

## COMMENT AND RESPONSE

### A RESPONSE TO GAVIN PAYNE

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In “Condoleezza Rice’s Rhetoric: A Classical Interpretation of Historic Examples,” Gavin Payne examines the rhetoric of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to understand her relative popularity among members of the George W. Bush White House. Payne draws from the rhetorical theories of Aristotle, most specifically Aristotle’s notion of *ethos*, to argue that Rice’s popularity is rooted in her use of historical examples to create a persona of intelligence. Payne’s analysis of *ethos* is strong, and I add to our understanding of Rice’s rhetorical effectiveness by suggesting that Rice’s *pathos*, her ability to connect with her audience on an emotional level, equals the power of her *ethos*.

Payne argues that Rice specifically builds her *phronesis* by incorporating historical events from the twentieth century in detail, and such references create in her audience a trust in her intelligence and competence. Thus she is able to persuade people more effectively than other members of the Bush government (or rather, with less harm to her own reputation) on issues relating to the Iraq war.

Aristotle presents *pathos* (appeal to emotion) and *logos* (rhetorical argument) as tools of rhetoric. I believe Rice’s rhetoric appeals greatly to *pathos*. Aristotle explains that speakers persuade their audience when the audience is “led to feel emotion [*pathos*] by the speech; for we do not give the same judgment when grieved and rejoicing or when being friendly and hostile” (39, 1356a). In fact, Quintilian actually considers Aristotle’s notions of *ethos* and *pathos* as “two kinds of emotions,” or as two facets of the same principle (49, VI.ii.8). He describes them as tools for appealing to the audience’s emotions, each to particular emotions or in differing degrees. Understanding *ethos* and *pathos* as complementary tools expands our insight into the effectiveness of Rice’s rhetoric; we distinguish the emotions she creates in her audience as well as the favorable character she creates for herself. Rice’s historical examples foster very particular emotions in her audience, leaving them primed to make the judgments she wants them to make.

Payne cites one example of a speech Rice gave to a group of African American journalists in which she discussed the 1963 bombing of a Birmingham church, an attack that killed one of her childhood friends. She related that situation to Iraq: just as African Americans, facing oppression by white supremacists, deserved freedom, Iraqis, too, should be given their freedom (from Saddam Hussein) (Payne 27). Payne states that this example builds Rice’s *ethos* by strengthening her *arête*, or perceived virtue, but I believe she also strongly appeals to the emotions of her audience through this narrative. First, as Payne points out, Rice “connects . . . to her audience through her use of ‘us,’ ‘our,’ and ‘we,’” thus establishing a common ground with the audience (28). Further, she uses a specific example likely to elicit a strong emotional response from the members of her audience, and she draws on their emotion and directs them to a particular judgment: that the Iraqi people should not suffer a similar injustice. Her ability to persuade comes not just from the audience’s trust in her virtue, but from the connection that example forms between herself and her audience—her *pathos*.

In another example, Rice describes the disarmaments of South Africa, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan

and then contrasts those disarmaments with the elusive behavior of Hussein's Iraq government. She also describes the challenges to establishing peace in post-World War II Europe and draws a parallel to the current situation in Iraq. Payne rightly notes the authority these detailed examples establish for Rice as a speaker. He even comments that the example of post-World War II Europe "evokes a strong response from the audience, who sees that era as a simpler time and views the people that took part in the war as a part of 'the greatest generation,' which binds Rice to the audience." In my view, the era of World War II is generally remembered as a time of American courage, and her parallel to Iraq encourages in her audience a determination to shoulder responsibility now as our country did then. The comparison also promotes the powerful emotion of fear about the consequences of turning away from Iraq. The disarmament examples might encourage emotions of anger or indignation toward Iraq's noncompliance, hostility toward Iraq's government, or fear of Iraq's potential for harm (harm that was averted in the examples)—and all of these emotions are described by Aristotle as components of *pathos*.

In order to create the image of an intelligent and trustworthy speaker, Rice must appeal to her audience's emotions. Quintilian's understanding of *ethos* and *pathos* assumes these aspects are linked and addresses both of them, providing a fuller account of her effectiveness. Rice does not persuade her audience only through an intelligent character; she connects to it on an emotional level, giving her the platform from which to then persuade it.

### Works Cited

- Aristotle. *On Rhetoric*. 2nd ed. Trans. George A. Kennedy. New York: Oxford UP, 2007.
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