



Aristotle's Rhetoric in Trump's Hate Speech

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Abstract

In this article I intend to prove Trump's presidential campaign speech that can be seen in Aristotle's work *The Rhetoric*. Through Dialectic, we can find different kinds of speech in order to move the people's passions to decide on many things like: The fate of the country, to elect a ruler or to make a point; among those kinds of speech there is hate. Generating hate against all those things doesn't let "America be great again". I gathered this affirmation from Trump's Presidential Announcement Speech.

Subject Areas

Politics, Philosophy, Rhetoric

Keywords

Aristotle, Donald Trump, Politics, Hate Speech, Rhetoric

It is well known that the run for president in the US has taken us by surprise with all the excitement. There are a series of events that have blown us away: Trump's declarations against foreigners, Ted Cruz giving up the campaign, Clinton in her demonstration of her down-to-earth living and the first woman to run for president, among other things. Many candidates have passed, and one by one they've got eliminated. As each candidate presents his or her abilities to be fitted for presidency, we find ourselves imagining every candidate for president. They all come in with speeches and reforms with opportunities and better ways to make America the best of all countries. Among all candidates, there is one we (all of the world) didn't expect: Trump. The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy defines it as "Aristotle's Rhetoric has had an enormous influence on the development of the art of rhetoric. Not only authors writing in the peripatetic tradition, but also the famous Roman teachers of rhetoric, such as Cicero and Quintilian, frequently used elements stemming from the Aristotelian doctrine." I will

expose in this paper, Aristotle's Rhetoric is still in use in Trump's Presidential Announcement Speech.

Aristotle's Rhetoric [1] a general view

Rhetoric is the art of persuasion and is often used by politicians to get elected. Since ancient times, politicians need to move the people to do their will through speech. The SEP states "Rhetoric is defined as the ability to see what is possibly persuasive in every given case (Rhet. I.2, 1355b). This is not to say that the rhetorician will be able to convince under all circumstances. Rather he is in a situation similar to that of the physician: the latter has a complete grasp of his art only if he neglects nothing that might heal his patient, though he is not able to heal every patient. Similarly, the rhetorician has a complete grasp of his method, if he discovers the available means of persuasion, though he is not able to convince everybody" [2]. And so the presidential campaign is composed of in showing the people that our politicians are the best people to govern the country. The orator must know the people he or she is capable to be as the specialist must know what to cure.

"Since rhetoric exists to affect the giving of decisions-the hearers decide between one political speaker and another, and a legal verdict is a decision-the orator must not only try to make the argument of his speech demonstrative and worthy of belief; he must also make his own character look right and put his hearers, who are to decide, into the right frame of mind. Particularly in political oratory... it adds much to an orator's influence that his own character should look right and that he should be thought to entertain the right feelings towards his hearers; and also that his hearers themselves should be in just the right frame of mind... When people are feeling... angry or hostile, they think either something totally different or the same thing with a different intensity: when they feel friendly to the man who comes before them for judgement, they regard him as having done little wrong, if any; when they feel hostile, they take the opposite view (1355a)". There are many kinds of speech, but the main one I will expose is hate-speech.

As we know politicians always have a way of talking to people. They move people's will and make us believe there can be a change for the better in every aspect of America's way of living (political, moral, security, education, health, etc.). A presidential candidate is all about demonstrating he or she is good to lead the country. Even though we know their life is not as pure and holy as we want them to be (as we find out their scandalous affairs, their corrupt business, or their abuse of drugs, among other things). We consider them the best citizens America has to give. Their image is what makes the politician a great influence for our future's country. "An orator's influence that his own character should look right and that he should be thought to entertain the right feelings towards his hearers; and also that his hearers themselves should be in just the right frame of mind (1378a)". Trump's is best known as a billionaire real estate mogul and television personality.

The presidential campaign is all about perspective and emotions, it is designed to make the people believe in the best person to hand them the country's well-being.

“There are three things which inspire confidence in the orator’s own character—the three, namely, that induce us to believe a thing apart from any proof of it: good sense, good moral character, and goodwill (1378b)”. Trump gives numbers and estimates about things that are happening in the US. To prove his point, he attends America’s good sense and good will in what he said in the Presidential Announcement Speech [3]: “And our real unemployment is anywhere from 18 to 20 percent. Don’t believe the 5.6. Don’t believe it”.

If the orator manages to have an image for a good sense of what things are inside the country and outside of it. “It follows that anyone who is thought to have all three of these good qualities will inspire trust in his audience. The way to make ourselves thought to be sensible and morally good must be gathered from the analysis of goodness: the way to establish your own goodness is the same as the way to establish that of others (1379a)”. To be good-willed and friendly to people inspire in them confidence, and as he or her will do it with the country, for example: paying taxes, solving moral matters, have an opinion on justice, participate on cultural events, among other things that prove he or she is the ideal citizen to govern.

To move people’s will and actions, there is a special ingredient we must consider: emotions. “The Emotions are all those feelings that so change men as to affect their judgements, and that are also attended by pain or pleasure. Such are anger, pity, fear and the like, with their opposites (1379a)”. So to examine anger we must consider the following sentence given in Presidential Announcement Speech: “A lot of people up there can’t get jobs. They can’t get jobs, because there are no jobs, because China has our jobs and Mexico has our jobs. They all have jobs.”

- 1) What the state of mind of angry people is (if the cause for anger is true or not, to ignite the anger needed): “*A lot of people up there can’t get jobs.*”
- 2) Who the people are with whom they usually get angry (to realize habits and complaints): “*They can’t get jobs, because there are no jobs...*”
- 3) On what grounds they get angry with them (the cause of anger so he or she relate to it): “*because China has our jobs and Mexico has our jobs. They all have jobs.*”

Once we have the elements to realize there is anger, the target and the cause of it. The people get angry at many things as: injustice, moral issues, when told a truth, when others are better, etc. To cause the right effect, let us not forget that not only the orator must be angry, but the people too. We will now proceed to define anger. As anger is the cause of hate, I took the liberty to use it as synonyms.

Anger or Hate speech

As I mentioned earlier, emotions are the corner stone of the political speech in order to move the people. “Anger may be defined as an impulse, accompanied by pain, to a conspicuous revenge for a conspicuous slight directed without justification towards what concerns oneself or towards what concerns one’s friends (1378a)”. In this case anger cannot be felt if there is no one to take the blame, it must be felt towards a single subject, either he or she has done it or intended to do someone we care. As Trump says: “We have a disaster called the big lie: Obamacare. Obamacare”. The cause and object of

the anger in this case is Obama.

Also anger has to be “attended by a certain pleasure—that which arises from the expectation of revenge (1378a)”. If there is no hope to do something or take care of that thing that bother then there is no point to feel anger just to feel fear, again in Trump’s speech: “Islamic terrorism is eating up large portions of the Middle East. They’ve become rich. I’m in competition with them”.

Anger must aim for revenge and this idea is pleasant. Revenge is the possible solution to end whatever or whomever make us angry. Even though if we do it or not, “the images then called up cause pleasure, like the images called up in dreams (1378a)”. As we think many things many of them are important and others unimportant; some thoughts evoke on us feelings, in case of anger it produces slight. “So now ISIS has the oil, and what they don’t have, Iran has. And in 19—and I will tell you this, and I said it very strongly, years ago, I said—and I love the military, and I want to have the strongest military that we’ve ever had, and we need it more now than ever. But I said, “Don’t hit Iraq,” because you’re going to totally destabilize the Middle East. Iran is going to take over the Middle East, Iran and somebody else will get the oil, and it turned out that Iran is now taking over Iraq. Think of it. Iran is taking over Iraq, and they’re taking it over big league.”

There are different forms of slight, and they are: Contempt (you feel contempt for what you consider unimportant, and it is just such things that you slight), spite (it is a thwarting another man’s wishes, not to get something yourself but to prevent his getting it without fear), and insolence (it consists in doing and saying things that cause shame to the victim by feeling superior when ill-treating them). There are many cases to feel angry according to Aristotle using Trump’s speech:

- When he is not respected by his inferiors in birth: “When was the last time you heard China is killing us? They’re devaluing their currency to a level that you wouldn’t believe. It makes it impossible for our companies to compete, impossible. They’re killing us.”
- When mocked in capacity: “Our enemies are getting stronger and stronger by the way, and we as a country are getting weaker. Even our nuclear arsenal doesn’t work... it was horrible when it was broadcast on television, because boy, does that send signals to Putin and all of the other people that look at us...”
- When someone shows goodness: “Well, you need somebody, because 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.”
- Generally in anything in which he is much their superior: as where money, where speaking is concerned, the ruler demands the respect of the ruled, and the man who thinks he ought to be a ruler demands the respect of the man whom he thinks he ought to be ruling, those who he thinks owe him good treatment: “We have to repeal Obamacare, and it can be—and—and it can be replaced with something much better for everybody. Let it be for everybody. But much better and much less expensive for people and for the government. And we can do it.”

As we can see there are many reasons to be angry, to whom and why. “The frame of mind is that of one in which any pain is being felt (1379a)”. Men always aim for something, so there is the need of a cause to feel anger. For example: “people who are afflicted by sickness or poverty or love or thirst or any other unsatisfied desires (1379a)” and in general people are angry of what they want and are still waiting for it as Trump expresses: “Now, our country needs—our country needs a truly great leader, and we need a truly great leader now. We need a leader that wrote *The Art of the Deal*. We need a leader that can bring back our jobs, can bring back our manufacturing, can bring back our military, can take care of our vets. Our vets have been abandoned.”

So “Each man is predisposed, by the emotion now controlling him” and the reason is when we happen to be expecting a contrary result, also when the “seasons, times, conditions, and periods of life tend to stir men easily to anger (1379a)”. The key to move the people’s will by knowing their audience to cause the desire effect: anger or hate.

We saw what make us angry, and so there is no anger without a subject or a particular individual causing our anger:

- those who laugh, mock, or jeer at us, for such conduct is insolent
- those who inflict injuries upon us that are marks of insolence
- those who speak ill of us, and show contempt for us, in relation with the things we ourselves most care about
- those who pride themselves upon their appearance get angry with those who show contempt for their appearance
- those lacking completely or to any effective extent in the qualities in question
- with our friends than with other people
- those who have usually treated us with honour or regard, if a change comes and they behave to us otherwise
- those who do not return our kindnesses or fail to return them adequately
- those who oppose us though they are our inferiors
- those who oppose us seem to think us inferior to themselves
- those who do not return our kindnesses
- those who slight us
- those who rejoice at our misfortunes or simply keep cheerful in the midst of our misfortunes
- those who are indifferent to the pain they give us
- those who listen to stories about us or keep on looking at our weaknesses
- those who love us share in all our distresses and it must distress any one to keep on looking at his own weaknesses
- those who slight us before five classes of people: our rivals, those whom we admire, those whom we wish to admire us, those for whom we feel reverence, those who feel reverence for us
- those who slight us in connexion with what we are as honourable men bound to
- those who do not return a favour, since such a slight is unjustifiable
- those who reply with humorous levity when we are speaking seriously

- those who treat us less well than they treat everybody else
- Forgetfulness, too, causes anger, as when our own names are forgotten, trifling as this may be

Those are the causes and the people we tend to feel angry. “The orator will have to speak so as to bring his hearers into a frame of mind that will dispose them to anger, and to represent his adversaries as open to such charges and possessed of such qualities as do make people angry (1380a)”. This can be appreciated in the next statement: “We need somebody that can take the brand of the United States and make it great again. It’s not great again. We need—we need somebody—we need somebody that literally will take this country and make it great again. We can do that.”

The kind of speech Trump is using is from hate and hate only, and that is why he is the republican candidate in the run for president, I am not saying he is winning the presidency, but he is ahead of other contenders whether he wins or not. As we will see from now on, Trump’s presidential campaign aims at one or many reasons to be angry and against the anger is felt against: Mexican, Philippines, Latin-Americans, Muslims, among others things as it shows: “When Mexico sends its people, they’re not sending their best. They’re not sending you. They’re not sending you. They’re sending people that have lots of problems, and they’re bringing those problems with us. They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists. And some, I assume, are good people. But I speak to border guards and they tell us what we’re getting. And it only makes common sense. It only makes common sense. They’re sending us not the right people. It’s coming from more than Mexico. It’s coming from all over South and Latin America, and it’s coming probably—probably—from the Middle East. But we don’t know. Because we have no protection and we have no competence, we don’t know what’s happening. And it’s got to stop and it’s got to stop fast. Islamic terrorism is eating up large portions of the Middle East. They’ve become rich. I’m in competition with them”.

Trump’s Rhetoric

The 2016 run for office in the US the world has been awed at the final contenders to rule America. As the other candidates have flown form battle. We are beginning to wonder if it is true Trump’s intentions. As a foreigner I can’t imagine what the US will become with all those ideals of making America great again. To shut everyone from the world only to restore economy, end violence, etc.

Trump’s talent and charisma for scathing, derogatory remarks fill the news. The ones about Mexicans and immigration. It confirms that he doesn’t care about what others think of him. Or even how is he going to govern the country. His political affirmations are crude. And inspires hate towards every one that doesn’t think or are American citizens like him. “Due to the recent derogatory statements by Donald Trump on immigrants. NBC Universal is ending its business relationship with Mr. Trump... [NBC responded in a statement]... To that end, the annual Miss USA and Miss Universe Pageants, which are part of a joint venture between NBC and Trump, will no longer air on NBC” [4].

As told before, “There are three things which inspire confidence in the orator’s: good

sense, good moral character, and goodwill” (1378a) to make people believe in their leaders. Those things lack in Trump’s figure. Still people find Trump to be the best choice for president as seen by his followers. His candidacy has a cause: “make America great again”, and that is what we all want. Trumps ingenious campaign is on what business are. They move necessities and emotions to get people’s attention. Emotions are key to what we think and choose. To show the best choice to buy, sellers often discredit their opponents. In that way people will buy your product not because it is good, but because you are telling them. “Emotions are all those feelings that so change men as to affect their judgments (1378a)”. In this case we find anger to be the main emotion Trump is moving to influence our judgment. “Our country is in serious trouble. We don’t have victories anymore. We used to have victories, but we don’t have them. When was the last time anybody saw us beating, let’s say, China in a trade deal? They kill us. I beat China all the time. All the time. When did we beat Japan at anything? They send their cars over by the millions, and what do we do? When was the last time you saw a Chevrolet in Tokyo? It doesn’t exist, folks. They beat us all the time. When do we beat Mexico at the border? They’re laughing at us, at our stupidity. And now they are beating us economically. They are not our friend, believe me. But they’re killing us economically. The US has become a dumping ground for everybody else’s problems.”

If we unite in the things that we have in common, we will unite in the things that bother us in hatred. So it is easier to see the problem focusing on other people instead of us, our self-image. Like Michael Jackson’ son “first we need to start with the man in the mirror” [5].

Therefore, anger brings us together. In this case Trump is trying to show what makes America angry, not great. And this gives a certain pleasure at the expectation of revenge, like if there is no other way. Even if he will get revenge or not, the satisfaction of what may be unites all. “For since nobody aims at what he thinks he cannot attain, the angry man is aiming at what he can attain, and the belief that you will attain your aim is pleasant (1378b)”. This speech not only arises in anger and hate, but like a dream to fulfill: “I’ll bring back our jobs from China, from Mexico, from Japan, from so many places. I’ll bring back our jobs, and I’ll bring back our money”.

Trump’s political personality may come to us as an insolent man. “The cause of the pleasure thus enjoyed by the insolent man is that he thinks himself greatly superior to others when ill-treating them (1378b)”. As many young and rich people feel when they feel powerful or invincible, or even when they lack maturity. Those people (not all young nor rich, but the ones that lack character) think they can ridicule others or “rob people of the honour due to them (1378b)”. In this case we have many examples in Trump’s speeches. He sees America’s problems, instead of looking through facts and not a popular belief.

But let’s consider something, Trump’s insolence is due to others. The voters, so he has to think of them so he can be president. “Then again a man looks for respect from those who he thinks owe him good treatment, and these are the people whom he has treated or is treating well, or means or has meant to treat well, either himself, or

through his friends, or through others at his request (1739a)". US citizens are these "friends" that agree in this candidacy.

By this we can confirm what Aristotle explains in the hate-speech. "The frame of mind is that of one in which any pain is being felt. In that condition, a man is always aiming at something... (1739a)".

If the world is in such chaos and America is losing itself due to globalization, who can save it? Hate speech is powerful to move the masses because it guarantees revenge. And this avenger is Trump. "Clearly the orator will have to speak so as to bring his hearers into a frame of mind that will dispose them to anger... (1380a)".

As we can see Aristotle's Rhetoric can serve us as a guide to know the path and intentions of the political career. Trump's campaign unites everyone through hate speech to serve as a solution to everything wrong with America; thus, people respond to these ideas in a thirst for vengeance. But the problem of all, is: what is "before"? America has been "the land of opportunity" since last two centuries. People came looking for an opportunity in life goes to try their luck in a new land.

Hate-speech may unite people to see the problem. But the fact is that the problem they are trying to solve is a passionate one. There is no reason to attack other countries knowing their population may be their own families they will be fighting against. Trump may be right to restore greatness to his country, but he has to use reason to achieve it, if not, he will be forced to retract.

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