DHS Bios Analyzed

What is it about a charismatic speaker that is so powerful; an author’s strongly worded work so compelling; a poet’s words so beautiful and flowing? Ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle believed these things were possible through modes of persuasion: ethos, logos, and pathos. Each mode of persuasion is utilized to charm certain aspects of our mind through the author’s argument. Ethos is the credibility or authority of the source, logos is the logical case based on facts, and pathos is our human emotions. These modes of persuasion are used in conjunction with one another through everyday communications that are both spoken and unspoken (e.g., speeches, novels, clothing, and even the Department of Homeland Security’s bios). These bios effectively inform us of who the agents are and attempt to persuade us that they should be trusted. Further investigation into the DHS agents’ bios through Aristotle’s modes of persuasion would provide greater insight into the actual identities of these agents.

Examining the peculiarities of each agent’s file and comparing it to bios will perhaps help us see into the minds of the Homeland Security Agents. In the case of Agent Duncan’s personal file: the man is a widower as well as a single father. It is well known that the premature loss of one’s spouse is a tragic and chaotic event for the significant other and other survivors of the deceased, an event that bleeds into the other spheres of one’s life. This information evokes one’s pathos in that the sympathy felt for this man’s loss helps him seem to be trustworthy and his pain to be relatable.

Yet, not every agent in the DHS bio file emanates trustworthiness. Agent Melder’s profile is full of rather questionable items with perhaps unintended negative connotations. Unlike most of his colleagues, Agent Melder (who appears to be Caucasian) listed his ethnicity as “Discordian.” Discordian is not an ethnicity, but rather a religion worshipping the Greco-Roman deity Discordia (aka Eris), the goddess of chaos. Why would this agent believe this would make him appear to be trustworthy? Agent Melder also has misleading information under his place of birth, listing a town that is actually located in Germany (Bad Tölz) in a country (Yggdrasil) that is actually a massive, sacred tree in Norse mythology. This misinformation could be a deliberate withholding of information as to not raise questions of Agent Melder’s true identity, certainly defeating the purpose of the argument for trustworthiness of his DHS bio.

While many of the bios listed in the file seem to argue to persuade others that the agents are able to be trusted through the use of Aristotle’s modes of persuasion, a few agents have supplied misinformation, making it harder to trust said agents because they have obscured their true identities. By utilizing Aristotle’s three modes of persuasion in conjunction with one another, one can effectively convince others to do their bidding, a power that could either be used to bring about trust or to do harm with malcontent.