

1 **Anytime, anything, anyone**
2 **– Forms of Apparent Reality in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* and**
3 **the Phenomenon of Deepfakes –**
4

5 *David Ross characterizes the Greeks as politically engaged and highly*
6 *litigious, where mastery of speech functioned as a passport to influence (2005,*
7 *284). In Aristotle’s account, rhetoric is the capacity to identify available*
8 *means of persuasion in any case. Persuasion rests on argument, the speaker’s*
9 *character, and the audience’s emotions. Rhetoric addresses matters open to*
10 *deliberation rather than certainty, relies on concise reasoning, and proceeds*
11 *from premises audiences already accept. Modern speakers often depend on*
12 *talent and experience, yet rhetoric still dazzles and can mislead. Audiences*
13 *persuaded by such means may feel shame rather than curiosity about the*
14 *techniques that influenced them. This dynamic illuminates the phenomenon of*
15 *deepfakes. A central issue is the relation between falsehood and credibility:*
16 *arguments can be framed while concealing causes and methods, allowing*
17 *false conclusions to appear convincing. Deepfakes exemplify a dangerous*
18 *form of rhetorical persuasion, blurring the boundary between fact and fiction.*
19 *Their feasibility and difficulty of detection enhance credibility and reduce*
20 *vigilance, even inviting participation in the deception. Whereas Aristotle*
21 *analyzes authenticity in communication, deepfakes simulate authenticity*
22 *through technological systems. When perceived truth is supported by trusted*
23 *data within familiar media environments, it is accepted as real, threatening*
24 *democratic processes and broader social cohesion.*

25
26 **Keywords:** *rhetoric, persuasion, deepfakes, politics, democracy*
27

28
29 **Introduction**
30

31 “The Greeks were both a politically minded and a litigious race, and the arts
32 of speech were as useful a passport to influence with them as they are in a modern
33 democracy” (Ross 2005, 284). This is how David Ross begins his analysis of the
34 chapter on rhetoric and politics in Aristotle’s work. He himself recognises the
35 part played by the appeal to emotion, but insists that the emotion must be
36 produced by the speech itself (Ibid.). Rhetoric is “the power to see the possible
37 ways of persuading people about any given subject” (Ross 2005, 285). The
38 components of persuasion are the argument, the character of the speaker, and the
39 emotions of the audience.

40 Aristotle knew how to play with the strings of the human heart. *Rhetoric*
41 deals with themes that are open to discussions and subject to consideration, and
42 it addresses people who are unable to follow a lengthy argument. Therefore, it
43 deals with probable things (since certainties are not subject to deliberation), uses
44 short conclusions, and, when it uses premises that are likely to be accepted by
45 its audience, it considers them accepted rather than deriving them from primary
46 principles. Many of Aristotle’s observations apply exclusively to the
47 circumstances of Greek society; however, many of his theories are eternal truths

1 as well (Ross 2005, 289.). Today, speakers may rely more on their own natural
 2 talents and experiences, although rhetoric can still dazzle audiences just as it did
 3 in the past. These people, who were persuaded in such manners, are more
 4 ashamed of this outcome than to be interested in finding out what tricks were
 5 used to deceive them (Ross, 2005, 289–290). This is also the secret of the
 6 ‘deepfake’ phenomenon.

7 Additionally, there is another essential element in the art of persuasion,
 8 which is the question of falsehood and credibility. We can very easily formulate
 9 our arguments by concealing their cause, purpose, and method (omissive
 10 arguments). Thus, although the argument becomes false, this remains unnoticed
 11 by the recipient. Based on the above-described processes, we can also establish
 12 that deepfake is a probable and very dangerous method of rhetorical persuasion,
 13 as the line between fact and fiction becomes blurred. The political idea of
 14 Athenian democracy is very different from the functioning of modern
 15 democracies or so-called political entities. Despite this difference, however,
 16 deepfakes can have profound negative consequences to democracies (Meskys et
 17 al 2020, 8). My paper analyses ancient and modern parallels of the
 18 manifestations of apparent reality and thus serves as a warning of the dangers of
 19 accepting apparent probabilities without common sense and critical thinking.

22 **Forms of Apparent Reality in Aristotle**

24 Reality that we perceive is not equivalent to the Real that is behind our
 25 perception and experience. In other words, ‘apparent reality’ is the concealment
 26 of reality that is the falsification of reality (the Real) through various tricks and
 27 processes, which are often also unconscious. First of all, let us examine what
 28 Aristotle means by enthymeme and apparent enthymeme. As Ross also argues,
 29 the latter has three distinct types (Ross 2005, 285). The first comprises those
 30 characteristics that are inherent in or originated from the speaker, such as the
 31 “devices of speech by which he induces his hearers to form a favourable opinion
 32 of his character” (Ibid.). The second consists of the emotions that arise and
 33 awake in the audience (Ibid.). And the third is the produced “proof or its
 34 appearance by sheer force of argument” (Ibid.). The third type of apparent
 35 enthymeme is considered first by Aristotle regarding the process of persuasion,
 36 and as Ross further explains, it has two main subcategories. The first one is
 37 ‘example’ that is the “rhetorical counter-part of induction,” and the second one
 38 is ‘enthymeme’, which is the “rhetorical counterpart of syllogism” (Ibid.). As
 39 Ross quotes Aristotle, “[o]f these, the latter is the rhetorical method par
 40 excellence, ‘the body of persuasion.’ ‘Arguments by example are no less
 41 persuasive, but enthymemes win more applause” (Ibid.).

42 Naturally, from the above types and methods, the most convenient mode of
 43 argument is both determined by and chosen on the basis of the prevalent
 44 conditions that defines the orator’s context of speech (Ibid.). As Ross presents,
 45 the characteristics of the audience is one of the most important contributing
 46 factors of these conditions (Ibid.) Therefore, as he phrases it, “the subjects he

1 has to deal with are the sort of things we deliberate about, in so far as these fall
 2 outside the scope of the definite arts and sciences; and the people he has to
 3 address are people who cannot follow a long train of reasoning” (Ibid.). The
 4 orator, as a result, has to deal with different possibilities and developments,
 5 especially, “since certainties are not matters of deliberation”; for instance, the
 6 speaker thus opts to utilize “short trains of reasoning,” while assuming certain
 7 premises, because they will probably be accepted, instead of deriving them from
 8 foundational principles (Ibid.).

9 Enthymemes, as Aristotle tells us, fall into two broad categories. On the one
 10 hand, there are specific arguments, those that arise from the subject matter of a
 11 particular discipline—such as ethics, philosophy and physics, among many
 12 (Ross 2025, 285–286). On the other hand, there are general arguments, derived
 13 from the Greek term “τόποι”—literally, the “places” or conceptual regions,
 14 where lines of reasoning naturally reside and from which they may be drawn
 15 (Ibid.). Therefore, a speaker who relies heavily on specific arguments moves
 16 away from the proper domain of rhetoric and toward that of the specialized
 17 sciences. Yet, as Ross underlines, Aristotle recognizes a practical limitation,
 18 namely, the stock of general argumentative forms is relatively small (Ibid.). For
 19 this reason, he permits the orator to employ specific arguments when necessary
 20 and even chooses to examine these first. Consequently, given the circumstances
 21 in which rhetorical discourse typically occurs—public deliberation, civic
 22 persuasion, moral evaluation—such specific arguments will most often be taken
 23 from the fields of ethics and politics (Ross 2025, 285).

24 This demonstrates the characteristic feature of rhetoric that Aristotle
 25 correctly described as “drawing opposite conclusions” (Freese 1926, 458). As it
 26 is quoted and translated by Freese, “Or, If men are in the habit of gaining credit
 27 for false statements, you must also admit the contrary, that men often disbelieve
 28 what is true” (AR, II.23.1397a; 1926, 297). “Another topic, appropriate to
 29 refutation, consists in examining contradictories, whether in dates, actions, or
 30 words, [...]” (AR, II.23.1400a; Freese 1926, 319) which quote is one of the
 31 arguments of the demonstrative enthymeme deriving from its opposite. “It is
 32 clear that it is possible to produce the stating of a counter-deduction on the basis
 33 of the same topics [as a deduction]. For the deductions are based on reputable
 34 beliefs, and many things that seem to be so are contrary to one another” (Rh. II
 35 25 1402 32–34; Reeve 2018, 67). “The refutation of enthymemes based on
 36 paradigms is the same as that of likelihoods. For if we have one case that is not
 37 so, there is a refutation, because the argument is not a necessity, even if more
 38 cases on more occasions are otherwise, but if more cases or more occasions are
 39 that way, we should contend that his present one is not like them, or not like
 40 them in the relevant way, or at least has some differentiating feature (diaphora)”
 41 (Rh. II 25 1402 36–10; Reeve 2018, 76). Moreover, the enthymeme includes the
 42 ‘gnome’ (cf. gnomic poetry), that is, the general moral opinion which is either
 43 the upper premise or the conclusion of a syllogism, the rest of which remains
 44 unstated, these are so-called arguments of omission, because we can very easily
 45 formulate our arguments by omitting the reason, the purpose, and the method.

1 Thus, although the argument becomes false, the recipient does not notice this
2 (Ross, 2025, 287).

3 “Further, maxims are of great assistance to speakers, first, because of the
4 vulgarity of the hearers, who are pleased if an orator, speaking generally, hits
5 upon the opinions which they specially hold” (AR, II.20.1395b; Freese 1926,
6 287). Amplification and depreciation are not topics of enthymemes, but are
7 themselves enthymemes, intended to show that a thing is great or small.
8 Refutative and constructive enthymemes are of the same kind, for each infers the
9 opposite of what has been demonstrated by another. An objection is not an
10 enthymeme, as it consists in stating a generally received opinion, from which it
11 appears either that the argument is not strictly logical or that a false assumption
12 has been made (Freese 1926, Book II: xxvi).

13
14 Now, of the topics of apparent enthymemes one is that of diction, which is of two
15 kinds. The first, as in Dialectic, consists in ending with a conclusion syllogistically
16 expressed, although there has been no syllogistically process, “therefore it is
17 neither this nor that,” “so it must be this or that”; and similarly in rhetorical
18 arguments a concise and antithetical statement is supposed to be an enthymeme;
19 for such a style appears to contain a real enthymeme. This fallacy appears to be the
20 result of the form of expression. For the purpose of using the diction to create an
21 impression of syllogistic reasoning it is useful to state the heads of several
22 syllogisms: “He saved some, avenged others, and freed the Greeks”; for each of
23 these propositions has been proved by others, but their union appears to furnish a
24 fresh conclusion. (AR, II.24.1401a; Freese 1926, 325)

25
26 Aristotle discusses homonymy, a fallacy arising from the ambiguity of
27 language, where the same word has multiple meanings, thus there are multiple
28 interpretation present at the same time among the members of the same audience.
29 Thus, for instance, the example of the “mouse” plays on the shift from animal to
30 sacred symbol, exploiting an accidental association rather than a genuine causal
31 or logical connection (Ibid.). The fallacy works because listeners unconsciously
32 slide from one meaning to another without noticing the shift. “The second kind
33 of fallacy of diction is homonymy. For instance, if one were to say that the mouse
34 is an important animal, since from it is derived the most honoured of all religious
35 festivals, namely, the mysteries” (AR, II.24.1401a; Freese 1926, 325–326).
36 Therefore, just as verbal homonymy confuses meanings, on this premise
37 deepfakes collapse the distinction between appearance and identity. The viewer
38 mistakes a representation for the thing represented. Therefore, Aristotle’s
39 concern with linguistic ambiguity anticipates today’s problem of
40 representational ambiguity, where digital likeness stands in for reality and
41 borrows its authority.

42 Additionally, Aristotle identifies a fallacy based on exaggeration, especially
43 when emotional intensity replaces evidence. The exaggeration does not establish
44 facts but manipulates perception: outrage makes guilt appear obvious, while
45 minimization makes wrongdoing seem implausible. The truth becomes secondary
46 to emotional framing. As Aristotle puts it in Freese’s translation: “Another topic is
47 that of constructing or destroying by exaggeration, which takes place when the

1 speaker, without having proved that any crime has actually been committed,
 2 exaggerates the supposed fact; for it makes it appear either that the accused is not
 3 guilty, when he himself exaggerates it, or that he is guilty, when it is the accuser
 4 who is in a rage” (AR, II.24.1401b; Freese 1926, 329). In parallel, a fabricated video
 5 of a public figure expressing rage, hatred, or criminal intent can bypass rational
 6 evaluation and trigger immediate moral judgment. The viewer feels they have seen
 7 the crime itself, even though no such event took place.

8 Furthermore, the fallacy of consequence involves mistaken inference,
 9 mainly, because a certain trait often accompanies a virtue, the presence of that
 10 trait is taken as proof of the virtue itself. In the example of Aristotle, Paris lives
 11 alone like a noble-minded person; therefore, he must be noble-minded. The
 12 reasoning confuses correlation with cause or essence. “Another fallacy is that of
 13 the Consequence. For instance, in the Alexander (Paris) it is said that Paris was
 14 high-minded, because he despised the companionship of the common herd and
 15 dwelt on Ida by himself; for because the high-minded are of this character, Paris
 16 also might be thought high-minded” (AR, II.24.1401b; Freese 1926, 331). For
 17 instance, deepfakes exploit the audience’s habitual reasoning, in a similar
 18 manner one could claim that “if this were fake, it wouldn’t look like this.” Thus,
 19 Aristotle shows how such reasoning is logically invalid, even though it feels
 20 persuasive.

21 In political life, it is particularly common to present something that is not a
 22 cause as a cause, e.g., if one thing happens at the same time as another, or follows
 23 it, we perceive the sequence as a cause. “Or, if one should say that it is wanton
 24 outrage to beat a free man” (AR, II.24.1402a; Freese 1926, 333). And this is
 25 what making the worse appear the better argument means. Next to what has been
 26 said we must speak of refutation. “An argument may be refuted either by a
 27 counter-syllogism or by bringing an objection” (AR, II.24.1402b; Freese 1926,
 28 333). Here, the omission of “when” and “how” is essential. After all, it is only
 29 disorderly conduct if, for example, we do not do it in self-defence. Among other
 30 things, these are the basic rhetorical principles on the basis of which the audience
 31 can examine whether something happened or not. To do this, they must carry out
 32 the following analysis: “In the first place, if that which is naturally less likely
 33 has happened, then that which is more likely will most probably have happened”
 34 (AR, II.19.1392b; Freese 1926, 269). Consequently, modern people should also
 35 undertake this analysis in order to navigate the jungles of deepfake videos and
 36 ensure that their internal compass works correctly when they have to decide
 37 between reality and apparent reality.

40 **The Phenomenon of Deepfakes as Apparent Reality**

41
 42 Based on the above, I argue that deepfake is a possible and very dangerous
 43 method of rhetorical persuasion, which is a semblance of reality, a version of
 44 reality falsified by technological tricks. As van der Sloot and Wagenveld put it,
 45 “[i]mage, sound, or other material that is wholly or partly fabricated or existing
 46 image, sound or other material that has been manipulated with the help of

1 advanced technical means and that is impossible or difficult to distinguish from
2 the authentic material” (2022, 4). Therefore, Aristotle rightly warns us that “[i]f
3 it is argued that one who makes an unfair use of such faculty of speech may do
4 a great deal of harm, this objection applies equally to all good things except
5 virtue, and above all to those things which are most useful, such as strength,
6 health, wealth, generalship; for as these, rightly used, may be of the greatest
7 benefit, so, wrongly used, they may do an equal amount of harm” (AR.I.1.1355b;
8 Freese 1926, 13). In the case of deepfakes, the argument becomes very complex
9 and widespread with the help of technology. This is not as simple as
10 photoshopping, because it also affects the ear, and unsuspecting viewers are
11 easily deceived by what they see and hear, especially because the creators change
12 small parts, faces, and voices in what is otherwise a largely real series of images.

13 Plato articulates strong ethical criticisms of the sophists, particularly
14 targeting their tendency to embellish deceptive ideas through elaborate rhetorical
15 techniques. He argues that they attempt to render falsehoods persuasive by
16 cloaking them in attractive and misleading language, effectively making what is
17 untrue appear credible (Adamik 1982, 266). Such stylistic sophistication,
18 however, serves primarily to influence and mislead audiences rather than to
19 convey genuine knowledge. Plato extends this critique by asserting that any
20 speaker who lacks a grounding in objective truth cannot be said to practice a true
21 art. In his view, those who prioritize shaping public opinion over engaging with
22 reality produce a form of rhetoric that is fundamentally hollow—lacking both
23 intellectual integrity and authentic artistic merit (Adamik 1982, 274). If we
24 compare the creator of deepfake to a painting forger, we can say that while the
25 former’s work is unique and, in its own way, irreproducible, the latter then is a
26 mass production method. However, deepfakes have become as much a part of
27 our lives as painting forgery, which has been commonplace for centuries and
28 tacitly accepted by the public (Aczél 2023, 33).

29 Nevertheless, the contemporary information environment is increasingly
30 shaped by rapid technological developments that challenge traditional
31 distinctions between truth and falsehood. In particular, advances in artificial
32 intelligence have enabled the creation of highly realistic synthetic media—
33 commonly referred to as deepfakes—which can depict individuals saying or
34 doing things that never occurred. These technologies leverage machine learning
35 techniques to fabricate convincing audio-visual content, thereby significantly
36 lowering the threshold for producing persuasive misinformation (Chesney–
37 Citron 2019, 1758–1759). At the same time, the networked structure of digital
38 communication platforms facilitates the rapid dissemination of such content,
39 often amplifying its impact through mechanisms such as information cascades
40 and the viral spread of emotionally charged or novel material (Chesney–Citron
41 2019, 1762–1764). As a result, deepfakes do not merely introduce new forms of
42 deception; they intensify pre-existing vulnerabilities within the epistemic
43 landscape, including cognitive biases and the erosion of trust in authoritative
44 sources. In this context, the manipulation of appearances through sophisticated
45 technological means can be understood as a modern extension of longstanding
46 philosophical concerns about rhetoric, persuasion, and the distortion of truth.

1 Aristotle presents us with correct models of quantity, quality, and manner in
 2 *Rhetoric* in order to expose the many ways in which deception can be used.
 3 Deepfakes violate every model, because they employ the entire arsenal of
 4 information manipulation. The messages are not vague or ambiguous, of course;
 5 on the contrary, they are completely clear and simple so that a wide audience can
 6 understand them. In every other respect—in terms of relevance, informativeness,
 7 and distortion of the truth—they are completely deceptive. We believe in the
 8 authenticity of the simulated person based on our prior knowledge, and the larger
 9 the context and the environment of the information, the more likely we are to
 10 fail to recognize that this simulated person is in fact a deepfake (Aczél 2023, 40).
 11 In Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, he reveals the attributes of authenticity in communication
 12 between people, while deepfake creates authenticity through technological
 13 systems. As a result, if the truth perceived by the recipients is supported by
 14 technology with facts and data in a medium, situation, and perception (both
 15 sensory and cognitive) that the recipients currently trust, then they will consider
 16 it authentic (Keleti 2023, 64).

17 Although we do not expect authenticity from technology in our personal
 18 interactions (Keleti 2023, 65), we have seen in Aristotle that the receptive
 19 audience tends toward easier resistance: they do not draw conclusions
 20 themselves, but applaud conclusions that have been made clear to them (III.
 21 10.1410.b)¹, so that “comfortable truths,” truths that are easy to accept with little
 22 thought, and our lack of sufficient motivation caused by our trust in technology
 23 that does the thinking and reasoning for us, make us vulnerable to fake news
 24 (Keleti 2023, 68). Therefore, it is no coincidence that politics is the favourite
 25 arena for the use of deepfake videos.

26 For instance, some politicians like to discredit their political opponents with
 27 deepfakes, or they use them to their own advantage by stirring up political
 28 scandals, or they can label real information that negatively affects their
 29 reputation as fake news. This is referred to in the literature as “The Liar’s
 30 Dividend,”² which refers to the paradox that someone creates a fake video to
 31 refute a real video, claiming that the real video is a deepfake, i.e., profiting from
 32 the fact that the falsification cannot be verified (Herke 2023, 161). The fact that
 33 falsification is relatively easy to conceal and technically feasible, and that
 34 detection is difficult, makes content modification convincing, credible, and
 35 reliable, which reduces our vigilance. Moreover, by contributing to the
 36 interaction during communication, the recipient actually approves the lie (Aczél
 37 2023, 32).

38 As Meskys et al. argues “[d]eep fakes can have profound negative
 39 consequences to democracies: deep-faked news reports could be aimed at
 40 targeting the reputation of certain individuals, portray fake events (e.g., faked

¹“Of necessity, therefore, all style and enthymemes that give us rapid information are smart. This is the reason why superficial enthymemes, meaning those that are obvious to all and need no mental effort, and those which, when stated, are not understood, are not popular, but only those which are understood the moment they are stated, or those of which the meaning, although not clear at first, comes a little later” (III. 10.1410.b).

²Further suggested reading on “Liar’s Dividend”: <https://www.newsweek.com/when-photographs-lie-206894>.

1 terrorist attack) or impact such democratic processes as electoral campaigns or
2 other socially significant events” (2020, 8). Furthermore, they also add that “[o]n
3 April 17, 2018 BuzzFeed published deep-faked video of President Obama to
4 demonstrate how easy it is to put words in someone else’s mounts. In that video,
5 President Obama was speaking his own voice and “mimicking” the video
6 creator’s words, some of which were unlikely to be said by the real Obama”
7 (Meskys et al. 2020, 7), which was created with the aim of drawing attention to
8 the real danger of political disinformation and deception (Freelon and Wells
9 2020, 151–152). Deepfakes may be used as catalyst to erode trust in political
10 institutions, deepen division among social groups (Meskys et al. 2020, 8).

11
12 One notable example was the circulation of an altered video of an American
13 politician, Nancy Pelosi on social media. In the video, she appeared intoxicated
14 while mispronouncing her words. The American President Donald J. Trump shared
15 the video on his “Twitter” account to alter public perception of his opponent, Nancy
16 Pelosi. Consequently, the video had been viewed and shared over 2.5 million times
17 on Facebook. (Buo 2020, Ch. 4.2.)

18
19 Therefore, if this technology is used by hostile governments, deep-fakes
20 could even pose threats to national security or impair international relations
21 (Meskys et al. 2020, 8).

22
23 The potential to sway the outcome of an election is real, particularly if the attacker
24 is able to time the distribution such that there will be enough window for the fake
25 to circulate but not enough window for the victim to debunk it effectively
26 (assuming it can be debunked at all). [...] The 2017 election in France illustrates
27 the perils. In this variant of the operation executed against the Clinton campaign in
28 the United States in 2016, the Russians mounted a covert-action program that
29 blended cyber-espionage and information manipulation in an effort to prevent the
30 election of Emmanuel Macron as President of France in 2017. The campaign
31 included theft of large numbers of digital communications and documents,
32 alteration of some of those documents in hopes of making them seem problematic,
33 and dumping a lot of them on the public alongside aggressive spin. The effort
34 ultimately fizzled for many reasons, including: [...] mismanagement of the timing
35 of the document dump, which left enough time for the Macron team and the media
36 to discover and point out all these flaws. (Chesney–Citron 2019, 1778)

37
38 Consequently, public discourse, as framed by political parties, lacks the
39 virtue of moderation. According to Aristotle “Self-control is a virtue which
40 disposes men in regard to the pleasures of the body as the law prescribes; the
41 contrary is licentiousness” (I.1366b). Those who control political discourse:
42 “Men act voluntarily when they know what they do, [...] The motives which lead
43 men to do injury and commit wrong actions are depravity and incontinence,”
44 until then, the masses on social media “do not act under compulsion” (I.1368b).
45 “What is done voluntarily is not always done with premeditation but what is
46 done with premeditation is always known to the agent, for no one is ignorant of
47 what he does with a purpose” (Ibid.) This provides ammunition for those who
48 control political discourse, who can then make it seem as “[f]urther, it should be

1 clear that this is the opinion” (I.1396a). This development can be contributed to
2 the fact – as Aristotle claims – that “an apparent enthymeme may arise from that
3 which is not absolutely probable but only in particular cases,” (II.1402a) so only
4 in the manner as the entity or person, who controls public discourse, had argued.
5 And that is a lie, not real, but apparent probability.

6 The above-presented examples illustrate that the dangers posed by
7 deepfakes are not confined to isolated incidents of deception but are embedded
8 within broader structural transformations of the contemporary information
9 ecosystem. As recent scholarship emphasizes, the rapid advancement and
10 diffusion of deepfake technology, combined with the affordances of digital
11 communication platforms, enable malicious actors to weaponize synthetic media
12 at scale, targeting political processes, public opinion, and institutional legitimacy
13 (Buo 2020, Ch. 1, Ch. 2.). In particular, the capacity to fabricate convincing
14 audio-visual evidence introduces novel challenges for democratic societies, as it
15 becomes increasingly difficult for citizens to distinguish authentic content from
16 manipulated material. This erosion of epistemic reliability is further intensified
17 and worsened by the speed at which such content circulates in the online
18 spheres, often outpacing efforts of verification or debunking (Chesney–Citron
19 2019, 1762–1764). Consequently, deepfakes operate not merely as instruments
20 of isolated misinformation but as catalysts that intensify polarization, undermine
21 trust in political actors, and destabilize the conditions necessary for informed
22 public deliberation (Buo 2020, Ch. 1, Ch. 2.). In this sense, the phenomenon of
23 deepfakes exemplifies a convergence between technological capability and
24 rhetorical manipulation, wherein the persuasive force of fabricated appearances
25 acquires unprecedented political significance.

26 27 28 **Conclusion**

29
30 Plato raises serious ethical objections against those sophists who dress
31 deceitful content in colourful forms (for their use of elaborate and deceptive
32 rhetoric), as they “strive to make the false appear true by dressing it in a cloak
33 of colourful lies” (Adamik 1982, 266). This ornate but misleading language is
34 thus used to manipulate their audience and present falsehoods as if they were the
35 truth. Plato deepens his critique by arguing that a speaker who lacks a foundation
36 in objective truth is incapable of practicing a genuine craft. He suggests that
37 those who focus only on manipulating public opinion, rather than understanding
38 reality, produce a form of oratory that is both absurd and devoid of real artistic
39 value (Adamik 1982, 274). The emergence and proliferation of deepfakes in the
40 21st century only deepens existing divides in beliefs, identity, and political
41 commitment; this polarization increases the likelihood that opposing political
42 adversaries and social groups will believe only negative things about one another
43 and, to this end, their members will be willing to spread lies as well. Therefore,
44 the diffusion of the capacity to produce high-quality deepfakes will erode that
45 limitation, empowering an ever-widening circle of participants to inject false-

1 but-compelling information into a ready and willing information-sharing
2 environment (Chesney–Citron 2019, 1779).

3 Taken together, these developments underscore the profound implications
4 of deepfake technology for the integrity of democratic discourse and the stability
5 of epistemic trust. As the preceding analysis has shown, deepfakes represent not
6 merely a technological innovation but a paradigmatic shift in the production and
7 dissemination of persuasive content, one that amplifies longstanding concerns
8 articulated by classical philosophers regarding the manipulation of truth through
9 rhetoric. The capacity to fabricate highly realistic audio-visual material enables
10 actors to present falsehoods with unprecedented credibility, thereby intensifying
11 the persuasive power traditionally associated with deceptive speech. This
12 technological capability is further compounded by the structural features of the
13 contemporary digital environment, in which information circulates rapidly,
14 widely, and often without sufficient verification, allowing misleading content to
15 achieve significant reach and influence (Chesney–Citron 2019, 1764–1766).

16 Moreover, the accessibility of deepfake tools ensures that such manipulative
17 practices are no longer confined to elite or specialized actors but are increasingly
18 available to a broad range of participants, including individuals, organizations,
19 and state actors (Buo 2020, Ch. 1, Ch. 2.). The consequences of this diffusion
20 are evident across multiple domains: in politics, where deepfakes can distort
21 electoral processes and public perception; in legal contexts, where they threaten
22 the reliability of evidentiary standards; and in broader social interactions, where
23 they erode trust between individuals and institutions. At the same time, the
24 psychological dynamics of information consumption—such as the tendency to
25 believe and share emotionally resonant or novel content—further exacerbate the
26 impact of such fabricated media, contributing to polarization and the
27 entrenchment of ideological divisions (Chesney–Citron 2019, 1766–1767). In
28 this regard, deepfakes do not simply introduce new forms of deception but
29 magnify existing vulnerabilities within the information ecosystem, creating
30 conditions under which falsehood can more easily masquerade as truth.
31 Consequently, the challenge posed by deepfakes is not solely technical but
32 fundamentally epistemological and ethical, raising urgent questions about the
33 preservation of truth, accountability, and rational deliberation in an increasingly
34 mediated public sphere.

35 Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* attained an enormous authority; his doctrines of
36 rhetorics appear over and over again in the works of Greek, Roman, and even
37 modern writers on the subject. Much of what he says applies only to the
38 conditions of Greek society, but very much is permanently true (Ross 2005,
39 289). The speakers nowadays (and rightly so) are inclined to rely on natural talent
40 and experience rather than on instruction, and because hearers, though as easily
41 swayed by rhetoric as ever, are rather ashamed of the fact and not much
42 interested in knowing how the trick is done (Ross 2005, 290). People in the
43 modern age tend to forget the correct models of quantity, quality, and manner
44 that Aristotle presents to us in *Rhetoric* in order to expose the many ways of
45 deception. We believe in the authenticity of the simulated person based on our
46 previous knowledge, and the larger context and environment of the information

1 presented to us, thus the more likely we are to fail to recognize the deepfake
 2 (Aczél 2023, 40). Therefore, in order to maintain our own reality, relying on our
 3 common sense, awareness, and instincts is perhaps more important today than
 4 ever before. I believe that this is Aristotle’s most important message for the
 5 people of today.

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