

## Kinetics of Argument: Rhetorical Vorticity of Ethos within COVID-19 Vaccination Narratives

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**Abstract** | During pandemic times, when vaccination-induced herd immunity is presumed as the sole remedy, government officials engage in wide-reaching persuasive moves to promote vaccination. Within this context, governments and government administrators assume the position of persuasive actors, or rhetors, undertaking the major task of mobilizing their entire population to vaccination action, accommodating even citizens skeptical of vaccination requirements. How can, however, the whole population of a country (and the world) be moved into action? Analyzing the rhetorical models that two countries (as rhetors) employed in early 2021, as the world still grappled with a crippling pandemic while vaccines were becoming available, our research argues that this coveted movement to action is primarily achieved through the appeal of *ethos*. Aristotle himself was singularly concerned with *ethos*, treating it as “the most important kind of *pistis*,” that is, means of persuasion. His core understanding of *ethos*, though, was not merely that of “the most important” but that of the most “authoritative, effective instrument of persuasion”—a nuance that evades translation. In closely rereading and reappraising *ethos* within a social constructionist framework, we attribute *ethos*’ dominance over the other appeals, as bestowed by Aristotle himself, to its inherent ability to be reinvented according to the intended audience. We specifically examine the ethical appeals generated in Greece and Israel, two countries with the highest early vaccination rates, as they attempted to motivate their first citizens to be vaccinated against COVID-19. This analysis of *ethos* as a *kinetical*, living organism chiseled in and through discourse reframes the traditional approach to a rhetor’s character as a fixed, solid entity into an ongoing, unraveling, happening, and becoming at once, and produces what we call a “rhetorical vorticity of *ethos*.” The implications of this work are significant for the design of persuasive messages by institutional or government entities to appeal to vast, often negatively predisposed, audiences.

**Keywords** | Ethos, Invented ethos, Situated ethos, Rhetorical Vorticity, Kinetical ethos, Persuasion, Character, Rhetor, Audience, COVID-19, Pandemic, Greece, Israel, Vaccination, Aristotle

## Introduction

In recent years, the inquiry into *ethos* (or the appeal through the character of the speaker) has gained fresh prominence, with many arguing that we live in a burgeoning culture of *ethos* (Fortenbaugh; Niu and Ying 43), an “Age of Ethos” (Baumlin and Meyer 21) that has sidelined the once dominant *logos*. At the same time, in the field of Public Policy, collaborative governance through reasoning and persuasion is gaining traction, leading Vivian Bradford to claim that we live in a “discursive economy” (13). Such assertions seem to position discursive *ethos* as the keystone of our times, re-establishing the status it carried in Aristotelian times. In fact, Aristotle’s own particular interest in *ethos*, as constructed by means of speech, was defined in the *Rhetoric* as “the most important (*kyriotaten*) kind of proof (*pistis*)” (qtd. in Garver 173), that is, means of persuasion. Etymologically, “most important” in the Ancient Greek text does not mean merely more important compared to the other two appeals, that is, *logos* and *pathos*, but “having power, being a lord, a master” (Liddell, et al.), being “the most authoritative, effective, instrument of persuasion” (Aristotle qtd. in Meredith Cope’s Commentary 31)—a nuance that evades translation. Indeed, *ethos* has been thriving in its bestowed dominance throughout rhetorical history, albeit in a way not fully explored or understood, with the overwhelming majority of *ethos* studies being descriptive in nature. Treating the Aristotelian maxim as a definitional quest rather than a causal or evaluative one, these studies readily indicate a gap in the extant literature: Why is *ethos* the most important-dominant kind of *pistis*? In this paper, we attempt to provide some preliminary insight by attributing the dominance of *ethos* to its potential for movement (*kinesis*) and, hence, its ability to resolve arguments in ways that the rest of the appeals of the Aristotelian theory of persuasion cannot. Our analysis is principally theoretical and explanatory. However, to instantiate our thesis, we will use two examples of attempts at promoting COVID-19 vaccination through mass persuasion by governments in two distinct cultural contexts, Greece and Israel.

In the first months of 2021, while the world was grappling with a crippling pandemic, a historic moment took place: The availability of the first mRNA vaccines against COVID-19. In this much anticipated move that contained, in concentrated form, humanity’s hopes for the end of the pandemic, governments and government administrators assumed the position of rhetors and undertook the major task of moving their entire population to vaccination action. To do so, they scanned their available means of persuasion in the given rhetorical situation (*endechomena pithana*) to “select with care” (Enos and Agnew) logical, emotional, but most importantly, ethical appeals to quickly mobilize their citizens to vaccination action. However, the common assumption of *ethos* as prior reputation, or a unified set of fixed social information entrenched in the social conscience that the rhetor may activate to rework the audience’s perceptions

(situated *ethos*), is especially problematic: People in opposition to the governing party, or authority in general, are highly unlikely to be moved into action through such an appeal. As Jacqueline Royster underscores, speakers not infrequently “come to a rhetorical task with a reputation, that is, with a situated ethos more often than not deeply compromised” (65). In these exigences, *ethos* needs to be (re)invented on top of situated ethos. Rhetors, then, need to forsake the solid but static nature of their situated *ethos* and invent a credible character for the given audience with words. This discursively engineered *ethos* leads to an ephemeral or, rarely, more permanent reconceptualization, or refashioning, of a speaker’s credibility. Ultimately, such a move generates the coveted invention mode needed to move the non-supportive audience (government officials’ ideological opponents and vaccine-hesitant citizens) toward action. Every time this reinvention/refashioning happens, situated *ethos* alternates with invented *ethos*, and invented *ethos*, after some period of stabilization and habituation, is reinvented anew. *Ethos* is motivated by *kinesis*, creating a character-based persuasion in motion. To unravel this movable/mutable nature of *ethos* and associate it with the principal role Aristotle assigns to it in the *Rhetoric*, we comparatively analyze the vaccine compliance *ethos*-based arguments that Greece and Israel employed in early 2021 to bring their population to vaccination action as the COVID-19 pandemic was moving into its peak phase. We specifically narrow down to the two countries’ Prime Ministers and Greece’s health care professionals wherein *ethos* was enacted in different ways.

Within this framework, the primary objective of this study is to reevaluate the idea that *ethos* is a notion with *kinesis*, versatility, and instability, and highlight it as a powerful tool for the design of persuasive messages by institutional or governmental entities to appeal to vast, often negatively predisposed, audiences. Essentially, we aspire to show that situated *ethos* and invented *ethos* are locked into a perpetual orbital dance, producing a unique form of *rhetorical vorticity*, which in turn produces forward movement for the whole population of a country. Our goal in this paper is to explore how this movement is accomplished. Towards this objective, the paper has been divided into three parts. The first part is concerned with the conceptual framing of our research within the current state of knowledge surrounding *ethos*. Reviewing the manifold theoretical and empirical strands of *ethos*, we trace explanations in the extant literature as to why *ethos* is the “most important kind of *pistis*.” We position ourselves within the social constructionist epistemology and argue for *ethos*’ dominance because of its non-static/generative nature. *Ethos*, we contend, emerges as the vortical flow achieved by the concatenated but juxtaposed movement between situated and invented *ethos*. In this sense, *ethos* generates the motion that moves the audience along into action, essentially creating persuasion. To fertilize the ground for our proposition, we provide some definitions of *ethos*, which lead to a review of previous treatments of the concept of rhetorical *kinesis* as associated with *ethos* in literature. Also, we lay out the theoretical underpinnings of *ethos*, the conceptual edifice upon which the two countries-rhetors’ arguments will be analyzed. In the next section, we present our preliminary results from the *ethos* appeals of the two countries. In this section we analyze in depth the ethical plasticity of *ethos* that facilitates the ethical vorticity. The final part concludes with a discussion of the three key points of our study. These are a) invented *ethos*’ desire to participate in the different social situations, a desire accomplished by the workings of language to change self-narratives and create consequent, new social realities; b) the

concept of *kinetical ethos*, namely a character that oscillates between a state of existence (that is, situated *ethos*) and a state of inventiveness (that is, invented *ethos*) due to the exact desire and potency of invented ethos for social immersion in the different rhetorical environments. *Kinetical ethos* in this sense is a property of the *ethos* construct; c) the concept of *ethos' rhetorical vorticity* itself. Due to this property of *kinetical ethos*, *rhetorical vorticity* is created, being the immediate effect of *ethos'* aforementioned property, and the tangible outcome of *ethos'* employment in communication and persuasion. Similar to *kinetical ethos*, *rhetorical vorticity* delineates *ethos'* movement (*kinesis*) from a situated *ethos*—that is, the narrative an individual uses about themselves as a result of society's story sharing about them, and a metanarrative of the individual's narrative in the community—to an invented *ethos*—that is, a productive cognitive framework for recreating the speaker's character by way of communicative action—to another situated *ethos*, and so forth. This movement happens not only once but in an ongoing circular, vortical fashion in which one type of *ethos* invokes and builds atop the other. However, more than this delineation of *ethos'* circular movement, *rhetorical vorticity* describes the effect of using the *kinesis* and vorticity of *ethos*, both upon the perception and knowledge created in the audience and upon communication at large, ultimately showing how ideas *progress* and change through *ethos*. *Rhetorical vorticity* is, in this sense, one of Rhetoric's many ways for “the progression of ideas through the speech,” as Hepler-Smith (19) writes.

### Conceptual Framing

Is *ethos* a state or an activity? An “overarching and definable core self” or “an endless sequence of self-presentations structured for different audiences” (Fliegelman qtd. in Bradford 11)? Character formed before words or character cultivated in words? An inert or a generative condition? A long tradition of understanding a person, that is, a pre-understanding, or a re-understanding of the person after some discursive performance and labor? An act of looking back or an act of looking forward? History or story? *Stasis* or *Kinesis*? *Ethos* is both fixity and variability: *Situated ethos is to presume character; invented ethos to assume character*; “authority” is “conferred” but also “constructed” (Lindquist 9). This paper proposes that *ethos* is, within social constructionism, an ongoing whirlpool and circulation between the two *ethe*, uniquely driven by the dynamic properties of invented *ethos*, profoundly allowing for a continuous transmutation of audience's thoughts, and a reengineering of social perception. This is why *ethos* is the most important means of persuasion. This metaphor of the whirlpool within the purview of communication has been an age-old concept. Marshall McLuhan, in his landmark '60s study on mass-age media, unveils the media maelstrom engendered by “advertising and persuasive messages” to lure the audience into an endless swirl of deliberate disorientation. McLuhan critiques the charmed circle of *Mad Men* who, driven by their intention to gain intimate access to “the collective public mind [...] in order to manipulate, exploit, control,” made persuasion illicitly take the shape of a propagandistic and treacherous whirlpool (Soules 1–2). However, persuasion as this propagandistic maelstrom is not the only form of audience mobilization. Persuasion is also, and probably first of all, a whirlpool that advances ideas, life, and humans themselves by putting them in a healthy and conscious orbit oscillating between stability and dynamism, that is, between situated and invented *ethe*, as they are co-created by the rhetor and the audience.

This kinship of rhetoric with circulation is celebrated chiefly in Mary E. Stuckey's essay, "On Rhetorical Circulation," which, among others, is attentive to how "by performing and circulating performances of [...] social roles those [...] roles are created" (609). Significantly, these circulated/repeated performances of social roles are closely comparable to the incipient form of situated *ethos*, a concept Stuckey overlooked. Our literature review below illustrates this circulation of situated *ethos* and also delves into the progressive development of the concept of *ethos* in chronological order. Starting with the most remote progenitor of *ethos* depicted in the Homeric work, we move forward to how *ethos* came to be viewed in WWII, the '60s, and the '90s when it started acquiring a *kinetic*, social, and flexible flavor within a social constructionist approach. This is where our own analysis is positioned.

The earliest form of situated *ethos* coupled with the circulation and repetition of social roles had its genesis in the *Iliad*. It originally amounted to the public moral character that audiences expected from a particular speaker, a character-reverberation of the shared communal values, social routines, and tribal presuppositions (A. B. Miller; LeFevre; Baumlin and Baumlin). To put it another way, situated *ethos* represented the customary actions the person was known for, civically applauded for, and crucially, existed in the society for. Character, then, had its own grammar of accustomed characteristics—a grammar of being. Before anything else, character was enshrined in the community, denoting both translucent mirrorings of a social role within a given cultural system and its entailing communal thinking dispositions, and shapings/makings of that role. An archetypical example was Nestor, the embodiment of *mythos* (that is, counsel and wise speech) that was the expected situated *ethos* and social template for the elderly (Frobish 22). Nestor, the oldest and wisest of all, is invoked five times to consult the military leaders (23), and each time his *mythos* is enriched and echoed by a previous one, his *ethos* being not only an expression (mirroring) of a social role but, most elementally the formation (shaping/making) of this role (Halloran 63)<sup>1</sup>: Enacting social roles generates these roles. Consequently, Nestor's presence and behavior are a structured, recurrent orbital dance and his *ethos* one that strengthens with repetitive performance; a sequential positive reinforcement of *ethos* or what Mary Hoffman and Debra Ford perceive as an "identity maintenance," reminiscing Paolo Vivante's identical conception of situated *ethos* as "the sheer recurrence of certain positions and motions" (qtd. in Frobish 26). This 'conservation' of *ethos* and rhythmic replication of the same stereotypical/predictable *ethotic* pattern—principally, an identifiable, formulaic response that has garnered communal consensus—implicates an inherent circularity and inner, endogenous, and intrinsically-induced vorticity between an *ethos* and its subsequent, more bolstered version: a confirmed and reconfirmed *ethos*, an echoed and reechoed *ethos*. What really renders *ethos* a more complex and sophisticated notion of rhetorical circulation, however, beyond situated *ethos*' internal vorticity, is the circulation of *ethos* instigated by the Aristotelian invented *ethos*, a character that is not reechoed, re-invoked, and repeated but rather storified, constructed, and reconstructed through discursive acts so as to respond to a rhetorical situation for which situated *ethos*' fixed credibility is inadequate. Rather than a re-echoing of the past, this *ethos* is an echoing of the present

<sup>1</sup>"The ritual acts that manifest [...] *ethos* are the very same acts that form it" (Halloran 63).



and sociality as it is constructed with specific rhetorical orientations toward the immediate social moment and audience (Liu in Niu and Ying 43).

This circulation is mainly accomplished as situated *ethos* is discursively regenerated/reformed into an invented *ethos* and, in turn, alternates with another situated *ethos* and a successive invented *ethos* anew. The aggregate of this concatenated array of *ethos* has two important entailments. Firstly, a pluralistic character is generated, characterized by adaptability, expansiveness, redefinition, mutability, multifariousness, customizability, and “otheredness” (Dubisar 133), the other character and authority the speaker can inhabit and assume by discourse itself (Halloran 60). We call this character, whose core characteristic is the communicative agility to break away from one, singular, and monolithic identity, *kinetical ethos*. *Kinetical ethos* has at its core the idea that *ethos* works only as a self-multifariousness. It is both the re-narrativization of the speaker in the given social transactions, operations, environments, and scenes (invented *ethos*), and—encapsulated in the collective intelligence—the story of an individual (situated *ethos*). Situated *ethos* is a *stasis*. It is an ex-post instrumentalization in that it operationalizes a preconceived, profoundly ingrained idea the community holds for the speaker and reinforces it. As a reputation, shared socially and denoting the collective intuition and cultivated, collaborative perception that a distinct cultural or social unit has adopted about an individual, situated, stasiastic *ethos* precedes the rhetorical situation. It is, therefore, referred to as established models of being and the credibility associated with this being; a grammar of being as it has been imprinted in the cultural grammar. Put differently, it is a relatively stable self-representation that captures the ‘core’ of the person, being astonishingly consonant with the handling of *ethos* in the Homeric epics as a public stability endorsed by the community, almost pattern-governed and drawing upon that community’s shared reality, meaning-making structures, semiotic and cultural frameworks, and the collective thought architecture. Conversely, invented *ethos* corresponds to *kinesis*. It can be regarded as an ex-ante instrumentalization: a linguistic (re)presentation of the self used to portray a character that recalibrates the speaker’s self-narrative in ways the audience approves and finds effective. Invented *ethos*, rather than a self that is invoked from the past, is a self provoked in the present, and is uniquely *praxis*-oriented, with the aid of which the speaker can elicit the audience’s assent.<sup>2</sup> While the epicenter of situated *ethos* is the collective consciousness regarding an individual, the primary focus of invented *ethos* is discourse and a character presented through the discursive activity to recreate the speaker’s self-storytelling. Founded on discourse, invented *ethos* pertains to the task of generating meaningful performances to elicit a given audience’s trust. In other words, *ethos* is refitted to be socially elicitable, elicited by audiences, for audiences and by social situations, for social situations. This means that invented *ethos* is forward-looking and anticipatory.

Secondly, the concatenation of situated (*stasis*) and invented *ethos* (*kinesis*) produces a vortical flow, which in turn produces movement and persuasion. By *stasis* and *kinesis*, we refer to the dichotomy of *stasis* and *kinesis*, formulated in Ancient Greek thought, signifying stillness and movement respectively. Otto Alvin Loeb Dieter has provided a thorough account of the terms, from Plato’s treatment of *stasis* as a state of

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<sup>2</sup>As Charles R. Fenno remarks, rhetoric embodies “the analytical, structural, and stylistic processes which writers must control in order to gain reader understanding and assent” (243).

repose, equilibrium, and quietude to Aristotle's interpretation of one term as antipodal to the other, and the Heraclitan delineation of *stasis* as "eremia," meaning an idling condition (Dieter 214–215). This inertia and movement are significant per se, but it is their inter-involvement that has primacy. Sarah Rivière accurately views *stasis* "as one part of a more extended sequence of *kinesis-stasis-kinesis*, where *kinesis* – undirected movement – forms the counter-term to *stasis*" (Rivière 83). Extrapolating this dyad in the *ethos* model, we suggest that *ethotic* persuasion is a seamless interlacing/circulation of situated *ethos*, corresponding to *stasis*, and invented *ethos*, corresponding to *kinesis*. Situated *ethos* as *stasis* finds expression as a coherent self-narrative carrying strong connotations of a psychological anchor that allows the speaker to use it as a continuous and consistent self-presentation. Nevertheless, it is this very staticity that acts as a *groundswell*, an inflated terrain that awaits the action and *kinesis* to spill over and move the audiences forward, and, consequently, calls for the complementarity of its antithetical position. This impulsiveness for *kinesis* (Carter 99),<sup>3</sup> effectuated by invented *ethos* and demanded by *situated* *ethos*, serves as a linchpin for the speaker's character development, propelling persuasion forward.

Invented *ethos* is described by scholars as an ensemble of diverse and reactive selves which happens linguistically through the rhetors' mingling with social and rhetorical needs and settings (Bradford 106, 108; Baumlin and Meyer; Schmertz 83, 88; Killingsworth 252; Halloran 60–61; Reynolds 326; Ryan et al. 5–6, 11; Dubisar 132). This process of discursively spawning complementary, new selves is a process of linguistic self-innovation, of retrofitting new selves with old ones. As such, being highly derivative of one another, situated and invented *ethos* collaboratively induce a continuum where one part permeates and flows into the other.<sup>4</sup> In this interflow and the being/becoming—essence/process dichotomy—the creative or dynamic synergy<sup>5</sup> of the two apparently contradictory elements is enacted. We regard this vorticity and interfusion as the driving force for persuasion. The dynamic interplay of acting on a character and inventing a new character is a robustly sustained fusion between a preexisting *arete* and a locally intelligent *kairos* (Baxter 15), that is, between "deeds motivated by moral consistency and actions resulting from perceptive responsiveness," between deeds motivated by a conventionalized, situated *ethos* forged by *hexis* (*stable disposition* or *possession* as Pierre Rodrigo notes on the term) (Rodrigo 6) and a socially tailored, invented, *kairotic ethos* that is, by definition, apropos, and propitious to a rhetorical occasion.

This notion of *ethos* as a dynamic and open-ended phenomenon found its first expression in Aristotle's most prominent conceptual forerunner: the Homeric thought.

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<sup>3</sup>The interpretation of *stasis* as a generative condition with *kinetic* impulses is thoroughly treated by Michael Carter who contends that "stasiastic conflict is generative, creating an impetus for rhetorical action" (99). Specifically, *stasis* as "the result of the confrontation of two opposing movements or forces, [...] bears a strong sense of the potential energy of creation and action" (99). Sarah Rivière similarly highlights the 'charged' nature of *stasis* that "creatively enables new and energetic production to follow" (91).

<sup>4</sup>The mingling of *stasis* and *kinesis* has been a focal point of analysis in multiple scopes and disciplines, including literature, architecture, and picture book art (see, Connolly; Rivière; Stephens).

<sup>5</sup>Our proposition echoes Michael Carter's and Sarah Rivière's ideas of *stasis* as a generative source and starting point sparking off rhetorical and social action.

Among other authors, Rachel Ahern Knudsen supplies a broadened understanding of the Homeric texts as “the locus for the origins of rhetoric” (2), with Maria Noussia concomitantly considering them manifestations of “‘pre-rhetorical’/ ‘pre-conceptual’ rhetoric,”<sup>6</sup> a proto-rhetoric that was bequeathed to Aristotle, materially affecting his own ideas and considerations. Homeric texts have a solid pre-Aristotelian underlying core, Knudsen contends, including the particular employment of invented *ethos* by Iliadic speakers (125), an anachronism that George A. Kennedy also identifies (Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric* 11). As an original illustrative example, Knudsen delineates that “when a need for persuasion arises, Zeus is no match for his consort, who must rely on wheedling and tricky speech rather than on pure authority to achieve her goals” (Knudsen 84). William Fortenbaugh cites the episode in the *Iliad* where Nestor is intervening to wane Achilles’ anger and reconcile him with Agamemnon. Therein the speaker constructs perceived credibility by presenting practical, “teleological” (M. Smith 55) wisdom (*phronesis*), virtue (*arête*), and goodwill (*eunoia*), through his speech choices (Fortenbaugh 211–212): Nestor is two generations older than his Trojan comrades (Dickson 10), an elderliness that confers practical wisdom on him; he is positively disposed, fraternal and congenial toward both Agamemnon and Achilles (he has goodwill towards his hearers); he has fought gallantly in his prime years (he has the virtue of courage). In the Homeric tradition, *ethos* is more than an ingrained, stasiastic authority; it is a consequential linguistic event sufficient to reshape a person’s character. Even in this nascent phase, well ahead of being given lexical existence and vocabulary and well ahead of its formal conceptualization and systematic analysis, invented *ethos* has epistemologically been there in a pre-defined, pre-verbalized, and proto-theoretical form. It precociously but definitively represented the idea of the linguistic generation or provocation of the authorial self within different rhetorical microenvironments and its accompanying begotten credibility.

Hinged on this preludial material, Aristotle recolonized the mind of Homer, and further promulgated *ethos* as an invented, “*ontologically new*” (Bellini 152)<sup>7</sup> and existentially important, discursive character contrived to infect audiences immune to situated *ethos* alone. To do so, he infused “the doctrine of choice” with it, that is, “the choices evidenced by the speaker in his speech” (Sattler 59), and presented it as an engineerable, adaptive, and obstetric concept. As it ensues from Aristotle’s discussion of *arête* in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, “character is derived from deliberate choice” (C.R. Smith qtd. in Shellenberger 77) and, therefore, invented *ethos* is synonymous with the intentionality of “building the credibility of a speaker before an audience” (C.R. Smith 5).<sup>8</sup> Within this presumption, “Aristotle changes the ethical tone of rhetorical theory from customary morality to that of reflective morality” (Sattler 64), that is, from a moral character that preexists and reflects community expectations, to one which is a form of cognitive labor (a form of rhetorical meta-thinking or thinking about the audience’s

<sup>6</sup>The locution “pre-conceptual” was first used by John Kirby to display how Hesiod’s work is the preliminary material for the subsequent emergence of rhetoric.

<sup>7</sup>The phrase is used by Bellini to describe, from a phenomenological perspective, the process of *self-shaping*: “far from being only ontologically *new* beings [...] we are also—and first of all—ontologically *innovative* beings” (Bellini 152).

<sup>8</sup>Consequently, invented *ethos* is the judicious, strategic choice to fit *ethos* in its social connectedness through linguistic means.



thinking), specifically composed to “ingratiate” themselves (Burke) with the audience. This marks a move from *ethos*’ invariableness, and its static nature as “the community’s assessment of a person’s habitual practices” (Hawhee and Crowley 108) and the individual’s long-lasting reputation and (favorable) earlier performance (C.R. Smith 15). Crucially, it leads to the transmutation of the rhetor’s self-narrative, which is tantamount to the transmutation of the audience’s perception of them.

The possibilities of human identity<sup>9</sup> and different selves that are born out of the rhetorical exigence essentially frame character as an inventional act (Sattler 64). In terms of Aristotelian rhetorical theory, the discussion of character as invention centers around the rhetor’s powerful capability to conceive in their discourse an opportune/fit-for-the-task self-projection (Killingsworth 251–252). Following this tradition sociologists and interactionists<sup>10</sup> (for example, Erving Goffman—performed self; Ralph H. Turner—role making; Mark Snyder—self-monitoring; Anselm Strauss—identity transformation in “turning points”; Atkinson)<sup>11</sup> as well as rhetoricians within the social constructionist approach (for example, Michael Halloran, Karen Burke LeFevre, Susan Miller etc.)<sup>12</sup> have expanded Aristotle’s arguments. The basic premise for social constructionism, which also frames our research, is that “all thought, discourse, and a priori, all writing take place in some social context” (Olson and Rorty 3). In Kenneth Bruffee’s definition, “social construction understands reality, knowledge, thought, fact, selves, and so on as community generated [...] linguistic entities” (774). By this account, Aristotle’s discursive, invented *ethos* rather than being a stand-alone, asocial/a-contextual entity, is a socially constituted, intrinsically *kinetic* entity deriving its essence by being tied to the local circumstances and interactions. Our rhetorical character is necessarily in a perpetual quest for self-reinvention. In the 1990s, along with the “social turn” in composition studies, the entirely re-constructible, and highly disorderly nature of *ethos* is acknowledged: Nedra Reynolds posits that “*ethos*, like postmodern subjectivity, shifts and changes over time, across texts, and around competing spaces” (326). James Baumlin and Craig Meyer also find that character’s “nature arises in *performance*. The self, in this sense, is a mode of personation—a mask” (5). In this field of social thinking and

<sup>9</sup>The premise that invented *ethos* embodies the ontological possibilities of human identity is reminiscent of Craig R. Smith’s perspective on invented *ethos* as “the realm of linguistic possibilities” (C.R. Smith 13), suggesting that these ontological possibilities are necessarily mediated by the linguistic nature of humanity.

<sup>10</sup>For a comprehensive list of the interactionist tradition that refers to the social construction of *ethos*, see, Christopher Philip Moorhouse’s work.

<sup>11</sup>Erving Goffman’s *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* provides the seminal proposition that there is no core self; self is highly endemic to the contextual situatedness. Our identities are rootless; being rooted only in the contextuality of a given social or communicative moment. Similarly, Ralph H. Turner and Mark Snyder discuss the contextualization/localization/optimization of the self within the ecosystem of social relations, interacting partners and occasions it finds itself in, with Turner proclaiming self’s volatility and with Snyder forming the term “self-monitoring” to emphasize the degree to which individuals have an awareness and control over their public appearance. Anselm Strauss observes that defining life events perturb an individual’s sense of self-image, leading to an identity re-formation.

<sup>12</sup>Michael Halloran examines the quality and effect of the rhetorical, social self. Self, or *ethos*, depends largely on the situational context and interpersonal ‘rubbing’; *ethos* emerges as the synergistic trait of them. “Ethos,” he maintains, “is manifested in rhetorical action,” rather than in “a good reputation” (60). Consequently, invented *ethos* is the idea and opportunity of the re-presentation of the character in the verbal realm. Likewise, in Karen Burke LeFevre’s and Susan Miller’s theoretical frameworks, *ethos* is a linguistic device for self-portrayal locally determined within the micro-context of the communicative event. See also, Fofana-Kamara; Shaver; Dubisar; Schmertz; Nelson Christoph.

becoming, Trevor Parry-Giles and Shawn Parry-Giles point us to the “vulnerability and fluidity of human character” (qtd. in Baxter 15), while a continual process of identity formation is maintained similarly by Stuart Hall, who writes that we are “the social subjects of particular discourses” (5–6). Within this research scope, James McTavish holds that “rhetoric considers the actual practice of character” (66), and he is echoed by Modu Fofana-Kamara who expounds that Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* “provides a system for the praxis of ethos” (20), for a pragmatic (Hawhee and Crowley 108; Li 13), social (Reynolds 327), and adjustable *ethos* that performs rather than is pre-formed. In the same way that Aristotle viewed rhetoric as *praxis*, he deemed character to be a practical character, an intrinsically discursive instrumentality that ongoingly fashions and refashions itself according to the rhetorical context. Ethos is a “performative self” (10), a phrasing that Vivian Bradford supplies, building on Richard Lanham’s consonantly apt term “homo rhetoricus,” signifying a “social self” (qtd. in Bradford 10) that is performed mindful of the social occurrences it lies in. Within this framework, Atkinson views self as “always social, in that it is a property of social encounters and engagements” (18). *Ethos* in action/practice is also further intimately involved in Susan Jarratt and Nedra Reynolds’s postmodernist postulation that the “speaking self” is not “completely known or stable” (53). Analogously, with their conceptually concordant “feminist ecological ethē,” intended to mean plural *ethe*, Kathleen J. Ryan, Nancy Meyers, and Rebecca Jones are quick to discern this non-singularity of *ethos* (11). They argue that feminist scholarship shall “open up new ways of envisioning ethos to acknowledge the multiple, nonlinear relations operating among rhetors audience, things, and contexts” (3). They specifically argue about the “resilience” of ethos, namely a “‘process of rhetorically engaging with material circumstances and situational exigencies’ that is relational, responsive, and potentially transformative (Flynn, Sotirin, and Brady 7)” (5–6).

The governing principle that envelops the postulations of these theorists is to bring *ethos* from a state of *stasis* to a state of continual *kinesis*, as they conceive of *ethos* as a communicative, performative act. Their main concern, which also frames this paper, is to consider how *ethos* performs and acts rather than what *ethos* is. Besides, as Aristotle himself writes, “it [is] important that rhetors [do] not rely on their reputation alone, as ethos is put in play in each rhetorical situation” (qtd. in Ihlen 12). Concomitant is Thomas Benson’s notable grasp of the subject that “rhetorical being is an action; not an essence [...] Rhetorical being is a becoming, both the revelation of an inner condition and the ongoing creation of interacting selves” (320). Rhetorical being or *ethos* emanates from continual adaptation; it is the product of both the dynamically changing lived experience and the shared dialogue of the interacting social actors within that lived social reality. It is the continuous flux from situated to invented *ethos*, rendering the whole construct of *ethos* an adaptive learning system. We have called this phenomenon “rhetorical vorticity” of situated and invented *ethos*. Most saliently, though, we intend to demonstrate that we can appreciate *ethos*’ paramouncy in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* by admitting to *ethos*’ *kinetic*, regenerative nature. This nature is what transforms *ethos* more than once; the *kinesis* is not a one-way movement from situated to invented *ethos* but an incessant *kinesis* between situated and invented *ethos*: a *rhetorical vorticity*. Our point is that *ethos*’ movement—its very nature as a socially intelligent, plastic, and renewable organ—makes it “the most important kind of pistis.”

## Analysis of Ethos

### Vaccinating Doctors and Nurses in Greece

When it comes to persuasion, the value of an argument rests in acting on it. Nurses and doctors in Greece, the first people to be vaccinated in early 2021, have an established situated *ethos* concerning medical affairs and, for the most part, their persuasive moves lay in exploiting this prior *ethos*. Such moves allow them to build on their medical expertise and present their actions as medically justified, beneficial for the people, and overall effective. In this regard, as soon as they enact their preexisting social identity as medical professionals and endorse vaccination, persuasion should naturally occur: Their situated *ethos*, that is, “the person’s habituated traits” (Baxter 14) and “accepted reputation” (Dubisar 131), has an intrinsically argumentative immediacy, being putatively a ready vehicle for persuasion (Leith 93), autonomous and independent of the mediation of *techne* (technical or artistic appeals) to be viable (Rapp). However, such an *a-technic* (artless) move promoted public trust towards vaccination only for the pro-vaccine audience, being of little import to the remaining, skeptical, and possibly hostile, audience. Skeptical of both inoculation and government officials, this resistant audience would hardly be moved into vaccination action by arguments from people who are a priori untrustworthy to them. Given this settled situation lacking the kind of *kinetic* energy and the kind of inventive and adaptive capacity that can cognitively restructure the hostile audience’s disposition, the rhetors are called to move beyond the traditional use of *ethos* as situated *ethos* and re-frame their self-narratives. Re-architecting self in such a manner entails re-architecting trust: If rhetors appear trustworthy, their vaccination messages will do so as well. Situated *ethos* needs to become situational. Indeed, one type of *ethos* is a mental representation containing the public knowledge about an individual’s identity and reproducing it. This representation, residing in the collective mind, functions as a reputational imprint that derives from the speaker’s social imprint and history as it has been developed through the habitual interaction of the individual in a community (Brahnam 14–15). Situational or invented *ethos* is also a mental representation but one significantly pliable, enabling the individual to regulate through speech acts the human perception and ideas about them, control their self-narrative, and thus compensate for the persuasive inefficacy the staticity of situated *ethos* often ensues. Perceptions have limitations that linguistic maneuverability can rectify. As a result, despite its earlier adamancy regarding vaccination, the hostile audience is re-approached through a different persuasive persona able to change its mind and attitude. But what are the very specific moves the rhetors take to actually cater to this anti-vaccine audience through *ethos*?

When nurses and doctors are inoculated and accompany this act with pertinent utterances, their situated *ethos* is fortified with a new rhetorical “mode of being” (Foucault in Bauman and Meyer 6), an invented *ethos* deployed to encourage vaccination willingness in audiences of lower vaccine acceptance. The first person vaccinated in Greece, Efstathia Kampisiouli, lends herself perfectly to this invention process. Kampisiouli, a critical care nurse, said live on TV right after her COVID-19 vaccination: “This is a great honor for me. In my person, the entire nursing profession is honored, and the honor is a recognition of our work and our contribution. I hope that a new page will start from today, but we have a long way to go. We must follow the measures and be

faithful to our goal, and after we are all vaccinated, we will regain our lives” (Newsroom, our translation). Such utterances, more than just words, are conveyances of the self that impinge on the traditional nurse image. In this character furnished by the social and discursive workings of *ethos*, the nurse’s *ethos* loses its native, fixed undertone. No longer connoting “the speaker’s inherent worth” (C.R. Smith 5), well-established “intrinsic authority” (McIntyre and McKee 66), “innate ethos” (Chamberlain 100) and “intrinsic, habitualised moral character” (M. Smith 53), Ms. Kampisiouli’s *ethos* makes room through discursive expression for a new persona based on invented *ethos*’ intrinsic pliability instead. This *ethos* is meant “‘to open a space’ through language that allows the self to be heard and, saliently, *to be seen*” (Foucault qtd. in Baumlin and Meyer 6). It is character perceived in the language. Significantly, this act of a seeable *ethos* through discourse where character becomes a linguistic article on display in itself<sup>13</sup> reveals a new dimension of the self, which is not the nurse’s trust in the vaccine. After all, trust in vaccines and science at large is part of her situated *ethos* as a health care worker. The new aspect of her character is that she herself is vaccinated. We claim that doctors and nurses presented as patients, being care receivers instead of caregivers, especially live on network TV, constitutes a *rhetorical reengineering*. At its heart, it is invented *ethos* that most prominently functions as a reimagining of these personas that the agency of words, linguistic ramifications, and some verbal workmanship allowed for.

More concretely, this invented *ethos* arises from emotional underpinnings, particularly from altruistic *eunoia*. There are two considerations of *eunoia* here. Firstly, driven by a profound sense to express goodwill without expectations from the targeted audience, the medical personnel are the first to get vaccinated. By doing so, they make a personal sacrifice on which the audience may rely to get vaccinated themselves. In light of this, doctors and nurses engage in some form of reflective listening of the mute fears and concerns of the audience: They sympathize with them and, being highly aware and cognizant of its inner emotional and cognitive world and worldview, communicate this deep, sensitive, and empathic understanding back to them by being the first to get the vaccine. They enlist empathy and succeed in resonating with the audience’s emotional state, being perfectly attuned to their emotional barometer. This vibrant sign of care incites trustworthiness and puts confidence in the two sides’ interpersonal interaction. Most importantly, it emotionally traverses every single member of the audience and leverages the speaker-audience relationship so that the audience is ‘persuaded’ to continue listening to the story, emulate the story, and, ultimately, get vaccinated. Secondly, aside from this sacrifice, the vaccination of the healthcare workers is wholesome first for the audience, and then for themselves. It is an act of one-way friendship that does not necessitate “reciprocated good” (C.R. Smith 12) on the part of the audience. The rhetor “is wishing good for others for their sake” (12). Such benevolence and beneficence emanate primarily from the term “hope” that Kampisiouli uses. The health care worker invests such an affective commitment in the audience that she feels hopeful not for herself but for the audience. As a corollary, her goodwill is construed as the alignment, psychological connection, and heightened emotional engagement/consonance with the audience. Her goodwill is the *pathos* aspect of her invented *ethos* argument, and goodwill, per se, is the emotional center of invented *ethos*

<sup>13</sup>Or what can be otherwise theorized as a visibly present and conspicuous *ethos*—an *ethos* on view possible through the room that language acts made for it.

(Kinneavy and Warschauer qtd. in Isaksson; Ihlen; Baumlin and Meyer). All in all, operating in this exploration rather than exploitation mode for their *ethos*, these rhetorically invented personas are accorded “discursive authority” (Reynolds) and “authoritativeness” (McCroskey) effective for significantly larger audiences unfacilitated by the original situated *ethos* argument alone. As such, their *ethos* constitutes an unfolding state, made possible by the intertwining performance of stable and discursive, reactive selves, that is, situated and invented *ethe* (Benson 320). Ethos is invariably in action (320) and movement.

### **Vaccinating the Greek Prime Minister**

Aristotle made the claim that we believe the speaker through his being a certain “kind of person” (Kennedy, *Rhet.* 1377b). In the case of politicians, audiences have differing views about their “kind of person” but the fact remains that they are by default believable for being a country’s elected navigator. Sheltered under this rank and “social standing,” a prime minister’s worthiness of credence transcends the political or governmental affairs and expands into areas outside the exclusive discursive or disciplinary scope where he habitually and professionally engages (Yagelski). For the Greek prime minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, the moment of vaccination was an opportunity to act on his perceived public image in the community (Burke) to communicate that the vaccine is safe, effective, and important. Activating his situated persona would persuade the audience segments that already resonated with this *ethos*, being at the same time unsatisfactory/insufficient for the entire nation of the vastly different audiences, and all the more so, for audiences who would hardly ever decide to get vaccinated simply because their leader admonished them to do so. For this other population with the profoundly antithetical frames of mind, the Prime Minister was called upon to generate a perceptual rearrangement of himself atop his argument of situated *ethos*. This goal was accomplished by his own vaccination (invented *ethos*) while he articulated his pro-vaccine message: “Today is a great victory for science. It is a great victory for the European Union. Today we all smile under our masks [...] Vaccine is the weapon against COVID-19. Vaccine is the only way to convince our hesitant fellow citizens” (ANA-MPAwebTV). This discourse-forged breed of *ethos* effuses an argument of invented *ethos* into the preexisting situated *ethos* of the Prime Minister engendering a new self-portrait: The Prime Minister is vaccinated because vaccination—his vaccination—“is the only way to convince our hesitant fellow citizens” (ANA-MPAwebTV). This is the type of *ethos* that “gain[s] an audience’s ‘filial’ sense of trust” (Baumlin and Baumlin 99) and sense of intimate fellowship and, ultimately, incites vaccination willingness in audiences of lower vaccine acceptance.

Four elements present in the Prime Minister’s statement underpin the invented *ethos*’ construct of “filial” trust. Firstly, the direct reference to the European Union invokes a larger cultural unit: a cultural entity/idea in which all Greek citizens, irrespective of their ideological stance towards vaccination, are enveloped. The placing of all Greeks in that situated collectivity foregrounds a similarity-based fondness in the first place. Secondly and thirdly, the fraternal adjective “fellow” attributed to the vaccine-hesitant citizens and the grammatical choice of the inclusive possessive pronoun “our” (a pronoun that serves to establish group cohesiveness) confer a powerful sense of social closeness, demonstrate communal belongingness between the Prime Minister and that audience segment, and denote membership in the same group. Although that audience



segment has different perspectival points of view, they are still ‘ours,’ still ‘me,’ and still share the same civic fellowship and common identity with ‘me,’ with ‘us.’ Essentially, these discourse-level choices, which conjure up the image of Mr. Mitsotakis ‘bowing down’ to the crowd to be with them, are pollinators of social beingness as much as they are a disguised virtue, which is at the center of his invented *ethos*. This is the virtue of an affective understanding, embracement, receptiveness, and openness towards people who are not ideologically similar peers.

In more detail, there is no better rhetorical vehicle for conferring this virtue of creating unity and shared identity among opposing sides than these lexical choices that carry a critical advantage of unifying people around a common identity marker. To begin with, the use of “our” and the amalgamation of the personal pronouns “I” and “they” into the inclusive “we” brings the engaging parties from a stage of cognitive and emotional alienation to some felt association.<sup>14</sup> This resulting proximity fosters emotional attunement with the ‘different,’ nurtures a relationship, and conveys a cognitive-emotional interrelation between “I” and “they.” The use of the plural first-person possessive pronoun “our,” in this sense, signifies alignment in the same social group, that is, the sharing of a social role, dissolves any distance between ‘they’ and ‘me,’ and, in doing so, promulgates physical, emotional, and cognitive harmonization. The Prime Minister, being equated with the audience and being one with them, is far more virtuous than someone who partitions the audience or, worse, purges it and divides it into “we” and “they.” Next, the phrase “fellow citizens” builds camaraderie, even for audience members in complete disagreement on the subject of vaccination. This transforms alienation into unity, separation into coexistence, a state of being apart into being together, and otherness into oneness. It unifies them around the same, single identity: the concept of civic fellowship they share. Most crucially, it energizes the understanding of “I” and “they” as national beings and foregrounds the point of unison where the individuals’ self-narratives intersect. In this way, the Prime Minister reminds this audience that however disjunctive or irreconcilable their differences may be, their common citizenship will always be the point for their unification.

More remarkable still is the syntactical pattern of the phrase “hesitant fellow citizens,” which further puts the rhetor and the audience in a community of being: a cognitive and emotional enclave where members experience perceived social ‘kinship’ and cultural or socio-territorial belonging that fulfils the psychological need for connectedness to a group. Instead of saying “antivaxxers” or any other noun that would define the essential characteristic of vaccine-hesitant citizens, the Prime Minister converts the noun “antivaxxers” into a semantically positive epithet: In the phrase “hesitant fellow citizens,” “hesitant” is an attribute of “fellow citizens.” This lexical and, most importantly, syntactical framing renders the adjective “hesitant” as a secondary/subordinate sentential unit.<sup>15</sup> It makes the “fellow citizens” gain ascendancy over the adjective “hesitant.” Most crucially, the adjective “hesitant” becomes almost silent, almost inaudible. This deliberate syntactical ploy in the place of the word “antivaxxers” hastily precludes the vaccine-hesitant audience’s alienation. Alongside

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<sup>14</sup>Drawing from Tajfel’s theory of *social identity*, Francesca Gino and Adam D. Galinsky posit that emotional proximity is highly correlated with belongingness to the same social affiliation and group (6).

<sup>15</sup>As Edward Kako proposes, “Syntactic frames could carry meanings much as words do” (563).

these two glossological elements of “our” and “fellow citizens” and their syntactic frame is the phrase “the only way.” This fourth element functions as an auxiliary force in the invented virtue of the speaker. Mr. Mitsotakis now says that vaccine “is the only way” for the vaccine-hesitant group’s vaccination. There is only one possibility, and he wants to embrace it. With this persistence in the exhaustion of the “only” possibly successful scenario, the Prime Minister asseverates that the dissenting audience is still part of his considerations. He recognizes it and caters to it; this is his virtue. Therefore, similar to the health care professionals, the Prime Minister is vaccinated, that is, he builds goodwill, but on top of that, he also builds virtue.

Overall, the image of the Prime Minister being inoculated is an integrated, cross-ethotic technique: He initially activates his establishment in the community identity, an *ethos* ratified in the social perception, and almost immediately augments and transforms it from the invented *ethos* part. The invented *ethos*, then, does not occlude the rhetorical forcefulness of the situated *ethos*. It only enhances and adjusts it for audiences unaffected by the original situated *ethos* argument alone. The interplay of the two is intended to enrich his image, not undo it; escalate it, not dethrone it; supplement it, not jettison it. The two operate synergistically, draw energy from one another, foster communicative connection with the different audiences, and create a social *ethos*, an *ethos* closely aligned with the targeted audience that does “mobilize audiences’ thinking” (Dubisar 131). Ultimately, the Prime Minister’s invented *ethos* is equivalent to the construction of his social believability through performative, linguistic, and reflective acts intended to shape the audience’s thoughts (its perception) and actions (its behavior). It is the social behavior of constructing, through linguistic expression, a new self-concept harmonized with circumstantial rhetorical challenges. And, thus, it is the dynamic rearrangement of the *ethotic* content through the verbal medium in the occasion of a social *peripeteia*: a new social situation, challenge or change of the established order. In this occasion the rhetor constructs a new self-*peripeteia*. By *peripeteia*, we refer to the Aristotelian term denoting “a change by which the action veers round to its opposite, subject always to our rule of probability or necessity” (Aristotle, *Poetics* 23).

At the nexus of situated and invented *ethos*, the Greek Prime Minister achieves *kairotic* unity with his audience. Through speech acts, he retrofits his situated *ethos* with an “ontologically new” persona (Bellini 152) that is ontologically distinct just because it emerges as a result of the performativity of language: the capacity for generativity that linguistic communication holds to bring about social change as it is being produced.<sup>16</sup> The discursively crafted identity through which an agent presents themselves anew formatively shapes the social world. Simultaneously, the social world is itself shaped by that identity. Karen Burke LeFevre underscores that “the inventing ‘self’” is socially galvanized, induced, and extracted (LeFevre x). And it is the very same self that constitutes, in turn, the social reality and environment. Examining the case of the Greek Prime Minister, we can see in *praxis* the social tangibility inherent in language: how discourse acts as a natural conduit for a new existence and, more specifically, how its instrumentalization led to the remapping and re-articulation of the speaker in the social

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<sup>16</sup>Language as social action—as the linguistic incarnation of a social decision, idea, process, event, or thought—is expansively discussed by William Labov (183), John Langshaw Austin, Judith Butler, Ruth Wodak (18), Norman Fairclough (in Nielson and Nørreklit 204), among others.

landscape. Most importantly, though, we can infer how language itself instigated the social invention of the speaker and the hostile portion of the electorate as collective actors who have come together to achieve common purposes and collective action. Indeed, the linguistic self-transmutation or self-retrofitting of the speaker, a *kairotic* identity at its core, accomplishes social impact in the deployment of language itself: the designation of the speaker and audience as a coherent social team. This identity with the social effects is in and of itself a discursive designation that puts them in a shared cognitive and affective state, instilling a self-perception as members of the same social affiliation or cohort (Neville et al.). This collective self-image and shared identity, specifically the shared citizenship identity, fosters trust and trustworthiness and imparts a shared sense of purpose, spurring the audience to get vaccinated. Such an operation has a significant effect: The speaker's *kairotic* identity creates *kairotic* unity and *kairotic* social impact.

Yet, one more facet warrants our attention: The speaker's *kairotic* identity not only creates immediate social impact but transcends the rhetorical situation, solidifying it into a more permanent form of *ethos*. In essence, it infixes in the collective intelligence a lasting impression of the individual, marked by positive connotations, epitomizing the transformative potential of *ethos* in shaping public opinion, communal comprehension, and collective behavior. This perception becomes so permanent and situated that it represents a tipping point for the speaker's image in the community from that moment forward. In this way, in his discourse, the Prime Minister created a mental space for his self re-portrayal that lasted beyond the duration of the communicative event. This enduring transformation is evident in opinion polls conducted in Spring 2020, gauging Greek citizens' views on handling the pandemic by the Greek Prime Minister. In specific, on a five-point Likert scale in reply to the question, "What is your opinion on the overall presence and activity of Kyriakos Mitsotakis as Prime Minister during a critical period with a pandemic, an economic crisis due to the pandemic, and other problems?" more than half of the study participants (57%) had a favorable opinion about him ("Ερευνα Opinion Poll"). Such polls, in tandem with Mitsotakis' re-election by a large margin, foster a clear understanding of how *kairotic* identity—initially an invented *ethos*—evolves into a stable, situated *ethos*. This case, eventually, serves as a textbook example of how a public figure successfully recreated their *ethos* within the public sphere.

## Israel

### The Moon Landing Narrative

As 2020 was coming to an end, Israel made global headlines as the nation with the highest vaccination rates. Of course, this was a result of the vaccine's wide availability but also of the government's effective message to its citizens. In addition to the persuasive strategies that the Greek Prime Minister enacted, a situated and invented *ethos* showing *eunoia* and *arete*, Israel performed an invented *ethos* potent enough to engage audiences not responding to its leader's situated *ethos* argument alone. On December 19, 2020, the Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu received the first injection in the country, pairing it with a cultural reference to Neil Armstrong by saying, "One small injection for a man, and one giant leap for the health of us all" ("Netanyahu is 1st Israeli to Get COVID Vaccine"). Neil Armstrong holds a positive reputation in the global community, and the audience, drawing from this name, can assume a unique set of characteristics that

accompany him, primarily characteristics that are tied not so much to the person himself but to what the person stands for, such as innovation and greatness. With minimal linguistic utterances, that is, the phrase “one small injection for a man and one giant leap for the health of us all,” Israel’s moon landing paraphrasis invokes an array of syllogistic reasoning:

Neil Armstrong is a public figure symbolizing greatness.

The moon landing paraphrasis urges us to equate ourselves with this greatness.

By getting vaccinated, we are capable of a greatness similar to the one that Neil Armstrong attained.

In seeing discourse as a canvas for redesigning himself and his trustworthiness, the Israeli Prime Minister presented vaccination as an equivalent accomplishment to the moon landing. This reflexively propelled an enthymematic syllogism: “If being vaccinated is as progressive as the moon landing success, I have to get vaccinated, too.” In other words, if Armstrong displays this *phronesis*, ‘I’ have to display this *phronesis*, too: ‘I’ must also get vaccinated. In essence, the trajectory of Netanyahu’s transformation is done by borrowing Armstrong’s statement, thus equating the charged symbolism of vaccination to Neil Armstrong’s landing on the moon and the greatness of the moon landing to the vaccination. Our proposition warrants a more complete explanation.

Two mechanisms are operating here. Netanyahu firstly reawakens Armstrong’s socially perceived identity. By invoking authority and, in this case, the community-shared authority of the man on the moon—someone everybody acknowledges as an authority—Netanyahu invokes Armstrong’s situated *ethos*. Calling up, as it were, this situated *ethos* equal to an “established authority and trusted persona” (Dubisar 131), he further buttresses the credibility of his own argument and vaccination position, a rhetorical tactic also known as “borrowed credibility” (McIntyre and McKee 66); an added *worthiness of confidence* (McTavish 68) at its heart.<sup>17</sup> Secondly, and of considerable importance, the situated *ethos* of the man on the moon that the Prime Minister invokes cloaks an additional mantle. Tapping into the allowances and the rhetorical liberty of *ethos* to design as many characters expressly configured for each exigence, the Israeli Prime Minister artfully presents the moon landing idea within the vaccination context, creating an *ethotic* persuasive pattern ever more intricate. Netanyahu getting vaccinated is as great a scientific leap as Armstrong’s moon landing, and, in doing so, he acquires a new *ethos*, uniquely obtainable from discourse in that the moon landing *paraphrasis* consists of “the elements of a speech or a text that present the rhetor as trustworthy” (Ihlen 11). This spoken performance yields performed credibility and “performed sincerity” (Andersen and Clevenger qtd. in Kinneavy and Warschauer 186). Before anything else, this invented *ethos*, a dexterous rebuilding/resculpting of the second situated *ethos*, unveils a character on the basis of the lexical-discursive choices the rhetor makes (Walzer 50), adds new layers to the rhetor’s character, and places it in a novel perspective. It gives it meaningful instability, added vitality, and forward thrust

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<sup>17</sup>Perhaps more pertinent, then, to this particular *ethos*, is situated *ethos* seen as a predetermined, fixed construct that appertains to the credibility of someone else, which is invoked, rather than a chronologically preceding invented *ethos* that, habitually honed, ripens into situated *ethos*. Essentially, this second situated *ethos* is not a product of the preceding invented *ethos*’ maturation, but of a new invocation.

for audiences unmoved by the preceding *ethe*. This discursive vibrancy gives *ethos* a pulse, animates it, fleshes it out, and sets it in motion. More than anything, it showcases the crux of the invented *ethos* idea: Invented *ethos* is *kinesis* per se but also makes *ethos* a *kinetic* entity as it confers *kinesis* to situated *ethos*, generating motion for the construct of *ethos* as a whole.<sup>18</sup> It is due to this *kinesis* of invented *ethos* that a vortex of *ethos* is built, with invented *ethos* alternating a situated *ethos*. All in all, Netanyahu is transformed four times, developing an intricate pattern of two situated and two invented *ethe* in a circular movement: Firstly, the Prime Minister articulates that vaccination is a desirable act, making an argument from the situated *ethos* part. Secondly, he is vaccinated, making an invented *ethos* argument. Thirdly, he invokes the situated reputation of the man on the moon (a new situated *ethos*); fourthly, he associates Armstrong's moon landing greatness with the vaccination action (a new invented *ethos*). Revealingly, Netanyahu's *kinetical ethos* is an osmosis of typified reputation and linguistic act linked to the construction of his perceived credibility within the situational environment. This amalgamated habitual and linguistic performance endows the rhetorical situation with a newly formed trust that marks a cognitive shift that ultimately converts into the audience's newly induced willingness for vaccination. The antidote to the pandemic would first come in words and secondly in vaccines.

To invent *ethos* then means to invent the social world itself, new contexts, new consensualistic forms of social living, new collective imagination, and shared decision-making, and as Halloran has attested no less pertinently, "rhetorical choices define the character of the speaker and of the world" (63). *Ethos* and the social world are interdependent: *Ethos* shapes social reality, meaning, knowledge, values, and norms, but, at the same time, they themselves are shaped by *ethos*. In this sense, Aristotle's *admonition* that ethical proof "should result from the speech, not from a previous opinion that the speaker is a certain kind of person" was not only an *admonition* for the speaker "not to rest on his laurels while looking for the 'available means' of persuasion" (Baxter 13). It was also an *admonition* of sociability, the social nature of *ethos* and its necessity to be an intensely kinetic construct. *Ethos*, for him, is best seen as a versatile cognitive framework that constitutes social identities and worlds through its inherent performative nature. In its most basic sense, Aristotle's *admonition* was that *the best version of (rhetorical) being is its (rhetorical) becoming*: an arc extending from situated to invented *ethe*.

## Conclusion

In the concatenating transformations of *ethos* and their circular/vortical movement triggered by invented *ethos*, it is made evident that rhetors cause their *ethos* to *happen*, *become*, and *unfold*. Such an 'unfolding' reveals three salient conclusions regarding *ethos*. Firstly, invented *ethos* is socially driven and linguistically accomplished. It is highlighted as a sophisticated, communicative tailoring that instrumentalizes words and actions singularly faithful to exigences: a perfectly re-narrativizable and versatile construct—a form of retrofitting possible through linguistic choices and acts. This treats discourse as a distinct source of character-building, and, in that treatment, it showcases that with words, we can have different character worlds: the ones that we want, that is,

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<sup>18</sup>Invented *ethos* is that linguistic force exerted upon the whole 'mass' of *ethos* causing it to move.



the ones that create public value effective for specific audiences. Indeed, adept rhetors—thinkers and doers of their discursive self-reengineering—convincingly frame self as a contextual, social, and interactive entity. *Ethos* is necessarily meant to be socially interdependent, transactional, and interhumanistic, transpiring in the social fabric among social creatures (Ryan, et al. 6; M. Smith 53–4; LeFevre x, 45–6; Baumlin and Baumlin xxii; Baumlin and Meyer 10–12,18). It is carried out in the social coexistence of the rhetorical stakeholders (rhetor and audience) and their civic interpenetration/intertanglement in the contemporary *agora* and *demos*. Within this “hypersociality”<sup>19</sup> of *ethos*, character transcends the boundaries of its deterministic existence, finiteness, and ontological narrowness; it can only be seen as an occurring communicative performance, competence, and act. We can understand *ethos* only as a definitional process originating in a multi-brain communicative, transactional process, only as the culminated result of the joint operation of the rhetor’s and the audience’s minds and the social storytelling they share. This pliable and social nature of *ethos* endows it with substantial *kinesis* able to propel audiences into action.

Secondly, mass audience persuasion flourishes in the heterogeneity of the many habituated and discursive modalities of *ethos* enacted by virtue of the two *ethe*. Persuasion flourishes in an anthology of selves, in a *kinetical ethos*: It is not the Prime Minister who convinces his vast audience to get vaccinated; it is how he invokes and presents the moon landing idea within the vaccination context that persuades. In this conceptualization, *kinetical ethos* constitutes emerging micro-narratives between a static and an invented self that spawn in a given discursive and rhetorical locale. These evolve as the right engineering of the self for situations in which neither situated *ethos* nor invented *ethos* alone succeeds to provide. Thirdly and lastly, in this small-scale cross-cultural rhetorical analysis of governmental messaging about COVID-19 vaccination, we propose that a shift in an audience’s understanding of the issue might be related to the change of the appeal itself, and especially in the vortical flow/movement that is generated when alternating from the static (situated) *ethos* to the *kinetic* (invented) one and back again to the static. It is on this generative complementarity, and particularly the synergistic competition between static-situated and *kinetic*-invented *ethos* that persuasion occurs. In other words, the wrestling ideas of situated and situational identity and how these interact and intermingle is what creates persuasive movement and generates the vorticity that galvanizes audiences into action. The vorticity of ethical argument implies that ethical *stasis* (situated *ethos*) is never a pure *stasis*: Ethical *stasis* seamlessly imbeds vestiges of *kinesis*, being a *stasis* on its way to becoming *kinesis*. So, too, is ethical *kinesis*. In being endosymbiotic, one fills in what the other lacks, collaboratively pushing the character’s development and persuasion ahead. This *kinetic* flow of *ethos* can inform our understanding of how this appeal works: *Ethos* is a *kinetical*, eventful, and action-packed concept. This separation from a state of *stasis* makes *ethos* “most important” (*kyriotaton*). This sets an example for the design of persuasive messages by institutional or government entities to appeal to vast, often negatively predisposed, audiences and concurrently solidifies *ethos* as a key factor in effective government communication strategies. More importantly, it demonstrates that the art of

<sup>19</sup>The term is used by multiple scholars and theorists within the cognitive psychology field, as noted by Elizabeth Colbert.

*ethos* is this vortical flow between situated and invented *ethos*, and the art of the rhetor is to manage this flow and pragmatically realize this action to move the audience.



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