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Death of a Politician

How did this happen? He is “A honey-glazed tiger testicle,” a “Batshit billionaire,” “A circus-peanut wearing a badger,” a “Feckless blowhard” (Colbert; Stewart, “Democalypse”; Stewart, “Da Best”; “Editorial: Trump should pull the plug”). He is “Cancer”; and he is successfully campaigning to be President of the United States (Perry). Regardless of his shameless verbal wallops against women, immigrants, reporters, and colleagues, Donald Trump receives tremendous acclaim from the American people. How did this happen? Many individuals scrutinize this topic, as illustrated by Google’s “about 134,000,000 results” for a query of “Why is Trump popular?”, with responses from *The Atlantic*, *Politico*, and *Huffington Post* (“Why is Trump”). Problematically, most media outlets muse on Trump’s popularity *despite* his acerbic rhetorical assaults; voters instead favor Trump *due to* his rhetorical attacks. Thus, we will analyze five of Donald Trump’s unorthodox, rhetorically generated relationships with logic, the media, immigrants, politicians, and women, in order to comprehend how his unseemly tactics account for his political popularity.

Before we can proceed, we have two tasks. We must summarize the problem with Donald Trump and provide a framework through which we can assess his rhetoric. In a word, Trump’s utterances are inadvisable in a presidential campaign. We can distill Trump’s avant-garde rhetoric down to five fundamental problems: Trump lacks logic, vigorously assails the media, insults immigrants, castigates politicians, and disparages women. To be clear, we are not asserting or refuting a stance on any of these issues. Instead, we will rhetorically scrutinize these matters, mainly as they appear in Donald Trump’s candidacy announcement and the 2015 CNBC Republican debate, in order to comprehend Trump’s successful application of a radically unique form of rhetoric. Our second task is to provide an overarching rhetorical lens with which to survey Donald Trump. Aristotle, in *Rhetoric*, supplies this lens, saying, that rhetoric presents “three means of effecting persuasion. The man who is to be in command of them must...be able (1) to reason logically, (2) to understand human character and goodness in their various forms, and (3) to understand the emotions,” conventionally recognized respectively as *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos* (Aristotle). We will primarily focus on *ethos*; however, to fully fathom Donald Trump’s dependance on *ethos*, one must first comprehend Trump’s multifarious fallacious follies.

We will, therefore, commence with the first problem, namely Trump’s thorny relationship with logic. Let us analyze one of Trump’s arguments. In his candidacy announcement, Trump propounds, that “every time we give Iraq equipment, the first time a bullet goes off in the air, they leave it” (“Here’s Donald Trump’s”). He rationalizes this pronouncement, arguing, “Last week, I read 2,300 Humvees—these are big vehicles—were left behind for the enemy...2,300 sophisticated vehicles, they ran, and the enemy took them” (“Here’s Donald

Trump's"). Trump presents a mosaic of irrationally, bestrewn with fallacies; we will underscore one. Patrick Hurley, in *A Concise Introduction to Logic*, asserts, that "The fallacy of begging the question is committed whenever the arguer creates the illusion that inadequate premises provide adequate support for the conclusion by leaving out a possibly false (shaky) key premise" (Hurley 157). Congruently, Trump assumes that, if he hears something, then it must be true, an inarguably tenuous assertion. This is merely an amusing logic exercise, until one discerns a problem: Donald Trump has a penchant for begging the question. For example, in one of his most notorious comments, Trump proclaims, about immigrants from Mexico, "They're rapists" ("Here's Donald Trump's"). He alleges to buttress this claim, saying, "I speak to border guards and they tell us what we're getting" ("Here's Donald Trump's"). Trump continually fails to state the premise that whatever Trump hears or reads is accurate.

One could write innumerable volumes, simply matching Donald Trump's statements to fallacies. Instead, we will merely reference the makers of the Blueprint LSAT preparation curriculum, who rank Trump as one of the most fallaciously inclined candidates, stating, "It hurts our brains to count the flaws in his argument" ("Republican Debate Fallacy"). Here is the problem. Why do many of the American people trust a candidate who lacks logic? The answer lies with the sophists and in ethos.

Concerning the sophists, John Poulakos, in "Rhetoric, the Sophists, and the Possible," explains, that "during the last two centuries, the supremacy of metaphysical thought has been brought into question," and has led to "the rediscovery of the Sophists," and, thus, a rise in sophistic rhetoric (Poulakos 216, 217). Sophists advocate "The rhetoric of possibility...[which] asks people to break from the past and present and to assume the responsibility necessary to create their future" (224). Trump epitomizes this sophistic future orientation with his forward looking campaign slogan, "we are going to make our country great again" ("Here's Donald Trump's"). Since Sophists "introduc[e] propositions that defy proof and verification" (Poulakos 223), Donald Trump's unwarranted success correlates with the rebirth of sophistic rhetoric.

Beyond retaining merely sophistic qualities, Trump, in lieu of logic, relies heavily on Aristotle's second appeal, namely ethos. Here, James May, in his book *Trials of Character*, will guide us. May examines "three kinds of ethos," the first of which is "the moral character of the speaker" (May 2). May explicates moral character, saying, "To win trust, confidence, and conviction, the speaker must exhibit...good sense" (2). Donald Trump utilizes good sense, in order to supersede logic. In his presidential candidacy announcement, he commences by stating, about the announcements of other candidates, "They didn't know the air-conditioner didn't work. They sweated like dogs...How are they going to beat ISIS?" ("Here's Donald Trump's"). The logic, that Trump's capacity to organize

an event confirms an ability to vanquish ISIS, is farfetched; however, having the foresight to host a candidacy announcement in a location with air conditioning does demonstrate common sense. Finally, even when Trump spurns an entire demographic, saying, “It only makes common sense. [Mexico is] sending us not the right people,” Trump unambiguously articulates his appeal to common sense (“Here’s Donald Trump’s”). There is little necessary, logical correlation between Trump’s purported common sense and his aptitude to make America great; however, Trump’s sophistic orientation and good sense create the illusion of such a correlation.

The second problem is Trump’s spirited, oral sorties against the media. The second aspect of ethos, according to May, is “the character of the audience to which the orator must suit his speech” (May 2). We will evaluate Trump’s remaining rhetorical onslaughts specifically through the lens of his audience. In a debate, hosted by CNBC, Trump says,

CNBC, they had it down at three, three and a half hours... We called in, we said, That's it. We're not doing it. They lost a lot of money. Everybody said it couldn't be done. Everybody said it was going to be three hours, three and a half, including them. And in about two minutes I renegotiated it down to two hours so we can get the hell out of here. (“CNBC Full Transcript”)

Trump noshes on the hand that feeds him, as he garners publicity in a debate, while denouncing the host. He allows no equivocation, specifying, that “Some of the media is among the worst people I’ve ever met. And I mean a pretty good percentage is really a terrible group of people” (“Trump Rips the Media”). The question is, how do such incessant assaults on the media appeal to viewers?

To appreciate the efficacy of this approach, we defer to Salomi Boukala, who, in her monograph, “Waiting for democracy: Political crisis and the discursive (re)invention of the ‘national enemy’ in times of ‘Grecovery,’” outlines strategies to influence an audience, describing the “*referential or nomination strategies* which focus on membership categorization devices, such as biological, naturalizing and depersonalizing metaphors, metonymies and synecdoches in order to represent...in-groups and out-groups” (Boukala 489-490). Trump wields “we” vocabulary, saying “we said...we can get the hell out of here,” deeming the citizens of the United States an in-group (“CNBC Full Transcript”). He ostracizes the members of the media, alluding to CNBC only as a corporation and further depersonalizing by redacting any title, saying, simply, “We called in” (“CNBC Full Transcript”). Trump further blacklists the media, employing Boukala’s “membership categorization” to designate the media as a “terrible group” (Boukala 489, “Trump Rips the Media”). Thus, Donald Trump blatantly berates the media in order to cultivate a distinction between in-groups and out-groups, thus engaging his in-group audience.

The third problem is Trump's immigrant slander. He spouts, "When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best... They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people" ("Here's Donald Trump's"). Here, Trump reutilizes Boukala's "*referential or nomination strategies*," to introduce "depersonalizing... synecdoches," representing all Mexican immigrants with a cornucopia of comprehensive monikers, like "criminal" and "rapist," which accurately characterize only a fraction of the Hispanic demographic (Boukala 489). Upon a shallow perusal, Trump's distinguishing "good people" from "not... best," does resemble in-groups and out-groups of Mexican immigrants ("Here's Donald Trump's"). However, Trump only unenthusiastically "assume[s]" that some nonnatives are commendable ("Here's Donald Trump's"). Strictly speaking, Trump's assuming insinuates his unfamiliarity with a "good" immigrant from Mexico. Thus, Trump does not delineate two groups, but instead uses depersonalizing synecdoches to categorize all Mexican immigrants as an out-group.

Here is the problem: Since Trump strives for the presidential nomination, he must, presumably, amass the acclaim of most voters in the United States. This particular remark, about immigrants from Mexico, fused with Trump's ceaseless confirmation of this ideology, forfeits many immigrant votes. How could this conceivably xenophobic rhetoric ally voters behind Trump? Scrutinized through the lens of immigration, Trump cannot unify. However, this one dimensional thinking fosters a misinterpretation of Trump. Perceiving Donald Trump instead through an economic lens crystalizes his political eminence. Jim Tankersley, Scott Clement, and Peyton Craighill of *The Washington Post*, in their article, "Why Donald Trump is winning," claim, that "Trump is selling an economic message that unifies growing concerns among liberals and conservatives," and these concerns are from "decades of lost jobs and falling wages for a swath of blue-collar Americans, who saw their opportunities diminish and developed a sense that someone has stolen something from them" (Tankersley). Voters are concerned about the economy, and "Trump... is the only candidate in the swollen Republican field willing to call out... how [illegal immigration] hurts native-born, blue-collar workers" (Tankersley). Thus, Trump intertwines two issues, capitalizing on synecdoches to set up a causal relationship between out-group Mexican immigrants and economic turmoil.

The fourth problem is Trump's skepticism towards politicians. From the outset, in his candidacy announcement, Trump has heralded the downfall of the politician demeanor, trumpeting, that "politicians are all talk, no action. Nothing's gonna get done. They will not bring us—believe me—to the promised land. They will not" ("Here's Donald Trump's"). Here, Trump practices Boukala's "*predicational strategies* which connect the already named social actors with negative and stereotypical attributions," applying an "all talk, no action" cliché to politicians

(Boukala 490). However, this is no outlying occurrence. For example, Trump complains, “We have losers. We have people that don’t have it. We have people that are morally corrupt. We have people that are selling this country down the drain” (“Here’s Donald Trump’s”). Trump practically demonizes politicians. He even specifically denounces the rhetoric of politicians, saying, “I watch the speeches of these people, and they say the sun will rise, the moon will set, all sorts of wonderful things will happen. And people are saying, ‘What’s going on? I just want a job’” (“Here’s Donald Trump’s”). The problem is that, as a politician in the United States, one has to work with other politicians. Trump’s denunciatory rhetoric seems opposed to this notion.

Perhaps the best procedure to explicate the efficacy of Trump’s anti-politician rhetoric is a survey of previous Republican presidents. Joseph Romm, in *Language Intelligence*, explains, that “President Ronald Reagan was called the Great Communicator... The root of that greatness was his simple style” (Romm 25). Reagan used “short words repeated often” to portray himself as “the wise teacher,” while characterizing his adversaries as “the callow youth in need of correction” (25). Analogously, Trump presents his conservative colleagues as green-horns; He quotes their questions: “Are you running? Are you not running? Could we have your support? What do we do? How do we do it?” (“Here’s Donald Trump’s”). He depicts Democrats in a corresponding fashion, maintaining, “You remember Obama a year ago, ‘Yemen was a great victory.’ Two weeks later, the place was blown up” (“Here’s Donald Trump’s”). Trump emulates Reagan, deploring his bewildered opposition.

Beyond a mere depiction of superior capabilities, Trump adopts Reagan’s “simple style” and George W. Bush’s “classic rhetoric, simple words with a lot of repetition” (Romm 25, 27). About immigration reform, Trump declares, “I would build a great wall” (“Here’s Donald Trump’s”). Concerning trade, he inquires, “When was the last time you saw a Chevrolet in Tokyo?”, and says, “They have bridges that make the George Washington Bridge look like small potatoes” (“Here’s Donald Trump’s”). About foreign policy, he states, “They always keep our equipment... We’re always losing this gorgeous brand-new stuff” (“Here’s Donald Trump’s”). Trump’s straightforwardness is glaring.

This simplicity manifests most lucidly in the distinct dichotomy between Trump and his opposition. For example, Jeb Bush, a quintessential politician, muses, that “The great majority of Republicans and Americans believe in a hopeful future... There are lids on people’s aspirations” (“CNBC Full Transcript”), which seems agreeable, but with one caveat: Who would say, in any normal dialogue, that “There are lids on [my] aspirations”? This rhetoric reveals detachment and reinforces Trump’s “all talk, no action” stereotype. As another illustration, Ted Cruz, says, that “the Democratic debate... reflected a debate between the Bol-

sheviks and the Mensheviks” (“CNBC Full Transcript”). Such an analogy is ineffectual, especially when broadcast to an unlearned audience.

Antithetically, Trump says, about John Kasich, another candidate, “And just, thirdly, he was so nice. He was such a nice guy. And he said, ‘Oh, I’m never going to attack.’ But then his poll numbers tanked. He’s got — that’s why he’s on the end — and he got nasty. And he got nasty. So you know what? You can have him” (“CNBC Full Transcript”). Trump’s fragmentary, vastly repetitive rant seems odd and hardly coherent on paper. However, Trump’s unsophisticated language typifies that of a regular individual and not an elitist, reciting the words of a speechwriter. Imagine, for instance, a used car salesman. He recites all the hackneyed lines and resembles not a friend, but a phony, spewing a monotony of meaningless metaphors. Then imagine that a personable, well dressed man, with rapturously golden hair, enters and commences to declaim against the used car salesman, dismantling the linguistic facade to divulge a sniveling fraud. Naturally, one would perceive this interloper more favorably than one would the used car salesman. Analogously, Trump confronts distrusted politicians, and people respond favorably. Trump demonstrates the decline in the used car salesman, political ethos.

Trump’s fifth problem is his denigrating women. Trump postulates, “You know, it doesn’t really matter what [the media] write as long as you’ve got a young and beautiful piece of ass” (qtd. in Easton). He tweets, that Arianna Huffington “is unattractive both inside and out. I fully understand why her former husband left her for a man—he made a good decision” and narcissistically asserts, “All of the women on *The Apprentice* flirted with me—consciously or unconsciously. That’s to be expected” (Trump, “@ariannahuff”; qtd. in Easton). A narcissistic male who objectifies women seems hardly appealing to female voters. Even when Megyn Kelly presents Trump with an opportunity to rebut this notion, asking, if he is “part of the war on women” (“Transcript: Read the Full Text”), Trump responds curtly on Twitter: “@megynkelly The bimbo back in town. I hope not for long” (Trump, “@megynkelly”). The problem is that Trump potentially forfeits nearly half of his voters with this demeanor; how is Donald Trump still running a successful campaign?

To answer this, we turn to Catherine Rymph, who, in *Republican Women*, describes Marion Martin, “the founding head of the National Federation of Women’s Republican Clubs as well as the Republican National Committee assistant chairman in charge of women’s activities” in the 1930s (Rymph 6). Martin “insist[ed] that both women and the party would benefit if women ceased to present their interests as separate from men’s” (6). In other words, to gain political stature, women should not accentuate “women’s issues,” but instead confront all difficulties in the United States. One could discard this as an archaic contention; however, a contemporary example invalidates such a dismissal. At an assemblage

of GOP women, Carly Fiorina, the only current, female, GOP, presidential contender, confirmed the idea, that “our desires are as diverse as the other half of the nation, the men. And I personally am so tired of hearing about women’s issues. Every issue is a women’s issue” (WesternFreePress). Thus, if GOP women intend to rescind a legislative disparity between themselves and men, as Fiorina’s relative popularity suggests, then GOP women would plausibly perceive Trump’s berating women, no differently than his upbraiding men. Nia-Malika Henderson of CNN explicates this hypothesis, in her article, “Donald Trump's nonexistent problem with GOP women,” saying, “Trump’s equal opportunity approach to hurling out loaded criticisms clearly resonates with some GOP women, who, like other Republicans, have been drawn to Trump's brash rhetoric” (Henderson). Thus, Trump is successful, partially because his disparaging women serves as an ultimate manifestation of his aversion to political correctness.

Trump confirms the interconnection of his castigating women and his political incorrectness, when Megyn Kelly famously asks, whether he is “part of the war on women?” and Trump immediately retorts, “I think the big problem this country has is being politically correct” (“Transcript: Read the Full Text”). Trump reframes the issue, attempting to divert a veritable tsunami of feminist wrath, and outlining a broader issue that women can support. Trump’s political incorrectness has two aspects, disrespect and violence. We have already examined the multitudinous instances of disrespect towards the media, immigrants, and women. Now, we will analyze Trump’s rhetorical violence.

At the CNBC debate, Trump declares, “gun-free zones...that's target practice for the sickos and for the mentally ill” and “They are a feeding frenzy for sick people” (“CNBC Full Transcript”). Nathan Kalmoe, in his essay, “Fueling the Fire: Violent Metaphors, Trait Aggression, and Support for Political Violence,” clarifies the consequences of this barbarous rhetoric, saying, “violent political metaphors raise the threat of literal violence in the forms of assassination, mob violence, civil war, and war between nations” (Kalmoe 547). Interestingly, “Trait-aggressive men and women alike respond to violent metaphors with substantially greater support for political violence” (556). Thus, Trump’s rhetorical violence, even if politically incorrect, appeals to aggressive individuals of both sexes.

However, to blanket the Republican party with the designation “trait-aggressive” is excessively rigid. Regardless, elevated pugnacity remains more virtuous for Republicans, due to another facet of metaphorically violent, political incorrectness, specifically sanctity. Scott Clifford, Jeniffer Jerit, Carlisle Rainey, and Matt Motyl, in their essay, “Moral Concerns and Policy Attitudes: Investigating the Influence of Elite Rhetoric,” explicate this aggression, saying that each political ideology emphasizes certain values, with “liberals prioritizing care and fairness” and “sanctity considerations...resonat[ing] more with conservatives” (Clifford 230). Thus, conservative Republicans sanctify life and are more tena-

cious in attacking those who would kill United States Citizens. For example, Ted Cruz, who is, presently, Trump's most eminent rival, emphatically vows, "We'll kill the terrorists" (Cruz). Ben Carson, a fleeting GOP frontrunner, argues, "We have to have in place screening mechanisms that allow us to determine who the mad dogs are" (Associated Press). Republicans have a propensity to condone metaphorical and literal violence, and, thus, Trump's politically incorrect rhetorical savagery and disrespect garners the votes of both women and men.

Thus, Trump's five rhetorical problems, namely with logic, the media, immigrants, politicians, and women, correspond with Trump's tapping into myriad Republican and United States rhetorical movements, namely sophistic rhetoric, in-groups, the synecdochic relationship between immigrants and economic frustration, simplicity, and political incorrectness, therefore allowing Trump to fuel his campaign. However, we must now consider two consequences of this rhetoric, namely how these "problems," especially taken aggregately, bolster Trump's campaign, and whether or not Trump should be taken seriously.

Nate Silver, who accurately forecasted the outcome of each state's 2012 presidential election, in his article "How Republicans and Polls Enable Donald Trump," indicates, that "in a field that still has 14 candidates, more media coverage — even negative media coverage — potentially helps a candidate to differentiate himself and thereby improve his position on the ballot test" (Silver). Silver asserts, that "Trump seems to understand this...he seems to issue his most controversial remarks and proposals precisely at moments of perceived vulnerability" (Silver). Trump releases his rhetorically charged utterances opportunely, in order to foster media attention; therefore, "the media's obsession over the daily fluctuations in the polls...may help enable Trump" (Silver). In other words, Trump has forced the media into a self-perpetuating pattern: He employs an outrageous remark, and the media, in an attempt to elucidate Trump's persistent success considering this remark, scrutinize Trump incessantly; this vast coverage publicizes Trump's name, and exponentially increases his popularity. Thus, the media unwittingly, in their confusion, enable Trump.

However, the primary election has yet to transpire, it is still 2015, and almost any candidate could emerge victorious. Could Donald Trump actually win? Foreseeing the fate of Trump's campaign is an endeavor fraught with difficulties, due to the anomalous nature of Trump. For instance, according to Real Clear Politics, which averages all the major polls, in the year preceding the 2012 election, Newt Gingrich, Rick Santorum, Herman Cain, and Mitt Romney each transiently retained the title of GOP frontrunner, before Romney eventually won ("2012 Republican"). In contrast, Donald Trump has prevailed as the frontrunner for five months, with little indication of faltering. Although Trump's variety of candidacy is rare, it does possess a precedent. Ward Baker, the future executive director of the Republican National Senate Committee, composed a "confidential" memo,

spearheading the committee's preparation for a Trump nomination, and explaining, "Not since liberal Republican businessman Wendell Willkie won the GOP nomination in 1940, had another dark horse candidate stood as its nominee for president" (Baker 1). This poses an intriguing comparison, that impels one to hesitate before disregarding Trump.

According to Donald Johnson, in *The Republican Party and Wendell Willkie*, Willkie, prior to his campaigning for the GOP nomination, "was a registered and voting Democrat" (Johnson 45); According to Chris Moody of CNN, in his article, "Trump in '04," Trump said, "I probably identify more as Democrat" (Moody). Willkie was "a business tycoon" with "no outstanding military career" (Johnson 45); Trump is a "real estate mogul" with no military experience (Moody). Willkie's "humor was a joshing repartee rather than subtle, wry, agreeable comment, and his remarks often gave the not completely erroneous impression that he was extremely self-assured" (Johnson 47); recall Trump's paucity of political correctness and penchant for narcissistic remarks about his own billionaire allure. Willkie's "thought process seemed more inspirational than logical" (46); recall Trump's sophistic, future oriented disposition and scarcity of logic. Willkie and Trump are extraordinarily similar.

Here is the point. According to Baker, "Willkie won the GOP nomination," but "would go on to lose" the general election (Baker 1). Thus, reasoning analogously, one could conjecture that Trump, although potentially positioned to triumph in the GOP primary, will likely fail to attain the position of Commander in Chief. However, Willkie, to our knowledge, did not consider Mexicans to be rapists, and did not erroneously deem a newscaster to be a bimbo. Thus, what we can say with certainty is that Willkie's unorthodox style and background are hauntingly similar to those of Trump, and his precedent forces us to not preclude a Donald Trump nomination.

How did this happen? Trump, the leading GOP candidate, calls a woman "The bimbo," Mexicans "rapists," politicians "losers," and the media "a terrible group of people" (Trump, "Here's Donald Trump," "Trump Rips the Media"). Yet, Baker cautions, "Tump could win" (Baker 7). Donald Trump succeeds because of his sophistic future orientation, his appeal to an in-group and out-group distinction with the media, his depersonalizing synecdoches about immigrants to appeal to economic frustration, his rhetorical simplicity, and his lack of political correctness with insults against women and violent metaphors. Thus, the ultimate question is not whether Trump will win; at this point, no one can confidently conjecture that Trump will be the victor, although we have proven the distinct possibility. The pertinent inquiry is what Trump's popularity reveals about the people of the United States. Trump's popularity signifies a movement away from logic and towards sophistic rhetoric. Trump's popularity signifies acute frustration with political correctness. Trump's popularity signifies exasperation with politicians

and the media. Trump's popularity signifies the death of the normal politician ethos.

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