

Cognitive Dissonance and the Followers of Donald Trump

When the legendary boxing promoter Bob Arum was challenged about the veracity of one of his past statements, he famously replied, "Yesterday I was lying, today I am telling the truth."

This leads to the obvious question, "But Mr. Arum, what will you tell us tomorrow?"

There is something about Arum's line that reminds me of Donald Trump, except that: 1) Arum was not running for the office of the president of the United States; and 2) Trump could say the same thing that Arum did but it appears that many of his followers would say, "You see! He's not a politician. He tells the truth."

Have you ever seen the like with a political candidate? And who but Trump could boast that he could shoot someone in broad daylight in New York City and his followers would still follow him? Who but Trump would want to boast of such a thing?

By all fair accounts, Trump did not perform well in the South Carolina debate on Saturday night, but this didn't matter much to his followers, as evidenced by the Drudge Report poll which, as always, declared him the overwhelming winner.

So when the crowd boos him for his vile behavior, that's just proof that the crowd has been stacked against him.

When competing candidates rightly confront his vacillating positions, they're branded liars, corrupt politicians and, worse, all to the delight of his followers.

"We need an alpha male," they exclaim. "Trump will get things done."

As to how, exactly, he will do it, no one seems to know.

But be assured that, despite four Trump bankruptcies (which surely affected many people, even if Trump was not personally affected) and the failures of Trump Airlines, Trump Vodka, Trump Mortgage, Trump: The Game, The China Connection, Trump Casinos, Trump Steaks, *Trump Magazine*, and , Donald Trump will get the job done.

He always does.

He only wins—as in wins, wins, wins.

And when he doesn't win (as in Iowa)? Actually, second was really first, since, we're told, the winner cheated. And his followers cheer him on.

But this is nothing to laugh about. The future of our country is at stake, especially with the sudden death of Antonin Scalia, which makes the question of the appointing of new Supreme Court justices all the more urgent.

Last Aug. 26—so, barely six months ago—Trump stated that his sister would make a “phenomenal” Supreme Court justice, despite her strong support for partial-birth abortion.

Now, after being challenged about what kind of justices he would appoint if president, Trump says that he was only joking about his past comments about his sister: “Just so you understand, I said it jokingly. My sister's a brilliant person, known as a brilliant person, but it's obviously a conflict.”

Shades of Bob Arum.

“I was joking yesterday, but today I'm being serious.”

Dear followers of Donald Trump, are you sure this is your man?

But it gets worse.

During the Saturday night debate in patriotic, pro-George W. Bush South Carolina, Trump said that Bush lied about Iraq and claimed that he, Trump, was the only one to oppose the war in Iraq. In fact, at a debate last September he said, "You can check it out, check out—I'll give you 25 different stories."

When asked for proof of this on Sunday, he responded, "I wasn't a politician so people didn't write everything I said."

Really? No proof of 25 different stories you told us to check out? No documentation of your very outspoken opposition to the war? You spoke loudly and clearly back then but no one noticed it because you weren't a politician?

Unfortunately for Trump loyalists, Andrew Kaczynski has documented that "in his 2000 book *The America We Deserve*, Trump noted Iraq was developing weapons of mass destruction and targeted Iraq strikes had little impact on their overall capabilities. The Donald said the best course might be against Iraq to 'carry the mission to its conclusion.'" (Kaczynski provides the exact quote.)

It wasn't until August of 2004 that Trump expressed clear opposition to the war, long after it had started and long after the problems with our engagement there had emerged.

This revelation led to the clever tweet from *New York Post* columnist Robert A. George, "Trump knew Iraq had WMDs before Bush lied abt Iraq having WMDs and followed Trump's advice to finish job in Iraq!"



In response to all this, I posted on Facebook and Twitter, "Trump could say tomorrow 'I've been lying about everything!' And his followers would say 'That's our man! He tells it like it is.'"

And how did some of his followers respond to my comment?

“So explain to me who is better than Trump.”

And “No he wouldn’t. Nobody is ideal, but you have it in for Trump. He is better than all of the socialists and other deceptive liars running.”

And, “[People would] much rather give Trump the benefit of the doubt because he does not answer to any special interest groups and because he proves that you can fight the leftwing media and their strongest weapon ‘political correctness.’”

What makes this all the more disturbing, not to mention downright scary, is that a substantial percentage of his supporters profess to be evangelical Christians, and it still appears that there is almost nothing he could say or do that would dampen their support for him.

“After all,” they lamely repeat, “we’re not electing a pastor, we’re electing a president.”

And if I might borrow a quote, “Yesterday he was lying; today he’s telling the truth.”

Let the voter beware.