and the Lawrence D. Green’s introduction to his edition of Rainold’s lectures on Aristotle, referenced below.


as Piero Vettori. As Rainolds explains, Averroës comments that Aristotle’s use of αντίστροφος is intended to convey that rhetoric is allied with [affinis] dialectic, whilst George of Trebizond goes further in suggesting that Aristotle means that rhetoric has the same valence [aequipollet] as dialectic.50 On this view, rhetoric and dialectic are not properly described as being engaged in any kind of opposition. Rainolds notes that this subtle distinction has been complicated by the fact that αντίστροφος [counterpart] and ἴσοστροφος [partner] are sometimes used as synonyms and sometimes as antonyms in the original Attic, just as they are in English.

The evidence that Rainolds offers in support of the compatibility of the two arts is humanistic and philological. He notes that the prefix αντί – can indicate opposition, as it does in some of the Greek geographical terms we have retained, such as ἀντίποδες [antipodes] and ἀνταρκτικός [Antarctic].51 But it can also indicate that something is being used as a substitute due to an approximate equivalence, be it of expertise and authority, as in the ἀντιστράτηγος [lieutenant-general], or in market value, as in the case of ἀντίλυτρον [ransom, lit. the ‘price instead of’]. This equivalence, Rainolds explains, leads to the impression of a strong similarity: ‘when one thing can be understood rightly for a second, and can be put in place of the second, we think it has the same force and possesses a similar nature.’52 Rather than interpreting the prefix as indicating opposition, cognate with the re of respicit or Cicero’s altera pars, Rainolds thus endorses the essential similarity of rhetoric and dialectic in Aristotle’s schema. He goes so far as to say that ‘[t]his general idea of the word seems to have eluded Cicero; certainly he imputes to Aristotle something other than Aristotle indicates in this passage, and even the most stubborn defenders of Cicero would condemn this false imputation.’53 In a sense, this is a story of two antistrophes, one between dialectic and rhetoric, and the other between Aristotle and Cicero.

However, and this is crucial for our purposes, rhetoric and dialectic were not allied because they shared a subject matter, but rather because they both lacked one. Aristotle, as we have seen, speaks of dialectic and rhetoric as ‘not restricted [ἀφωρισμένης] to one single body of knowledge.’54 Having distinguished Aristotle’s conception of rhetoric and dialectic from Cicero’s,

50 Rainolds, Oxford Lectures, 396.
51 The examples listed are found in Rainolds, Oxford Lectures, 103.
52 Rainolds, Oxford Lectures, 105.
54 Aristotle, De Arte Dicendi, I., 1–3: ‘Ἡ ῥητορικὴ ἐστὶν ἀντίστροφος τῇ διαλεκτικῇ ἀμφότεραι γάρ περὶ τοιούτων τινῶν εἰσὶν ἃ κοινὰ τρόπον τινὰ ἅπαντων ἐστὶ γνωρίζειν καὶ οὐδεμιᾶς ἐπιστήμης ἀφωρισμένης.’
Rainolds then goes on to show how Aristotle’s remarks concerning the pair’s similarities can be integrated with passages where Cicero discusses rhetoric, once in connection with poetry, but always omitting dialectic. Glossing the verb ἀφορίζω, Rainolds explains that

it means ‘to mark off with boundaries,’ ‘to separate from others,’ [...] Cicero has much the same idea in Latin, when he claims that the poet, like the orator, ‘does not circumscribe [circumscribat] or define [definiat] his liberty by any limits,’ and again when he says that the art of speaking well ‘has no determinate [definitam] province, within whose limits it is enclosed [septa] and held.\(^{55}\)

At the same time, Rainolds speaks of the Aristotle’s treatise as ‘patterned after the rhetorical precepts which were sketched in Plato’s \textit{Phaedrus};\(^ {56}\) and thus alludes to an older tradition of dialectic that was intimately connected to the precept γνώθι σεαυτόν, which appears in the \textit{Phaedrus}, and is, as we shall see, an integral part of Hobbes’s conception of Platonic anamnesis.\(^ {57}\) One of the origins of dialectic’s capacity to speak to any subject is that it deals as much with the auditor or reader’s self knowledge as it does with the subject in question.

\textbf{The Fourth Reference: \textit{Elements} (1640)}

The next of Hobbes’s direct references to Plato’s dialogues is found in the first part of the \textit{Elements}, which contains a lengthy discussion of Plato’s \textit{Symposium}.\(^ {58}\) This is probably the best known of Hobbes’s references to Plato. In a section concerning the affection of charity, Hobbes writes that

\begin{quote}
[t]he opinion of Plato concerning honourable love, delivered according to his custom in the person of Socrates, in the dialogue intituled \textit{Conxivium} [i.e. the \textit{Symposium}], is this, that a man full and pregnant with wisdom and other virtues, naturally seeketh out some beautiful person, of age and capacity to conceive, in whom he may, without sensual
\end{quote}


\(^{57}\) The remark appears in the following Platonic dialogues: \textit{Charmides} (164D), \textit{Protagoras} (343B), \textit{Phaedrus} (229E), \textit{Philebus} (48C), \textit{Laws} (11.923A), \textit{Alcibiades} I (124A, 129A, 132C).

\(^{58}\) Schuhmann does include this example in aforementioned survey (191–2), and makes more or less the same textual connections that I do here.
respects, engender and produce the like. And the idea of the then noted
love of Socrates wise and continent, to Alcibiades young and beautiful:
in which, love is not the sought honour, but the issue of his knowledge.

This passage represents the synthesis of Diotima’s (206c–d) and Alcibiades’s
(216d–e) reflections on love in the *Symposium*. Note the contrast with the
*Horae*’s quotation from Plato’s *De legibus*; Hobbes does not lift large quotations
from a Latin translation of Plato verbatim, but instead fluently paraphrases
Plato whilst following the structure of the argument as it appears in the
*Symposium*. Indeed, as we shall see, this is a close paraphrase of Plato’s text.
Hobbes follows the structure of the dialogue in presenting the material taken
from Diotima before that of Alcibiades. Just as we hear of ‘a man full and
pregnant’, Plato writes that (206c) ‘every man is both pregnant and heavy with
child [praegnans et gravidum] in the body and the soul is pregnant.’

When Hobbes writes that the lover ‘naturally seeketh out some beautiful person [...]’
in whom he may, without sensual respects, engender and produce the like’,
Diotima likewise informs Socrates that (206e) ‘love concerns not the beautiful
[...] as you think.’ Instead, she argues that love concerns ‘the generation and
birthing of the beautiful’. In reporting that Socrates is ‘continent’ and that
love is ‘not the sought honour’, Hobbes refers to Alcibiades description of
Socrates’s nature (216d–e); ‘if the inside should really be opened, you would
be amazed, drinking companions, by the chastity and integrity inside. Nor
does he value the beauty of the body of anyone whatsoever, nor riches, nor
honours.’ This reference is significant as the first instance where Hobbes uses
Plato to construct his own philosophy, rather than merely using Plato’s text to
make a philological point about another classical text. In all of the subsequent
references discussed Hobbes shall similarly use Plato’s arguments to develop
his own. Significantly, the kind of Platonic love that Plato describes is maieutic;
the older lover seeks out someone of ‘age and capacity to conceive’ love, ‘the
issue’ of the older lover’s knowledge. An essential component of Hobbes’s own
theory of recollection is that the obligation of the philosopher is to identify

corpus est, praegnans et anima.’

60 Plato, *Platonis opera* (1602), 1196 [misnumbered as 200 in the edition]: ‘Est enim amor
non pulchri Socrates, ut tu putas [...] [g]enerationis partumque in pulcro.’

61 Plato, *Platonis opera* (1602), 1203 [misnumbered 1195]: ‘Intus vero si apieratur, mira, o
viri convivae, castimonia et integritas inest. Neque pulchritudinem corporis ciusquam
quicquam aestimat, neque divitas, neque honores.’
those definitions that the reader shall themselves be able to conceive of and reproduce in themselves.

The Fifth and Sixth References: *Tractatus Opticus II* (c. 1640) and the Third Set of Objections (1641)

In the *Tractatus Opticus II*, which only circulated in manuscript form in Hobbes's lifetime, Plato's *Theaetetus* is cited in support of Hobbes's theory of sensation:

For we must not think that something is flying out of the object coming into the brain and telling us itself what the colour and shape of the body from whence it flew out might be. Nor do Plato and Aristotle judge vision to be anything other than motion, as is obvious from Aristotle's book on dreams and waking, chapter 3. And the book of Plato's in which it is written is the *Theaetetus*.62

The section Hobbes alludes to is likely *Theaetetus* 154a63 where Socrates argues 'that black or white or any colour you choose is a thing that has arisen out of the meeting of our eyes with the appropriate motion.'64 In the *Theaetetus* this remark is associated with Protagoras, and so the attribution of this view to Plato himself is somewhat tendentious. Ralph Cudworth, by contrast, is careful to write in his *True Intellectual System of the Universe* (1678) that 'Protagoras in Plato's *Theaetetus* concludes, Knowledge to be Sense'.65 But this is not quite right either, as Protagoras does not appear as an interlocutor in the dialogue.

I have paired this reference with one found in the Third Set of Objections (1641) below, because it appears to allude to one of the passages of the *Theaetetus*

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63 See Cees Leijenhorst, *The Mechanization of Aristotle* (Leiden, 2002), 81, for more detail on the passage's connection to Aristotle.


that immediately follows the discussion of motion referred to above. In the *Objections*, Hobbes criticises Descartes’s first meditation concerning the criteria of doubt as follows:

It is clear from the things which are said in this Meditation, that there is no *criterion* by which dreams are distinguished from waking and real sensation, and on this account the phantasms we have whether awake or asleep, are not accidents inherent in external objects, nor do they provide an argument that such external objects really exist. In other words, if we follow our sense without any other ratiocination, we deservedly doubt whether or not they really exist. Therefore we acknowledge the truth of this Meditation. But since the same uncertainty of the senses was argued for by Plato, and others of the ancient philosophers, and as the difficulties in distinguishing waking from sleeping are observed by everyone, I would not have wished for an author so distinguished in new speculations to publish these antiques.

That both of these references derive from roughly the same period and concerning roughly the same sections of the same Platonic dialogue may suggest that Hobbes was reading the *Theaetetus* in this period, or otherwise encountered them in optical treatises that he was using to construct his own optics. That Hobbes thought Plato’s optics were compatible with his own is an important step in understanding how Hobbes came to rely on Plato’s definition of knowledge as memory. Memory is, as Plato claims up the *Philebus*

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66 Cf. *Theaetetus* 157e–158a in *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 12 (Cambridge MA, 1921) trans. Harold N. Fowler: ‘Let us, then, not neglect a point in which it is defective. The defect is found in connection with dreams and diseases, including insanity, and everything else that is said to cause illusions of sight and hearing and the other senses. For of course you know that in all these the doctrine we were just presenting seems admittedly to be refuted, because in them we certainly have false perceptions, and it is by no means true that everything is to each man which appears to him; on the contrary, nothing is which appears.’

(34a), is the conservation of sense, and imagination for Hobbes is decaying sense. In that sense the self-knowledge we have can be located, ultimately, in our interpretation of that decaying motion. Hobbes is as comfortable pairing Plato’s theory of recollection with nominalism as he is pairing Plato’s optics with his own materialist theory of perception. In an England where Platonic philosophy was still eclectic, it was not taken for granted that Plato was the otherworldly philosopher we conceive of him as today. In Samuel Parker’s *Free and impartial censure of the Platonick philosophie* (1666), for instance, we hear variously that ‘[t]he Platonists [...] made their measures of Good and Evil, from the observations of Sense and Experience’⁶⁸ and that this is connected with a form of self-knowledge; ‘Plato concludes [...] the same use that these delineations have in *Mathematical Theories*, Idea’s have in *Physical Speculations*, as therefore we best understand what a Circle is by looking upon its Delineated Figure, so the surest knowledge, we can have of the Natures of things, is gotten by contemplating their Ideal Pictures or Images engraven on our understandings.’⁶⁹

The Seventh Reference: *De cive* (1642)

In his treatise *De cive* (1642), we come to the pivotal moment where Hobbes cites Plato as an authority on the relationship between knowledge and memory:

> to know truth is the same as to remember that it was made by ourselves, by our very usurpation of names itself. Nor was it said idly by Plato long ago that knowledge is memory [scientiam esse memoriam].

*OL II, 419*⁷⁰

In the dedicatory epistle that commences the Latin edition, Hobbes writes that ‘true wisdom is nothing other than knowledge of the truth in all matters [...] as it is derived from the memory of things inspired by certain and definite appellations’(*OL II, 419*).⁷¹ We possess, insofar as we remember of our act

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⁷⁰ Hobbes: ‘veritatem scire, idem quod, esse eam a nobismet ipsis ipsa nominum usurpatione factam, meminisse. Neque temere olim a Platone dictum est, scientiam esse memoriam.’
of naming *ab arbitrio*, a form of maker’s knowledge about all language. For Hobbes, maker’s knowledge, or demonstration by reading oneself, is what connects politics with geometry. As Hobbes himself puts it in his *Six Lessons*,

[on arts, some are demonstrable, others indemonstrable; and demonstrable are those the construction of which is in the power of the artist himself, who, in his demonstration, does no more but deduce the consequences of his own operation. The reason whereof is this, that the science of every subject is derived from a precognition of the causes, generation, and construction of the same; and consequently where the causes are known, there is place for demonstration, but not where the causes are to be found. Geometry therefore is demonstrable, for the lines and figures, from which we reason are drawn and described by ourselves; and civil philosophy is demonstrable, because we make the commonwealth ourselves. But because of natural bodies we know not the construction, but seek it from the effects, there lies no demonstration of what the causes be we seek for, but only of what they may be.

EW VII, 183–4

For Hobbes, geometrical demonstration thus involves self-knowledge. The geometer must be aware of the propositions, common notions, and definitions they have committed to in order to demonstrate any geometrical equation. By implication, Hobbes also believes that this is possible in a subject as controversial as politics if only the same kind of self-knowledge is acquired and applied.

This quotation *scientiam esse memoriam* may well be a paraphrase of the *Meno*, where Plato says that ‘seeking and learning are in fact nothing but recollection’\(^\text{72}\) (81d). This definition appears in the dialogue not long before the discussion concerning a certain Thucydides, son of Melesias, which Hobbes had dealt with in 1629.\(^\text{73}\) However, similar ideas can be found in any number of Platonic dialogues which deal with amnesia, including the *Theaetetus*, the *Phaedrus*, and the *Philebus*. Nor was Hobbes the first Renaissance philosopher to describe Plato’s theory of recollection in these terms. In the *Liber de intellectu* (1510), for instance, the mathematician Charles de Bovelles paraphrases Plato’s definition of memory in remarkably similar terms, saying

\(^{73}\) In Ficino’s 1602 Frankfurt edition of the *Platonis opera*, the claim that learning is recollection (translated by Ficino as ‘discere reminiscetia est’ appears on page 415, whilst the reference to this Thucydides is not much further on, on page 424.
that ‘Plato said that knowledge is the restoration of memory [scientiam esse memorie resumptionem].’

Moreover, Hobbes may well have been encouraged to combine Platonic anamnesis with his own metaphysics through reading Galileo. We know that from Hobbes’s correspondence with William Cavendish, the first Duke of Newcastle, that he had read Galileo’s Dialogo sopra i due sistemi massimi (1632) sometime between 1634 and 1636. The dialogue is notable for its discussion of scientific knowledge in terms of Platonic anamnesis. Salviati discusses with his interlocutor (named Simplicio) an apparent objection to the view that the earth revolves on its axis, viz. that the impetus that the earth’s revolutions would confer to earthbound objects would seem bound to propel them away from the earth. Crucially, Salviati insists that he is only highlighting facts already known to both of them:

\[
\text{[t]he resolution [of this objection] depends on certain facts, that are no less known and believed by you than me; but because they do not occur to you, you do not see the resolution. Therefore, without my teaching you, because you already know them, I will, by simply reminding you of them, make it so that you yourself resolve the question.}
\]

Simplicio responds by identifying Galileo’s method of argument via reminiscence with Plato:

\[
\text{I have frequently turned my mind to your way of reasoning, which has gotten me to thinking that you are inclined to the option of Plato, that our knowing is a kind of remembering [che nostrum scire sit quoddam reminisci].}
\]

Indeed, the marginal notation for this section confirms, this time in Italian, that ‘[o]ur knowing is a kind of remembering [Il nostro sapere è un certo}

74 Charles de Bovelles, Liber de Intellectu (Paris, 1510), 11: ‘Plato: scientiam esse memorie resumptionem.’
75 Galileo Galilei, Dialogo sopra i due massimi sistemi (Florence, 1632), 185: ‘Lo scioglimento suo depende da alcune notizie non meno sapute e credute da voi che da me; ma perché elle non vi sovvengono, però non vedete lo scioglimento. Senza dunque ch’io ve lo insegni. perché già voi le sapete, co I semplice ricordarvele farò che voi stessò risolverete l’istanza.’
76 Galileo, Dialogo (Florence, 1632), 185: ‘lo ho posto mente più volte al vostro modo di ragionare, il quale mi ha destato qualche pensiero che voi inclinate a quella opinion di Platone, che nostrum scire sit quoddam reminisci: però, di grazia, cavatemi di questo dubbio, dicendomi ’l vostro senso.’
ricordasi], following Plato. As with Hobbes’s *scientiam esse memoriam*, the phrase that Galileo attributes to Plato is not an exact quotation of any published Latin translation of Plato. For Galileo too seems to have been guided to Platonic anamnesis by another, modern source. In this case, the apposition of *scire* with *reminisci* derives from the Jesuit polymath Benedict Pereira. In Pereira’s *De communibus omnium rerum naturalium principiis & affectionibus* (1576), we hear that ‘Plato holds it to be tried and tested that *Nostrum scire nihil aliud quam quoddam reminisci*.’ In this formulation, the phrase evokes not just the *Meno*, as we have seen, but also the *Phaedo*, where Socrates asks Simmias (76a–b) the following question:

Utrum igitur eligis, o Simmia? vel cum scientia nos esse natos, vel reminisci postea quorum prius scientiam acceperimus? [Which then do you chose, O Simmias? That we are born with knowledge, or that we recollect afterwards from the knowledge we possessed before [we were born]?  

Notably, in the Stephanus edition, published two years after Pereira’s treatise, very similar language to Pereira’s and Galileo’s is used in Socrates’s presentation of the same dichotomy in the passage immediately preceding the above (76a):

> Aut enim haec scientes nati sumus, & per universam nostrum vitam scimus omnes: aut certe, quos dicimus tandem scire, eos nihil aliud quam reminisci: atque adeo, Discere erit reminisci. [For either we are born knowing these things, and we know everything for our entire life, or, surely, when at last we speak of those who know, they do nothing other than remember, and so, in other words, to learn shall be to remember.]

In addition to Galileo and direct reading of the *Meno*, there are two sources recorded by Hobbes in the Hardwick Hall catalogue which may have served as sources for his understanding of Platonic anamnesis. The first is Robert Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), where Plato’s theory of recollection is mentioned twice the first partition. Firstly, Burton connects Platonic anamnesis with the transmigration of souls, 

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77 Galileo, *Dialogo* (Florence, 1632), 185: ‘Il nostro sapere è un certo ricordarsi secondo Platone.’

78 Benedict Pereira, *De communibus* (Rome, 1576): ‘Plato habuit pro certo & explorato [sic], Nostrum scire nihil aliud quam quoddam reminisci.’


80 Plato, *Platonis opera* (1578), 76.

81 Hobbes, Chatsworth MS HS E/1/A, 79.
Plato in Timaeo, and in his Phaedon [...] differs not much from this opinion, that it was from God at first, and knew all, but being enclosed in the body, anew, forgets, and learns which he calls reminiscencia, or recalling, and that it was put into the body for a punishment, and thence it goes into a beast’s, or man’s, as appears by his pleasant fiction de sortitione animarum [about the allotting of souls], lib. 10 de rep., and after 10,000 years is to return into the former body again.82

Later on, Burton speaks of Ficino as drawing ‘from Plato’s reminiscencia’ to argue for ‘a divine kind of infusion’.83 The second significant discussion of anamnesis in a book entered into the Hardwick Hall catalogue is Bartholomäus Keckermann’s Systematis logici plenioris (1609), where Keckermann writes of a rational memory, that is either μνήμη [memory] or ἀνάμνησις [recollection]. Μνήμη, or that body of images, which the intellect contains and conserves: ἀνάμνησις, also known as reminiscence, is really the same [images] if it should happen that they be obscured in the mind, and gathered back together.84

Keckermann’s conception of the intellect and memory as conserving images of sense data is profoundly Platonic. Socrates had famously described memory as ‘the preservation of sense [σωτηρία αἰσθήσεως]’ in the Philebus (34a). Both Ficino85 and Stephanus’s (34a) translations render this expression as sensus conservationem. Forgetfulness, by contrast, is given as ‘lacking sense [sensus carentiam] (34a) and ‘the insensibility, or emptiness, of sense [insensibilitatem, vel vacuitatem sensus]’,86 by Stephanus and Ficino respectively. Given Hobbes’s endorsement of Plato’s equation of knowledge and memory, as well as the connection Hobbes maintains between his own theory of sensation and the one espoused by Plato in the Theaetetus, the definition of imagination as

83 Burton, The Anatomy of Melancholy, 415. Ficino characterised poetical frenzy as a kind of remembrance, see Marsilio Ficino, Commentaries on Plato, Vol. 1 Phaedrus and Ion (London, 2008), 201, trans. Michael Allen, where the process of frenzy is described as a journey ‘from the body’s sleep to the mind’s vigilance, from the shadows of ignorance to the light [...] from Lethean oblivion to the remembrance of things divine.’
84 Bartholomäus Keckermann, Systematis logici plenioris (Hanau, 1612), 69: ‘memoria rationalis, que vel μνήμη est, vel ἀνάμνησις. Μνήμη, res sive imagines istas, quas intellectus concipit, conservat: ἀνάμνησις vero, alias Reminiscencia, easdem si forte in animo sint obscuratae, recolligit.’
85 Plato, Platonis opera (1602), 385.
86 Plato, Platonis opera (1602), 385.
'nothing but *decaying sense* (EW III, 4) in *Leviathan* certainly seems to have some connection with what Hobbes wants to say about Plato's position on knowledge and memory in *De cive*.

**Hobbesian Anamnesis**

That Hobbes, possibly inspired by Galileo, makes an explicit commitment to Platonic anamnesis does not mean that this was the first occasion he employed a kind of rhetoric or dialectic (insofar as the two are in antistrophe) of reminiscence. It may well be that Hobbes in 1642 recognised in Plato an approach that he had arrived at himself long ago. It may also be the case that Hobbes first encountered the idea when reading the *Meno* in the 1620s. I do not propose to settle these questions here. Instead, I hope to show why Hobbes might have felt that Plato lent authority to his own argumentative approach.

The paradox at the heart of Hobbes’s rhetorical theory is Hobbes’s insistence that rhetoric should not just persuade. Hobbes’s ideal orator does not follow the Roman rhetorical prescription to teach, move, delight. Evidently, Hobbes is nonetheless concerned with persuading people (and some of his better jokes may even be said to delight), and so it is not my intention to suggest that he removes those elements from his argumentation entirely. Instead, I hope to show how Hobbes’s argumentative strategy emphasises the role of the reader in demonstrating the author’s arguments by testing them against their own passions. Hobbes aspires to remind his readers of what he thinks they already know.

There are strong parallels between this and Platonic dialectic. It is my contention that Hobbes had sufficient knowledge of those parallels to cite Plato in *De cive* as an authority for his own unusual method of argumentation. Anamnesis is suitable for this purpose because it is too places the demonstrative burden on the reader or interlocutor. As Ficino puts it in his commentary on the *Phaedrus* in his *Commentaria in Platonem* (1496);

> [t]hrough [dialectic] the soul at some point can arrive at the universal formula naturally implanted in the soul; and through this formula, at the Idea, the Idea that is not only called a species but actually exists. The beast’s soul cannot do this, as it has none of the formulas of the Ideas implanted in it. But to arrive in this way through the formulas at the Ideas (which is the office of the rational soul) is nothing other than to recall
those intelligibles that the rational soul had once seen in heaven when it followed there its mundane god.\textsuperscript{87}

For Ficino, dialectic is thus an argumentative strategy intended to remind his readers of beliefs that they already possess. Once those beliefs are recalled they can be shown to apply to the matter in question. However, the Ficinian archetype of the old dialectician inspiring his student was not, as we might expect, Socrates, but the figure of Parmenides as the educator of Socrates in the \textit{Parmenides}. For in this dialogue, on Ficino’s reading, Parmenides argues against what he knows to be true, i.e. Socrates’s arguments for the existence of the Ideas. On Ficino’s reading, Parmenides’s hidden purpose is dialectical, just as Socrates, who is the son of a midwife, always plays the role of a midwife towards children and youth (and he claims to be so above anything else), so Parmenides, who is already an elderly man, encourages and assists like a pious midwife the still young Socrates to give birth to admirable and almost divine opinions [...]. Parmenides does not spurn or destroy the thoughts that are about to be born, even the ones that are less beautiful, but rather embraces them and cherishes them in an admirable way: he strengthens those which are fragile, he straightens out those which are crooked, gives form to the formless ones and perfects the imperfect ones.\textsuperscript{88}

It is in the same spirit that Hobbes rejects criminations in the \textit{Briefe} whilst explaining (following Aristotle) that ‘it is an absurd thing for a man to make crooked the ruler he means to use.’ (\textit{EW VI}, 423). In his commentary Ficino is invoking Proclus’s interpretation of the dialectic in the \textit{Parmenides}. In Proclus’s own commentary on the dialogue, he explains Parmenides’s mysterious opposition Socrates’s arguments by way of ‘three processes of dialectic’: ‘that of purification through cross-questioning’, ‘the opposite of this, that which induces recollection of true reality, by means of which he [Socrates] used to lead on those naturally suited to contemplation’, and ‘a compromise between the two, partly refuting, partly stimulating the interlocutor towards the truth.’\textsuperscript{89} Proclus elsewhere in the same commentary explains that one of the chief activities of dialectic is self-enquiry,

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{87} Ficino, \textit{Phaedrus} (London, 2008), 149.
\end{thebibliography}
[o]ne, which is suitable for young men, is useful for awakening the reason that is, as it were, asleep in them and provoking it to inquire into itself. That is actually an exercise in training the eye of the soul for seeing its objects and for taking possession of its essential ideas by confronting them with their contradictories.\textsuperscript{90}

Proclus instances ‘arguing on both sides’\textsuperscript{91} (what Quintilian would call \textit{argumentum in utramque partem}) as an example of this kind of dialectic,

[t]his is the method by which Socrates trains his young men, as for instance Theaetetus, by examining both sides of the question – e.g. whether what a man thinks is true for him or not, whether or not knowledge is perception – and then in turn examining the difficulties in true beliefs [...] in this way constantly exposing [the interlocutor] to the difficulties inherent in his opinions.\textsuperscript{92}

Parmenides is thus seen in the dialogue as using dialectic \textit{in utramque partem} to bring out the truth of Socrates’s ideas. But, crucially, this process is identified with the straightening out of the interlocutor’s true beliefs. Indeed, Ficino commands that

no one, therefore, suspect that Parmenides reproves opinions of this kind [i.e. Socrates’s], since he is, like his Pythagorean colleagues, a friend of the Ideas, the defender of being itself, separate from sensible things and of the One itself, superior to being. Every Platonist should rather remember that Socrates is being carefully trained by Parmenides in the art of dialectic, to become more heedful of divine mysteries, to approach them with more caution and reach them more securely.\textsuperscript{93}

For Hobbes, in a similar fashion, Platonic dialectic is compatible with rhetoric because it can treat any subject whatever. We can see Hobbes using a similar strategy in the following texts in spite of their dealing with different kinds of principles:

1. \textit{A Briefe of the Art of Rhetorique} (1637)
In rhetoric the principles must be common opinions, such as the judge is already possessed with. (EW VI, 426).

\textsuperscript{90} Proclus, \textit{Commentary}, 43.
\textsuperscript{91} Proclus, \textit{Commentary}, 44.
\textsuperscript{92} Proclus, \textit{Commentary}, 44.
\textsuperscript{93} Ficino, \textit{Parmenides} II, 71.
2. *Elements* (1640)
To reduce this doctrine to the rules and infallibility of reason, there is no way, but, first, put such principles down for a foundation, as passion, not mistrusting, may not seek to displace; and afterwards to build thereon the truth of cases in the law of nature (which hitherto have been built in the air) by degrees, till the whole have been unexpungeable. (ew iv, iii).

3. *De Cive* (1642)
[I have] followed such a Method, in the first place I established as a Principle something known by experience to everyone, and denied by no one, namely, that the spirits of men are naturally such that, unless they are held in check together by fear of some power, they will all distrust and dread each other. (OL II, 146).

4. *Leviathan* (1651)
He that is to govern a whole nation, must read in himself, not this or that particular man; but mankind: which though it be hard to do, harder than to learn any language or science; yet when I shall have laid down my own reading orderly, and perspicuously, the pains left another, will be only to consider, if he also find not the same in himself. (EW III, xii).

5. *De corpore* (1655)
This is common to every method, that it is set out from what is known to what is unknown [...]. Civil and Moral Philosophy adhere to each other in such a way, however, that they might be separated; for the causes of motion of minds are known not only by ratiocination, but also from the experience of every one of us observing his own motion himself. (OL I, 59–65).

When Hobbes (as in the first example) is using anamnesis in a solely rhetorical context, he is merely concerned with the importance of reminding the auditor of beliefs that the orator and the auditor share. There does not need to be anything universal about this kind of reminiscence because a different auditor may not share the same opinion. If you and I share a belief about, e.g., religious toleration, for rhetorical purposes it suffices that I remind you of our shared belief to support a particular argument about toleration. No one outside of the context of the rhetorical dispute need necessarily share

94 Hobbes: ‘Talem ergo Methodum secutus, Pono primo loco pro Principio omnibus per experientiam noto, quodque nemo est qui non confiteatur, nimirum, Ingenia hominum eiusmodi esse a natura, ut nisi metu potentiae alicuius communis coercetantur, fore ut sibi invicem diffidant & sese mutuo metuant.’

95 Hobbes: ‘Omnis methodo commune est hoc, ut procedatur a cognitis ad incognita [...] Philosophia civilis morali ita adhaeret ut tamen distrahit ab ea possit; cognoscentur enim causae motuum animorum non modo ratiocinatone, sed etiam uniussuisque suos ipsius motus propios observantis experientia.’
this opinion. In De corpore and Leviathan, however, Hobbes is operating on the level of universal reminiscence, which for him constitutes demonstration, i.e. he is writing in the belief that he is reminding his reader of something that everyone on some already level knows.

One of the sayings with which Hobbes is most strongly associated is the Delphic proverb Nosce teipsum.\footnote{This means ‘know yourself’. Accounts of the origin of the maxim, γνῶθι σεαυτόν in the original Greek, vary. According to Pausanias in his Description of Greece (24:10), the aphorism was dedicated to Apollo by seven sages at the Temple of Apollo in Delphi during a period of conflict following one of the Gallic resettlements in the Balkans of the 3rd century BC. Unsurprisingly, given the aphorism’s subsequent association with Socrates, deviations from that origin story generally have their root in Plato’s Socratic dialogues (and their scholia, via the Suidae Lexicon), especially Protagoras and the Philebus.} This is the aphorism, which, as we have noted, also appears in the Charmides (164D), Protagoras (343B), Phaedrus (229E), Philebus (48C), Laws (11.923A), and Alcibiades I (124A, 129A, 132C). He employs it, as everyone who has read Leviathan (1651) knows, with considerable flamboyance in the introduction to that work. (ew iii, xi.) In Hobbes’s writings the Socratic aphorism has its more modest beginnings in the first part of his Elements. There, in a section entitled ‘Translation of the Discourse of the Minde into the discourse of the Tongue, and the errours thence proceeding’ (ew iv, 26) Hobbes introduces a philosophical problem and suggests this proverb as a means of resolving it. The problem that he presents is

how unconstantly names have been settled, and how subject they are to Equivocation, and how diversified by passion, (scarce two men agreeing what it to be called Good, and what Evil; what Liberality, what Prodigality; what Valour, what Temerity) and how subject men are to paralogism or fallacie in reasoning.

EW iv, 26

Hobbes scholars will be quick to point out that this passage echoes the language he uses to describe stasis [civil war] in Corcyra, in his translation of the third book of Thucydides. In the passages describing the civil war we hear that as a result the rhetorical representations on the island, made respectively on behalf of the parties of ‘the political equality of the multitude’ and (as Hobbes has it) ‘the moderate aristocracy’,

[t]he received value of names imposed for signification of things was changed into arbitrary. For inconsiderate boldness was count-ed true-hearted manliness; provident deliberation, a handsome fear;
modesty, the cloak of cowardice; to be wise in everything, to be lazy in everything.

**EW viii, 348**

It was rhetoric’s capacity to unsettle moral language and question shared moral values that made civil war possible in Corcyra. That rhetoric might have this capacity was, in Hobbes’s day, well understood. In the terms of Renaissance rhetoric, extensively excavated by Quentin Skinner, the rhetorical redescription of vices as virtues is called *paradiastole*. As with so many important devices of Roman *elocutio*, its formal definition can be found in Henry Peacham’s *Garden of Eloquence* (1577). There, the neo-Ciceronian rhetorician explains that ‘Paradiastole […] is when […] we doe excuse our own vices, or other mens whom we doe defend, by calling them vertues.’ Yet Hobbes’s concern in *Humane Nature* is a more fundamental inconstancy than that produced by mere rhetoric, viz. the equivocations produced by natural differences in human opinion and the weakness of human reason. ‘It is impossible’, he contends to rectify so many errors of any one man, as must needs proceed from those causes, without beginning anew from the very first grounds of all our knowledge and sense; and instead of books, reading over orderly ones own conceptions, in which meaning, I take *Nosce Teipsum* for a precept worthy the reputation it hath gotten.

**EW iv, 26**

Rhetoric thus merely exacerbated a natural tendency towards conceptual confusion. But the idea that dialectical self-reflection might have a unifying effect, and thus work to remedy conceptual confusion, also has some basis in Roman *elocutio*. Amongst the other figures of speech that Peacham lists is *paroemia*, or the rhetorical deployment of proverbs. Proverbs, Peachman tells us, are ‘[t]he Summaries of maners, or, The Images of humane life.’ He teaches us that a proverb consists of

a sentence or forme of speech much used, and commonly knowen, and also excellent for the similitude and signification: to which two things

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97 See, for example, Quentin Skinner’s “Paradiastole: redescribing the vices as virtues" in *Renaissance Figures of Speech* eds Sylvia Adamson, Gavin Alexander and Katrin Ettenhuber, (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 149–64.
are necessarily required, the one, that it be renowned, and much spoken off, as a sentence in everie mans mouth. The other, that it be witty, and well proportioned, whereby it may be discerned by some speciall marke and note from common speech, and be commended by antiquitie and learning.\footnote{Peacham, The Garden, sig. diiv.}

This has a double significance for \textit{nosce teipsum}. In a simple sense Hobbes is deploying \textit{paroemia} because he is using a well known proverb to enhance his argument. But, more fundamentally, Hobbes is insisting on a proverb whose power depends on the ‘commonly knowen’, because it is appeals to knowledge that ought to be expressible ‘in everie mans mouth’. This because it is knowledge that is already held, in some sense, by his reader.

That \textit{Leviathan} is concerned with the settling of definitions is something Hobbes freely admits in chapter four, ‘Of Speech’. In a section called ‘Necessity of Definitions’, Hobbes asserts that

\begin{quote}
[s]eeing then that truth consisteth in the right ordering of names in our affirmations, a man that seeketh precise truth, had need to remember what every name he uses stands for; and to place it accordingly; or else he will find himself entangled in words, as a bird in lime twigs; the more he struggles the more belimed.
\end{quote}

\textit{EW III, 23}

He goes on to insist that ‘in the right definition of Names, lies the first use of speech; which is the acquisition of science’. (\textit{EW III 24.}) The problem of inconstancy is revisited, with Hobbes complaining that ‘though the nature of that we conceive, be the same; yet the diversity of our reception of it, in respect of different constitutions of body, and prejudices of opinion, gives every thing a tincture of our different passions.’ (\textit{EW III, 28.}) Alluding again to the problem posed by paradiastole, Hobbes expands on the argument of \textit{Humane Nature}:

therefore in reasoning, a man must take heed of words; which besides the signification of what we imagine of their nature, have a signification also of the nature, disposition, and interest of the speaker; such as are the names of virtues and vices; for one man calleth \textit{wisdom}, what another calleth \textit{fear}; and one \textit{cruelty}, what another \textit{justice}; one \textit{prodigality}, what another \textit{magnanimity}; and one \textit{gravity}, what another \textit{stupidity}, &c. And therefore such names can never be true grounds of any ratiocination. No
more can metaphors, and tropes of speech: but these are less dangerous, because they profess their inconstancy; which the other do not.

EW III, 28

In chapter 13, ‘Of the Naturall Condition of Mankind, as concerning their Felicity, and Misery’, where Hobbes expounds his theory of the ‘State of Nature’ (a phrase that never appears in Leviathan) we can see a list of affections of the kind found in the Briefe, but this time the passions are turned into ‘Articles of Peace’. In Aristotelian terms these articles of peace might be considered irenic ἔνδοξα, it is Plato, however, that allows Hobbes to claim a universal demonstrative value underpinning this account of human nature. Hobbes urges us to consider ‘The Passions that incline men to Peace’, describing them as follows,

The Passions that incline men to peace, are feare of death, desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living, and a hope by their industry to obtain them. And reason suggesteth convenient articles of peace, upon which men may be drawn to agreement.

EW III, 116

Common passions are thus transformed into articles likely to form the basis of agreement. As in De Cive, Hobbes calls these articles ‘Lawes of Nature’. This minimalist account of natural law, where a law of nature is merely the formalisation of irenic ἔνδοξα into a simple principle confirmed by the passions, is profoundly dialectical. Although modern scholars unfamiliar with late Renaissance forms of argumentation have failed to notice it, this is precisely what Hobbes tells us in the introduction. There, in an explosion of eloquence (which, as we have noted, he never entirely abandoned) he insists that there is a ‘saying not of late understood, by which they might learn truly to read one another, if they would take the pains; and that is, Nosce teipsum, Read thy self.’ (EW III, xi.) This proverb exists, Hobbes insists,

to teach us, that for the similitude of the thoughts, and Passions of one man, to the thoughts, and Passions of another, whosoever looketh into himself, and considereth what he doth, when he does think, opine, reason, hope, feare, &c, and upon what grounds; he shall thereby read and know, what are the thoughts, and Passions of all other men, upon the like occasions.

EW III, xi
The introduction ends with Hobbes issuing the Socratic injunction to a would-be ruler,

But let one man read another by his actions never so perfectly, it serves him onely with his acquaintance, which are but few. He that is to govern a whole Nation, must read in himself, not this, or that particular man; but Man-kind: which though it be hard to do, harder than to learn any Language, or Science; yet, when I shall have set down my own reading orderly, and perspicuously, the pains left another, will be only to consider, if he also find not the same in himself. For this kind of doctrine, admisseth no other demonstration.

EW III, xii

That this is a species of formal demonstration by self-knowledge is meant, I believe, quite seriously.

The interpretation of Hobbes’s various attempts to clarify the meaning of concepts is a field that has been dominated by three names, Quentin Skinner, Richard Tuck, and Timothy Raylor. Skinner, in his magisterial survey of Hobbes's background in the Roman rhetorical tradition, *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes* (1996) has seen Hobbes as primarily responding to the destabilising influence of the Ciceronian rhetorical tradition. Tuck, on the other hand, sees in Hobbes attempt to settle concepts a reaction to ancient and modern scepticism, both the ancient variety revived by Montaigne and the novel introduction of Cartesian doubt.101 Raylor, however, follows Skinner as seeing rhetoric as being Hobbes's fundamental concern, but asserts that ‘Hobbes's understanding of rhetoric as, from the first, Aristotelian rather than Ciceronian’.102 My approach significantly differs from all three insofar as I see Hobbes as primarily engaging in a form of argumentation that unites traditional forms of rhetoric with Platonic dialectic. Hobbes is, I agree with Skinner and Raylor, concerned with the capacity of rhetoric to unsettle meaning (though contra Raylor I would say that Hobbes's conception of rhetoric includes both Ciceronian and Aristotelian concepts). Nor do I doubt that Hobbes intends throughout his career to persuade us; the dialectical account I have given


here is intended to be complementary, not supplementary, with the work of Skinner and Raylor in excavating the classical roots of Hobbes's conception of argumentation. Similarly, I think that Tuck is right to say that Hobbes is concerned with scepticism, but that is a scepticism that he encountered in the first place not from Descartes, but from the shared capacity of rhetoric and dialectic for the argumentum in utramque partem.\textsuperscript{103}

In summary, Hobbes's orator engages in a dialectical form of rhetoric that would be recognisable to Renaissance students of Plato's Phaedrus. This dialectic emphasises the role of the orator in drawing out the ideas inherent in the auditor. The formal end of this rhetoric is to induce reminiscence in its audience. Crucially, Hobbes offers his readers the means to verify his arguments with their own self-knowledge. The reader is directly invited to compare their own principles with those being proposed. This reasoning involves a kind remembering. The reader is guided to a conclusion on the basis of his own,\textsuperscript{104} rather than the author's, premises. The conclusions of any discourse can thus be said to exist in embryo in the minds of the philosopher's interlocutors. This is a consciously Socratic form of dialectic anamnesis and its function in politics is ultimately irenic, because it allows for the cultivate of a stable body of definitions from which all political argumentation might proceed. Hobbes sincerely believes that if we can commence from definitions that we already know then, as in geometry, we can unify politics via a kind of universal maker's knowledge. Points of contention and inconstant definitions can be dissolved by recalling those ideas which we all have in common. The seeds of this complicated conception of argument and demonstration has its roots, as we have seen, in a deep and sustained reading of Plato that spanned several decades.

\textsuperscript{103} This is the capacity to argue on both sides of any given question.
\textsuperscript{104} Hobbes tends to assume a male readership.