



Ewan Pearson

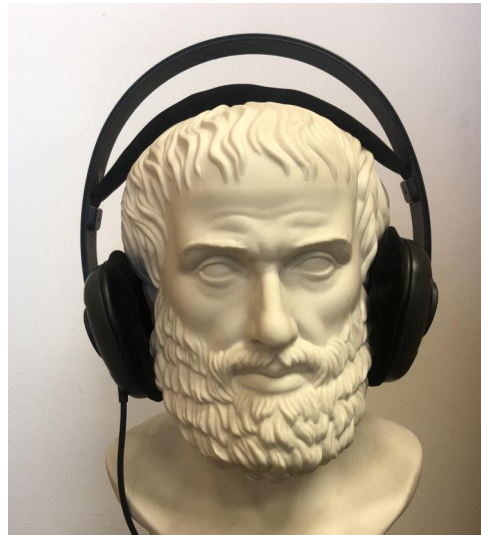
Aristotle's Lost Appeals

He had way more than three; here are another five...

Aristotle is a famous guy. He was a philosopher, writer and good at posing for statues. He is, to us, a leading light with his Three Appeals of Logos, Ethos and Pathos, and we even have a bust of him in our office to remind us of this. We have written here several times about the enduring high value of these three appeals in acts of persuasion, and we started to write about others in 2019. Here is a more elaborated review.

A wordier definition, would be: *'a time when conditions are right for the accomplishment of a crucial action: the opportune and decisive moment'*.¹ Surely, getting this right has a great effect on the level of persuasiveness, and yet how much do we think about that before embarking on a major project? I think we all do this a bit, but even since choosing to write about this one, we have sharpened our timing.

Is it because of the 'Magic of Threes' that his other appeals have been almost forgotten? Maybe they just aren't as good? No, the review of them below tells us they are just as valid and just as helpful in building a compelling case, so we commend them to you.



GPB's statue of Aristotle, posing with headphones on (GPB, 2021).

Kairos
Put most simply Kairos translates from Ancient Greek as 'the right time' or 'good timing', for example when to give a presentation or to do something. If you've ever climbed Everest (yes, a few of our clients actually have!), decided when a 'push on' should happen in a rowing race (I have), or had the response *'not now, I'm busy'* or *'we just don't have the budget/time/capacity for that'* then you'll be familiar with this one. But I hope you'll also have experienced the opposite *'Ah, I'm glad you called, there's something I'd like your help with'*.

Nomos/ Nomoi

Put most simply, Nomos translates as a Law, Convention, Conduct or Custom, which was distinguished in the 5th and 4th centuries BC from Physis, which meant the Law of Nature². Nomoi is the plural. Simple customs include shaking hands when we meet new business counterparts (OK, not for the last year), greetings on emails and letters such as Hi/Hello and Yours/ Best wishes, and saying your name when you

call someone (even though these days your name would be stored on many of the other mobile phones you call).

So, what sorts of conventions and customs do we humans have that might affect persuasiveness? One that has always struck me as odd is that of hiring firms *before* experiencing any of their work, using other factors like *'Do I know you'*, creds and reputation (think of the Big 4 accounting firms and Magic Circle law firms) in our selection processes

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In this edition:

Aristotle's Lost Appeals

By Ewan Pearson

Ewan reviews five of Aristotle's 'lost' appeals and highlights how they play a part in day-to-day acts of persuasion.

Intercultural lessons on vocal pitch

By Richard Keith

Richard talks about the importance of pitch patterns when speaking Japanese, and compares this with English.

Respond well to questions - but how long have you got?

By Desmond Harney

Des discusses the importance of answering questions well and provides tips on how to do so effectively.

Plausibility, credibility and our emotions

By Lynda Russell-Whitaker

Lynda considers plausibility and credibility, looking at the impact that they can have on an audiences' emotions and perception of the speaker.

Aristotle's Lost Appeals (cont...)

instead. This disadvantages smaller firms or those less well known. Here's a couple of other unhelpful conventional thoughts: *'Men are stronger'* and *'Women multi-task better'*. Some other conventions are well described these days by subconscious biases such as Affinity, Confirmation and Attribution bias³. Our advice would be to beware of convention!

Telos⁴

Put most simply, Telos translates as Purpose, Intention, Final Aim or Result.

It's the second thing we ask our clients to consider when building a compelling case. FYI, the first thing is to think about your audience. "Why are you doing this, and what purpose do you serve?" are profound questions, and when we ask

them, they trigger a really good discussion that seems to catch people out, and yet always changes a presentation for the better, as it gives everything a clear focus and body of argument. It is very good at helping us to move from Features to Benefits, as Telos describes what something does for the user, not what it is: A knife *cuts things*⁵. So, our advice would be to define your Telos early on, then keep applying it to bring your benefits out.

Oikos

Put most simply, Oikos translates in a business sense as Team, although it originally meant Family or Household, being the main unit of Ancient Greek society. Every Team needs a Leader, and others as Members. The *sharing of the persuasion* between these parties is often poorly done, with the Team Leader doing too much of the talking. We heard about a PR pitch recently where that was the #1 reason why they lost a pitch.

Mythos

Put most simply, Mythos translates as Myth, but it also means Belief and Story, whether true or not. It includes anecdotes, which are really just short stories. In Ancient Greek society, people acquired knowledge by analysis (Logos) and hearing stories (Mythos)⁶, and not only do we still do so, but it turns out from a bunch of recent scientific research that we humans actually prefer hearing stories over facts (who knew!?), finding them a much more engaging and thus

memorable way to learn. If that act is learning why a provider should win a piece of work, then stories matter. Our advice is to include anecdotes or stories in your acts of persuasion, even though they will take a bit of extra time. Have you ever heard the one about....?



Eight of Aristotle's Appeals (GPB, 2021).

For the sake of space, I'll stop the appeals there, but there are others that Aristotle reviewed. Take **Hamartia** (a character flaw) for example...

By Ewan Pearson

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Intercultural lessons on vocal pitch



Richard Keith

Pitch is often pivotal in determining the meaning of words in Japanese.

Having worked in Japan for some months now, I have had the opportunity to observe my Japanese colleagues and friends when they communicate. It goes without saying that there are numerous differences between communication in English and Japanese, and I have no intention of attempting to highlight them all here.

However, one area of the Japanese language has piqued my interest; and with the apologetic caveat that I am simplifying here for the sake of time and space, I will explain it below, for it may illuminate certain communication issues closer to home.

Japanese is usually described as a pitch-accent language¹, where the meaning of a word can be influenced by changes in pitch on the *morae*. (*Mora* equate, very roughly, to syllables, at least for our purposes; the “pitch accent” is a raised pitch.)



In Japanese, pitch is important when determining the meaning of a word Tubiermont, (2021)².

Take the word, “hashi”, for instance: *hash-i*, with the higher pitch on the first morae means “chopsticks”, yet *hash-i* with the higher pitch on the second morae, means “bridge”.

Or the word “ima”: when the pitch accent is on the second morae (*i-ma*) it means “living room”, when the pitch accent is on the first morae (*i-ma*) it means, “now”.

Note that there are regional variations in Japanese pitch accents and there is some debate regarding the extent to which native Japanese speakers identify meaning using pitch accents such as the above, with some scholars

suggesting that the context of a word is more important for comprehension. Nevertheless, pitch accent is an inherent part of the language, where specific changes in pitch are designed to convey meaning naturally.

In one way this is similar to English. English is a stressed language (technically a variable stressed accent language), where, for instance, the emphasis of a syllable in a polysyllabic word can be important to the correct pronunciation. We say, “i-rre-gular” nor “i-rre-qu-lar”, and “im-por-tant” rather than “im-por-tant”.

Yet in English the meaning of a word almost never changes if we put the stress in the wrong place; it just sounds... wrong.

Even with words that are spelled the same but mean different things, most of the time we alter the sounds when we speak. Take a word like “content”: we say con-tent to mean “the thing contained”

whereas when we say con-tent, meaning “happy”, we flatten the initial diphthong to a schwa: c(ə)n-tent.

The second important difference is that in English we can – indeed, we nearly always do – find other ways to emphasise a syllable in a word, and then a word in a sentence. Aside from a pitch change, the most common vocal tools we use are volume and duration: we usually either get louder, or we lengthen or shorten a syllable or word.

Duration is, of course, related to pace; if you lengthen your syllables then you will likely slow down your speech rate overall.

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Intercultural lessons on vocal pitch (cont...)

But duration and pace are not the same, for you can pronounce your syllables at a constant rate, yet by adding in more pauses in between your words, you will slow down your words per minute overall.

In Japanese, pitch is objectively essential to creating accurate meaning, therefore being able to control pitch change when you want to is rather important.

The result is that native-Japanese speakers are notoriously quite aware of this, and sensitised to using pitch. Although I can't claim to have had any conversations with Japanese music teachers, it is said that they believe perfect pitch can be taught to anyone for this very reason.

This may be a lovely linguistics lesson, but how does knowing any of this actually help? Well, perhaps native speakers of English should accept that the way our language functions does not make us naturally gifted when it comes to hearing and using pitch change for emphasis. Of course, this may or may not be true for those of you whose first language is not English: it depends on the language, but it may be an interesting thing to explore, if you haven't already.

But like many things in life, just because something does not come naturally does not mean we can't do it; it just means that it we probably have to try a bit harder to master pitch changes if we are to wield this particular linguistic weapon with any real impact.

At GPB we have spent many a coaching session helping clients improve their voice, and very often we work on pitch modulation—the movement up and down in pitch height through words

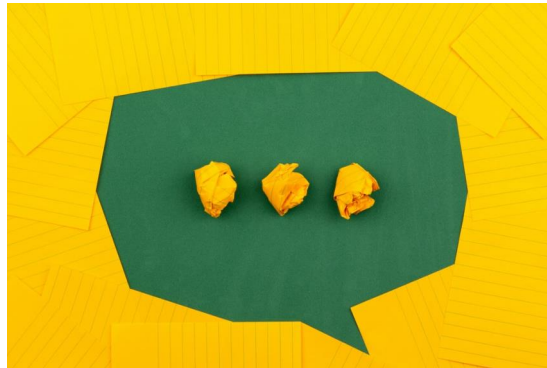
and phrases. We help clients to hear the positive effect of strategic pitch changes, help them to make those changes with their own voice and, almost invariably, help them to appreciate the difference between what it sounds like in their head and how an audience hears those pitch changes!

We have found that you can almost always make bigger pitch changes than

initially expected and, provided it is done authentically, you sound more engaging, dynamic and persuasive.

Simply put, the effective use of vocal pitch modulation can convey meaning, and dynamism. Clarity and memorability are often beneficial by-products. Knowing more about your voice, and especially how to control it in the way you want, can help maximise your communication skills. This is something we can all aspire to, irrespective of the language being spoken.

By Richard Keith



"We usually either get louder, or we lengthen or shorten a syllable or word" Richard Keith. Hryshchenko (2021)³.

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Respond well to questions - but how long have you got?



Several key factors work well together to help you give persuasive responses to questions.

A client asked me recently how long somebody should speak for, ideally. She referenced an Adrian Chiles article which I'd already planned to reflect on, here. She wondered whether GPB endorses the view, summarised in the second part of Chiles's title: *'... talk for more than a minute and you've lost me'*. Chiles offers opinions on question-handling as well as optimal timings. So, after further reflection, I've outlined some GPB perspectives on both areas here.

Yes, we do have a recommendation on how long Persuasive Communication should last. We're clear yet equivocal, contradicting Chiles's very specific stance on maximum duration. We've found that, to be optimally persuasive, communication should last for as long as it needs to – but not a moment longer. It's a principle that applies equally to media contact, question handling, public speaking, presentations, sales pitches and much more besides.

To evaluate how long we will need, we should first clarify exactly what we're aiming to achieve.

What do we hope to communicate? To whom? In what setting? And under what circumstances?

Based on our answers, we should then plan to deliver our objectives as concisely as possible.

Chiles cites a particularly successful radio interview he hosted (and includes a link²) offering a simple rule: *'never talk for more than a minute in one go'*. But we don't think you should feel too constrained by his arbitrary time limit.

Chiles also makes the rather trite, generalised claim that *'Less is always*

more.' But that's only true up to a point. If you prepare a pithy and powerful piece of persuasion and then remove one word, one phrase, or one sentence, would that reduction offer an automatic improvement? No, not necessarily! It might be detrimental.

Chiles warmly praises his star interviewee, former FBI director James Comey, primarily on the basis that he was *'the easiest edit ever'*, revealing more selfish motives besides just *'the comprehension of listeners'*.

'It didn't need any editing at all... as much to do with the length of Comey's answers as what he was saying.

Whatever the optimum length of answers is, our man nailed it.' That last sentence suggests Chiles himself knows his one-minute limit is arbitrary. And even Comey isn't entirely an adherent, impressively persuasive though he is. Always answering the question directly, he adds supportive,

engaging evidence and anecdotes. He takes as long as he needs to, but not a moment longer. Comey's approach to *'What he says'* is at least as vital as a time limit in his success.

Meanwhile, Chiles (cheekily) goes on to

admonish President Obama for routinely giving much longer answers elsewhere than Comey. Although that's a criticism Obama readily concedes³.

While we would agree it's good practice to make things as easy as possible for the media when dealing with them, there's so much more to giving good answers than merely having an accurate mental stopwatch. GPB has a well-proven methodology for question-handling, whether you're



Desmond Harney



James Comey and Barack Obama (from their Wikipedia pages) - Wikipedia, 2021.

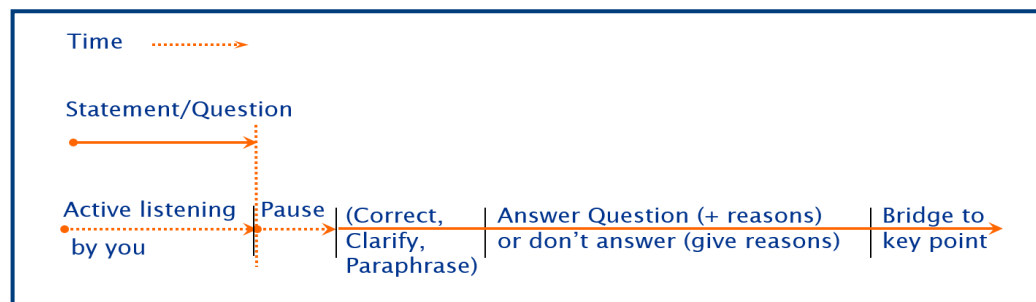
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Respond well to questions—but how long have you got? (cont...)

talking with clients, journalists or other stakeholders. How you respond to questions is often a decision-level criteria for audiences, when evaluating you and your message. So doing well here may give you a powerfully persuasive, competitive advantage.

Our methodology requires a bit of focus and practice. But the value it can unlock makes that practice and effort well worthwhile. I'll summarise it here in its consecutive steps:



A Proven Question-Handling Methodology (GPB, 2021).

- Actively listen to the whole question;
- Pause to choose your best response;
- Clarify the question if necessary, correcting any errors or misunderstandings it contains
- Respond, illustrating your reasoning, without overelaborating
- Having responded well, "Bridge" to a key or positive point you want to make. Ideally all with strong vocal and visual delivery, of course.

Interestingly, despite now being widely regarded as an excellent public speaker, Obama acknowledges that this was not always the case³. Like many people, he learned the hard way how best to persuade others with his spoken communication, especially when answering questions: *'I was just plain wordy... If every argument had two sides, I usually came up with four... I'd provide footnotes. "You got an A on the quiz... No votes, though"... the moderator called time at least twice before I was done speaking'*.

As Obama self-effacingly acknowledges, answering tough questions well requires discipline and a considered,

systematic approach, avoiding self-indulgent, over-extended detail.

Chiles suggests his stated beliefs on the ideal length of an answer may have been influenced by his earlier experiences on the BBC's 'One Show', where even the biggest star guests *'had no more than four minutes at most'*.

Luxury! Thirty years previously, cultural commentator Michael Ignatieff had already argued that even three minutes

was well beyond the average attention span of the typical audience member⁴.

Less *ISN'T* necessarily *'always more'*, but enough *IS* always enough. And Chiles shares an analogous observation that we can probably all learn from. He suggests you'll rarely hear a church-goer say, *"Y'know, I really wish that sermon had gone on longer"*.

Equally though, they might well feel short-changed if sermons stopped arbitrarily, just 60 seconds in. Or if they failed, through undue brevity, to persuasively address important issues.

By Desmond Harney

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Lynda Russell-Whitaker

Plausibility, credibility and our emotions

Dominic Cummings serves to remind us that it's what you say *and* the way you say it.

It's probably fair to say that, when it comes to Aristotle's three appeals of Logos, Ethos and Pathos, we can more easily identify when the credibility (ethos) of a speaker is enhanced or diminished due to facts, figures and the strength of their argument (logos). If an argument is clearly flawed, or facts are obviously inaccurate, plausibility inevitably plummets.

Without plausibility, persuasion is highly unlikely. Ancient rhetoricians played on this all the time in court speeches, whether for the plaintiff or the defendant. What isn't as immediately apparent to us on a conscious level is the extent to which the emotions (pathos) aroused in us by a speaker affects our view of their credibility and authority. And credibility of an individual often goes hand in hand with the plausibility of an argument or the story behind that argument.

Given Dominic Cummings is back in the news, criticising the UK Govt's early handling of Coronavirus to a Select Committee, it seemed timely to do a brief analysis of how *pathos* influenced *ethos* in the widely viewed 'Rose Garden' speech, i.e. the Press Conference held in the garden of 10 Downing Street on 25th May 2020.

Looking at the relationship between speaker, the content of the speech and the audience and, in this example, *how* the speaker delivers the content can influence how we feel, which in turn can either enhance or diminish their credibility.

Many of you (especially UK residents) will remember that Cummings was seated in a garden, at a plain pop-up wooden table. You probably also remember that he was wearing a shirt without a tie, with his sleeves rolled up, reading from a script. Taking these elements together, and despite improving slightly on his usually very casual dress-code, as a viewer you might conclude that he wasn't taking the situation seriously enough.

His immediate audience were members of the Press, but because it was being broadcast, there was a much larger public audience. Given the situation, it's fair to say the public was hoping for, perhaps even expecting, an apology. It's also fair to say that the prevailing reactions were likely to range from disappointment, disbelief, anger to disgust.



Dominic Cummings 'Rose Garden Speech' in May 2020.

Five days after the broadcast (30 May 2020), an article in The Guardian newspaper quoted a woman from Durham, who had been self-isolating for 10 weeks, as saying that: "If there were stocks in the village, Dominic Cummings would be in them". She continued: "there is not one single person

around here who is not disgusted....People haven't been able to go to funerals, they haven't been able to go to weddings, they haven't been able to look after people who are dying." That sentiment was probably shared by many others.

An experienced orator would be acutely aware of not just the content of their speech, but also the arrangement and style of the words

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Plausibility, credibility and our emotions (cont...)

they use to try to persuade their audience.

They will be mindful of the congruence of those words with their voice, facial expressions and other non-verbal body language.

They will probably have gauged the emotional temperature of their audience and taken advantage of it.

The content and delivery of Cummings' speech merely served to amplify the prevailing emotions of the public, further diminishing his dubious credibility. He made no apology, nor did he seem contrite. He even said "*the legal rules inevitably do not cover all circumstances, including those that I found myself in.*" Although he didn't say that he thought there was one set of rules for him and one set for others, the feeling conveyed was of someone who didn't care.*

He appeared to make no appeal to our pity or sympathy. His facial expressions were devoid of emotion, and his voice had minimal modulation. No change in volume or speed. Completely bland. It seemed as though he had been coerced into holding this Press Conference.

The convoluted story was unconvincing: the additional trip to apparently visit an optician, and the claim that they didn't stop to use the bathroom during such a long journey. These factors, and others added to the background situation, contributed to undermining his ethos.

If and when those in positions of influence or power flout the rules, we ask ourselves questions about their values and their integrity. Are they honourable? Are they even honest? Or are they hypocrites? In extraordinary times such as these, emotions are even more heightened and someone's credibility can be ruined overnight.

What does this mean for you and me? As a speaker, it's important to know as much as possible about your audience; their perception of you and your topic.

Consider the emotional appeals you want to amplify or arouse in your audience, alongside developing your arguments and thinking about how you are going to deliver your talk.

What opinion do you want your listeners to have of you when they leave? And as listeners, it's useful to be aware how easily emotions, as well as reason, can sway our opinion of the speaker as much as the speech.

As a speaker, it's important to know as much as possible about your audience.

By Lynda Russell-Whitaker

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