

# Social Media and the “Perpetual Project” of *Ethos* Construction

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Borrowing from both classical rhetoric and new media studies, this article contributes to the ongoing project of defining *ethos* by considering the concept as it applies to social media platforms. The contrasting views of two early Greek thinkers (Aristotle and Isocrates) provide a basis for the consideration of social media profiles as sites of *ethos* construction. Four key aspects of social media profiles—richness, co-authorship, availability, and indestructibility—are then discussed, which highlight how these profiles are similar though necessarily distinct from other forms of online communication, deserving of analysis as unique rhetorical artifacts. A discussion of the impact of current social media practices on the future of *ethos* construction in public life, especially in political and legal spheres, then follows.

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Just as rhetoric and composition is currently confronted with the complexity of writing, rhetorical studies is in the process of trying to determine just what rhetoric would be in our current cultural situation. The ancient civic space that led to the emergence of rhetoric has been replaced by contemporary network space. In its place, however, are few rhetorical theories that adequately address the complexities of this new social space.

—Byron Hawk

Throughout the history of rhetorical studies, theorists have struggled to define the role and function of “credibility” in rhetorical performance. From the early Greek philosophers onwards, scholars have espoused differing ideas on what credibility is, how it is conveyed by a rhetor to an audience, and when it is appropriate to do so. It is a topic of lively and continual scholastic debate—indeed, the only point theorists seem to agree on is this: in any rhetorical situation, a speaker’s perceived credibility is one of the strongest appeals available to the rhetor. That is, if the audience believes the rhetor to be a person of “good character,” then that rhetor’s views will be accepted more readily.

Of the classical Greeks, it is Aristotle whose views have been most widely circulated and generally accepted in rhetorical studies. However, Aristotle’s definition of *ethos* has always been questioned, even among his contemporaries. Other Greek thinkers offered up quite different views on speaker credibility, views which have not taken root to the same degree in the minds of rhetoricians.

We might ask, then, “How well does Aristotle’s understanding of *ethos* hold up in the modern world, when the practice of rhetoric is so vastly different from that of his time?” As the opening quotation of this article suggests, we live and operate in a wholly different communicative environment than that of the classical Greeks. Surely, contemporary audiences have far greater access to information regarding a rhetor’s “credibility” than would have ever been possible—perhaps even imaginable—in Aristotle’s time. The advent of the Internet (especially those technologies termed “social media”) allows users to catalogue virtually every detail of their lives—their thoughts, memories, values, achievements, and embarrassments—almost in real time. Such tech-

nologies mark a dramatic change in the ways people communicate, interact, and engage rhetorically with the world around them. If rhetoric is the study of discourse, it follows that a change in the means of discourse necessitates a change in rhetorical theory.

This essay seeks to problematize the dominant classical and contemporary Aristotelian understanding of *ethos* as an appeal limited to a particular rhetorical artifact. To do so, I will examine the statements of one of Aristotle's contemporaries, Isocrates, whose views on *ethos* contrast starkly with those of Aristotle. Following this, the ways in which modern communicative revolutions (particularly social media) have further complicated an Aristotelian understanding of character will be discussed. Throughout, I will argue that the advent of social media requires a shift away from the Aristotelian understanding of *ethos* and call upon rhetoricians—*rhetorical critics* and *critical rhetoricians* alike—to consider the construction of *ethos* in contemporary culture as a “perpetual project,” that is, as an appeal which is not limited to a particular artifact but constructed over the course of a rhetor's lifetime. Such an understanding of *ethos* proves useful to contemporary theorists, critics, and practitioners of rhetoric as it allows us to consider how a rhetor's previously constructed character can—and necessarily does—affect an audience's response to current and future performances. Having argued these points, I will consider the potential impact of social media and this “perpetual project” of *ethos* construction on two fields which are inextricably linked to the study of rhetoric—politics and law.

### ***Ethos: A Definitional Quagmire***

Before going further, it would be prudent to define our terms. One of the first difficulties encountered in any discussion of *ethos* is the hazy, nebulous nature of the term—it seems to mean something different in every context. This can in part be attributed to the etymological origins of the word; *ethos* can be translated into English as “character,” “custom,” “habit,” or “folkways” (Jarratt and Reynolds 42); alternatively, it can even be translated as “a habitual gathering-place” (Halloran 60). However, here I advance another, less obvious explanation for this lexical confusion: I believe the term *ethos* has come to function in rhetorical studies as an “ideograph,” an argument contained within a single word. In defining the ideograph, Mcgee writes:

Though words only (and not claims), such terms as “property,” “religion,” . . . and “liberty” are more pregnant than propositions ever could be. They are the basic structural elements, the building blocks, of ideology. Thus they may be thought of as “ideographs,” for, like Chinese symbols, they signify and “contain” a unique ideological commitment; further, they presumptuously suggest that each member of a community will see as a gestalt every complex nuance in them. (428)

Though Mcgee is primarily concerned with how these “single-word arguments” effected political control in society, his term can be applied self-reflexively to the study of rhetoric to consider how ideographs function within the discipline. *Ethos* (as it is conventionally understood) generally refers to an Aristotelian notion of the word: as an appeal based on the “good character” of a rhetor at a given moment (this understanding will be discussed below). However the term, like “liberty” or “freedom,” is one with variegated meanings and a long definitional history, and it is prone to being conjured up in discussions or scholarly articles without proper attention being given to what the author understands the phrase to mean. *Ethos*, I argue here, acts as an ideograph in rhetorical studies—a term which is dense in meaning, difficult to unpack, and one which goes far too often uninterrogated.

Of course, several theorists *have* offered specific definitions of *ethos*—its functions, roles, scope, and so forth. Two contrasting definitions will be discussed in the following section, but they are by no means a representative sample. The sheer multitude of these definitions adds to

the difficulty inherent in any discussion of *ethos*. Indeed, any attempt made here to catalogue definitions of *ethos* would prove unsuccessful and, for our purposes here, superfluous. Therefore, except where stated otherwise, throughout this essay the term *ethos* will be used in the most conventional, generally accepted sense: to describe an appeal made by a rhetor to an audience, based on the rhetor's "credibility" or "good character" as perceived by that audience.

### Early Thinkers on Rhetor Credibility

Aristotle was—and still is—inarguably one of the most influential thinkers in the rhetorical canon; his thoughts on *ethos*, character, and the appropriate means of building credibility have long been at the foreground of rhetorical education. In *On Rhetoric*, Aristotle states his belief that the *ethos* of a speaker is established during a speech and is limited to that speech. In his words,

[Persuasion occurs] through character [*ethos*] whenever the speech is spoken in such a way as to make the speaker worthy of credence . . . *and this should result from the speech, not from a previous opinion that the speaker is a certain kind of person*; for it is not the case . . . that fair-mindedness on the part of the speaker makes no contribution to persuasiveness; rather, character is almost, so to speak, the controlling factor in persuading. (1356a4; my emphasis)

This passage is important because it shows not only where Aristotle believes the appropriate domain of *ethos* lies, but also where it does *not*. For Aristotle, ethical appeal is not established through the audience's prior knowledge or "previous opinion" of a rhetor's actions or deeds. In other words, each new speech is a blank slate, where *ethos* can (and necessarily must) be established anew.

Students of rhetoric will no doubt be familiar with this understanding of *ethos*—Aristotle's concepts of *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* are among the first (if not *the* first) rhetorical concepts students are introduced to in the academy. Further, this understanding of *ethos* can often be assumed (that is, to function ideographically) when alternative definitions are not explicitly stated; this is what we talk about when we discuss the *ethos* of Churchill's wartime speeches, or the *ethos* created in Justin Trudeau's eulogy for his father (Whalen 11). Whether owing to the legacy of neo-Aristotelian scholarship or to some other confluence of factors, the Aristotelian understanding of *ethos* remains firmly entrenched in the minds of rhetoricians today.

A reading of Aristotle's contemporaries, however, shows that this view of *ethos* has been disputed since its first pronouncement. Isocrates, a contemporary (and very likely a rival) of Aristotle (Benoit 251), offers a very different understanding of the production of ethical appeal. In *Antidosis*, a dialogue which predates Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, Isocrates writes:

The man who wishes to persuade people will not be negligent as to the matter of character [*ethos*]; no, on the contrary, *he will apply himself above all to establish a most honorable name among his fellow-citizens*; for who does not know that words carry greater conviction when spoken by men of good repute than when spoken by men who live under a cloud, and that *the argument which is made by a man's life is more weighty than that which is furnished by words?* (278; my emphasis)

In this passage, we see that Isocrates did not regard *ethos* as an appeal limited to a given rhetorical artifact; the appeal of "good character" was an "argument . . . made by a man's life." The rhetor who wishes to be persuasive must not only craft *ethos* within a speech, but must establish for himself "a most honourable name among his fellow-citizens." "Elsewhere in the *Antidosis*," Benoit notes,

[Isocrates'] meaning becomes unmistakable when he declares that probabilities

— and proofs . . . support only the points in a case to which they are severally applied, whereas an honourable reputation not only lends greater persuasiveness to the words of the man who possesses it, but adds greater luster to his deeds, and is, therefore, more zealously to be sought after . . . than anything else in the world. (257)

Further valuable insights into the opposing views of Isocrates and Aristotle are offered by Michael J. Hyde, who summarizes the Isocratic position quite succinctly when he writes that “for Isocrates . . . [the orator’s] presence and rhetorical competence are a ‘showing-forth’ (epi-deixis) of an *ethos*, a principled self, that instructs the moral consciousness and actions of others . . . it is a person’s character itself, his stellar reputation, that anchors the persuasive capacity of rhetoric” (xv).

By contrast, Aristotle “associates *ethos* not primarily with the orator’s reputation for being such a [virtuous] soul but rather with the actual rhetorical competence displayed in the orator’s discourse” (Hyde xv). For Aristotle, *ethos* is conveyed through rhetorical competence in a given moment. For Isocrates, *ethos* is not so much “constructed” in the speech as it is “shown-forth” or made apparent to the audience based on the “true” character of the individual. We see, then, that even before *On Rhetoric*, an Aristotelian understanding of *ethos*—though a cornerstone of early rhetorical education and rhetorical scholarship to this day—has never been accepted universally and has always been somewhat problematic. In the following section, I intend to show how technological developments have only served to problematize this understanding further.

### Social Media and Character Construction

The shortcomings of an Aristotelian understanding of *ethos* are made evident when considering modern communications technology. As Barbara Warnick writes, “Prior to the growth of the World Wide Web and other new media forms, there was consensus . . . about the nature and functions of credibility. The credibility of a message was judged primarily according to attributes of the message source, especially expertise, reputation, believability, and trustworthiness.” However, she notes, “this way of proceeding is frequently problematic when applied to online environments” (46). The Internet has fundamentally changed the way human beings interact and communicate. Where once an audience would be incapable of making “character” judgments of rhetors they did not know personally or who had not developed a public reputation (one could argue that Aristotle stressed the importance of developing *ethos* within a speech primarily for this reason), today we find a different case entirely.

Social media are surely among the more interesting aspects of the Internet for rhetorical analysis. For the purposes of this article, I define a “social medium” as any online website or application which is designed specifically for the purpose of social interaction; Facebook and Twitter are popular contemporary examples. Social media allow users to create online “profiles” of themselves, then interact with other users; they can share photos, chat with one another, plan events and gatherings, send messages, post videos, and so on. Of course, theorists have already explored how individuals interact through other forms of digital communication such as blogs (Baron), e-books (Laquintano), and online forums (Grabill and Pigg), but little work has yet been done on the “social media profile” as a distinct subject of study. Before going further, then, a more detailed understanding of these profiles is necessary if we are to distinguish them from other forms of online communication.

A social media profile (perhaps better described as a “front-end interface”) requires a significant amount of input from the user; as such, it can be understood as a text authored by that user. However, it must be remembered that the user is not the *sole* author of this text; the purpose of these social media sites is, after all, to allow other users to view, respond to, and otherwise mod-

ify elements of an individual's profile. For example, the user profile of Facebook (formerly known as the Wall and recently restyled as the Timeline) can include not only basic information, such as age, location, occupation, interests, found in the "About" section, which is controlled directly by the user, but also written messages from others in a person's social network, pictures and images of the user, and other information related to the individual's activities and interactions on the social network. Thus, the user's profile is a *co-authored* work, a text authored by the input of both users and audiences (although, arguably, the profile's creator must be considered the "primary author").<sup>1</sup>

Social media profiles also contain a wealth of information about the user—users can and do often hint at or even explicitly state their values, beliefs, opinions, and ideals—and this information is gathered over a long period of time. As such, these profiles can be considered very *rich* texts regarding the beliefs, opinions, and values of users—how they interact with others, what upsets them, what pleases them, how they handle various social situations, and so forth. In many cases, a user's profile offers enough information for a reasonable person (or audience) to make judgments on the profile creator's "character."

In these two ways, social media profiles are distinct from other forms of online communication: their co-authored nature distinguishes them from forms such as the blog or e-book, where the individual user can still exercise considerable authoritative and editorial autonomy, and their *richness* as texts which speak to character precludes the relative anonymity often found (and perhaps encouraged) in online forums and chat rooms. In sum, these first two points suggest that social media profiles deserve consideration as distinct rhetorical artifacts.

In addition, as far as *ethos* is concerned, it is important to note that the *texts* produced by social media users are widely, publicly, and near-constantly accessible (either as a whole or certain elements of them). This means that any audience wishing to view a user's social media profile in order to gauge the author's "character" may do so. The accessibility and availability of these profiles is significant when considering their potential impact on the construction of *ethos*. While this type of "accessibility" is a quality of most forms of online communication, it is still a key aspect in analyzing social media.

A final, often ignored point about social media is that the information which has been uploaded to a social networking site is *archived* and can be stored digitally in several locations. Even if the author later decides to edit, retract, or delete elements of a profile, the earlier, unedited state can be cached in several different locations (whether that be through first-party archiving by the service itself, third-party digital archives, screen images saved to a personal computer, etc.). While it is true that any retracted elements are no longer *easily* accessible to the public, it is more likely than not that they *do* still exist, and can be recovered by anyone with the means and will to do so. They are, in this sense, "indestructible texts."

In sum, the four crucial aspects of social media and their relation to *ethos* are their *richness* as texts which speak to character, their *co-authored* nature, their exceptional *availability*, and their virtual *indestructibility*. I argue in the following sections for potential changes to our understanding of *ethos* based on these four aspects. The arguments posed in the following sections seek to correct the shortcomings of the Aristotelian model's applicability to social media and to allow fuller consideration of the perpetual project of *ethos* construction online.

### Prospective Changes to our Understanding of *Ethos*

In his work on network media culture, Byron Hawk warns against "[s]imply applying rhetorical systems developed in the context of ancient Greece to our contemporary period," as this is an inadequate response to a changing cultural environment (146). This is certainly true for the concept of *ethos*. As discussed above, social media profiles serve as rich texts, easily accessible by the audi-

ence, and containing enough information to allow for judgments of a user's "character." Contemporary audiences now have—or very shortly will have—access to at least two different texts *simultaneously* which speak to a rhetor's *ethos*: the speech (or other rhetorical artifact) and the rhetor's social media presence. This is, of course, counter to Aristotle's assertion that *ethos* is constructed solely within a given speech.

Much of the previous discussion has addressed social media in a more general sense. However, from this point forward I have a specific demographic in mind—young social media users. Though quantitative research suggests that younger social media users (at least in America) are "more active" in controlling and maintaining the character they present online (Madden and Smith), this research does not consider, qualitatively, the *kind* of public image these users seek to create. The underlying presumption of the discussions which follow is that, in the absence of other motivating factors, younger social media users are primarily concerned with establishing a certain character for an audience of friends and peers, and not necessarily interested in the construction of alternative, more "professional" *ethos*. This premise will be elaborated upon below.

While we are now entering somewhat underexplored rhetorical territory, here I put forward two potential impacts of current social media practices on the study of *ethos*. First, because the audience can (and likely will) assess a rhetor's credibility based on the rhetor's online presence, social media should be considered by the rhetor as an element in the *perpetual project* of constructing *ethos*. Second, this *ethos* presented online, which is under constant development and evolution, *must* nevertheless be made congruent with the *ethos* presented in other rhetorical performances. When interviewing for a job, for example, one may present the image of a professional, composed, very *employable* candidate; however, if the employer makes a quick scan of Facebook and finds a wholly different presentation of character, one is not likely to receive a job offer. Incongruence between the *ethos* projected through social media and through other rhetorical performances may make the rhetor appear duplicitous, even dishonest, to an audience.

Admittedly, the job interview example above is somewhat banal. In order to more fully develop these two points, let us consider two other fields linked inseparably with rhetorical studies: politics and law.

### **Social Media, *Ethos*, and Politics**

It is often the case that politicians are chastised for "saying one thing and then doing another." However, more and more frequently, politicians are now being chastised for "saying one thing and then *saying another*." In the modern age, when it is easier than ever for voting citizens to learn a politician's previously stated position on any given issue, a political reversal, or "flip-flop," is relatively simple to detect. For a recent example of this, we may look to Newt Gingrich, the prominent Republican politician and then-presidential hopeful who, when asked what he would do as president during the Libyan revolution on 7 March 2011, said, "Exercise a no-fly zone this evening, communicate to the Libyan military that Qaddafi was gone and that the sooner they switch sides, the more likely they were to survive. . . . This is a moment to get rid of [Qaddafi]. Do it. Get it over with," and then forcefully argued on 23 March, just over two weeks later, that President Obama was wrong for imposing said "no-fly zone": "I think that two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is a lot. . . . I would not have intervened. I think there were a lot of other ways to affect Qaddafi. I think there are a lot of allies in the region we could have worked with. I would not have used American and European forces" (Morrill). To appear to "waffle" or "flip-flop" obviously has the potential to negatively impact a politician's credibility. It is difficult, if not impossible, to project an image of trustworthiness if a politician appears to waver on issues which that politician has already taken firm stances on and defended with seeming conviction. When audiences recognize that a politician has

made contradictory statements, with no apparent explanation for any change in opinion, it is often seen by the audience as a deceit, not reflective of the politician's "true beliefs."

Just as the advent of reliable recording technologies (audiotape, cameras, etc.) has allowed audiences to accurately recall a politician's previous statements on issues, so too will social media have an impact on politics in those cultures in which its usage is prevalent. It is not inconceivable that, among the millions of young adults who now maintain a social media presence (often from the time of their mid-teens), some will seek political office in the future. When this happens, these individuals' social media profiles will come under heavy scrutiny; the higher the elected office they seek, the greater scrutiny they can expect. All of the information which has been submitted to the social network—comments, pictures, status updates, and the like—can be made available not only to a public eager to learn more about a candidate's personal beliefs, convictions, and personality, but also to political opponents who may wish to study these texts for anything which might diminish the user's "reputation" or "good character" among the electorate. In the Canadian federal election of 2011, Alan Saldanha, a candidate for the Green Party in British Columbia, was forced to drop out of the race once news reports surfaced that his Facebook profile included the phrase "If rape is inevitable, lie back and enjoy it!" among his "favourite quotations" (Hall). In this case, we find that the character presented on Mr. Saldanha's Facebook page was not in keeping with the *ethos* he sought to project as a politician, and this proved devastating to his political ambitions. Already, then, we can observe the impact of social media on the perceived credibility of politicians, a trend which can be expected to continue. Politicians will no doubt need to contend with the growing impact of social media on the production of ethical appeal. The impact of current social media practices will be substantial, though still manageable; considering one's *ethos* as a perpetual project may be one means of doing so. However, as will be discussed below, the impact of social media on the institution of law is far more problematic.

### Social Media, *Ethos*, and Law

One of the fundamental elements of the common law (as it is practiced in Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States, and elsewhere) is the concept of an *impartial judiciary*. In order to render judgment on any issue, judges and justices must appear unbiased, to act as dispassionate adjudicators of conflict between parties. This principle is encapsulated in the legal maxim

*nemo iudex sua causa*: Literally, no one shall be the judge in his own cause. [This] means that where judges have an interest in the outcome of particular cases, they should not sit in judgment in them, since they are not expected to be able to divorce their own self-interest from the merits of the cases. (Horner 294)

Whenever a judge has a "vested interest" in the outcome of a case, that judge is obligated to withdraw from hearing that case. If a judge or justice does not reveal this conflict of interest, and that conflict comes to light after the decision has been rendered, that decision can be appealed and a new trial ordered. It is not even necessary for a true conflict of interest to have existed; for "[t]he rule is that judges may not sit in judgment where a 'reasonably informed bystander' might reasonably *perceive* bias—that is, where there is a reasonable apprehension of bias, *whether it actually exists or not*' (Horner 294; my emphasis). In numerous cases, common law judges the world over have upheld the principle that "for justice to be done, it must be *seen* to be done."

This "impartiality of the judiciary" has always been a philosophically troublesome concept. Judges do not simply sprout from the soil—they are human beings, and no human being can ever be considered wholly impartial. However, the judiciary is still expected to maintain (at least the appearance of) neutrality. In Canada, as in many Western democracies, judges and justices are not permitted to speak out on controversial issues outside of the courtroom, be members of or donors to political parties, or attend political meetings. In Canada, prior to the adoption of the Charter of

Rights and Freedoms, high-ranking justices were not even allowed to vote (Horner 295). The “judicial *ethos*,” then, can be described as one of “neutrality”: judges and justices are to occupy an impartial and unbiased position from which they can decide issues of law objectively, based on the facts and circumstances of each individual case before them.

The advent of social media tremendously complicates the ideal of the independent judiciary. Just as it can safely be assumed that some users of social media may one day run for political office, so too will some opt for careers in law, and eventually be considered as potential members of the judiciary. But then the question must be asked, “Does the social media presence of the prospective judge correspond with the ideal of an ‘independent’ judiciary?” Do previous statements or images correspond with the “neutral” and “objective” role which will be expected of judges? If not, should that candidate still be considered qualified to rule on legal cases? Could a judicial candidate’s decisions be appealed due to “conflict of interest” or “reasonably perceivable bias” based on claims made through social media prior to the candidate’s acceptance to the judiciary?

The dilemma of social media as it relates to law would be far simpler were it possible to simply delete one’s social media presence entirely. However, as mentioned earlier, this is a difficult if not impossible task. While certain information can be removed from one particular website or another, it will almost assuredly be archived in several other locations—more difficult to find than before, but not altogether eliminated, still potentially accessible by those with the knowledge and desire to access it. Obviously, a generation of young social media users who will one day form the judiciary is extremely problematic for the legal system (tangentially related issues are currently being examined in the judicial inquiry of Justice Lori Douglas determining her eligibility to remain on the bench [CBC News]). Ultimately, these problems will likely be settled by the courts themselves; the findings of the Douglas inquiry will undoubtedly become legal precedent for similar cases in the future, at least in the Canadian context. Exactly *how* these issues will be addressed remains to be seen.

### Conclusions

Social media are new developments in communication, and the changes they are sure to cause remain largely undertheorized in rhetorical studies. In researching this article, I found that far more research existed on topics such as Usenet groups or CD-ROMS—subjects which were recently considered “new,” yet now seem almost archaic. As such, there appears to be some reticence on the part of rhetoricians to engage with “new” developments such as social media, for fear that this research will all too soon be considered anachronistic. Scholars who have written on “new” developments in rhetoric and communication have frequently been frustrated by the rapid rate of change in communication technologies. However, I believe that such work is still important; rhetorical theorists must not restrict themselves to working with “tested and true” concepts alone. To do so is to allow rhetorical theory to remain forever out of sync with new developments in rhetorical practice and culture.

Due to the absence of scholarship on the construction of *ethos* through social media, the arguments and conclusions presented in this article are necessarily tentative and exploratory, a jumping-off point for further discussions. I have suggested an alternative to the conventional Aristotelian understanding of *ethos*, one which understands character development as a *perpetual project* rather than as an appeal contained within one specific rhetorical artifact. This understanding of *ethos* as perpetual project, built upon the Isocratic understanding of credibility from prior knowledge, allows for a broader interpretation of *ethos*, which in turn permits consideration of how *ethos* is constructed through current social media practices. Further, this essay has identified some key components of social media profiles which make them a meaningful site of rhetorical analysis—as rich, co-authored, publicly accessible, and relatively “indestructible” texts—as well as some poten-



tial problems facing the fields of politics and law due to current social media practices. It is my sincere hope that rhetorical theory will continue to engage with new developments in cultural practice, that we may use the knowledge and practice of the past to offer greater insights into the present (and the future) of public discourse.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Brian Turner of the University of Winnipeg, who provided invaluable notes and commentary on an earlier version of the article published here.

### Note

<sup>1</sup>It should be pointed out that while media theorists (such as Marshall McLuhan or, more recently, Ben McCorkle) have argued that the *form* of media necessarily affects the communication which takes place through it, and certainly the same case could be made concerning social media, a larger discussion of how social media platforms themselves act as another “author” by influencing the communication of users is beyond the scope of this essay.

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