The Language of the Deplorables

from The City Journal, Trump and the American Divide by Victor Davis Hanson:

> *Language is also different in the countryside. Rural speech serves, by its very brevity and directness, as an enhancement to action. Verbosity and rhetoric, associated with urbanites, were always rural targets in classical literature, precisely because they were seen as ways to disguise reality so as to advance impractical or subversive political agendas. Thucydides, nearly 2,500 years before George Orwell's warnings about linguistic distortion, feared how, in times of strife, words changed their meanings, with the more polished and urbane subverting the truth by masking it in rhetoric that didn't reflect reality. In the countryside, by contrast, crops either grow or wither; olive trees either yield or remain barren; rain either arrives or is scarce. Words can't change these existential facts, upon which living even one more day often depends. For the rural mind, language must convey what is seen and heard; it is less likely to indulge adornment.*
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> *Today's rural-minded Americans are little different. Trump's appeal to the interior had partly to do with his politically incorrect forthrightness. Each time Trump supposedly blundered in attacking a sacred cow—sloppily deprecating national hero John McCain's wartime captivity or nastily attacking Fox superstar Megyn Kelly for her supposed unfairness—the coastal media wrote him off as a vulgar loser. Not Trump's base. Seventy-five percent of his supporters polled that his crude pronouncements didn't bother them. As one grape farmer told me after the Access Hollywood hot-mike recordings of Trump making sexually vulgar remarks had come to light, "Who cares? I'd take Trump on his worst day better*

> *than Hillary on her best." Apparently red-state America was so sick of empty word-mongering that it appreciated Trump's candor, even when it was sometimes inaccurate, crude, or cruel. Outside California and New York City and other elite blue areas, for example, foreigners who sneak into the country and reside here illegally are still "illegal aliens," not "undocumented migrants," a blue-state term that masks the truth of their actions. Trump's Queens accent and frequent use of superlatives—"tremendous," "fantastic," "awesome"—weren't viewed by red-state America as a sign of an impoverished vocabulary but proof that a few blunt words can capture reality.*
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> *To the rural mind, verbal gymnastics reveal dishonest politicians, biased journalists, and conniving bureaucrats, who must hide what they really do and who they really are. Think of the arrogant condescension of Jonathan Gruber, one of the architects of the disastrous Obamacare law, who admitted that the bill was written deliberately in a "tortured way" to mislead the "stupid" American voter. To paraphrase Cicero on his preference for the direct Plato over the obscure Pythagoreans, rural Americans would have preferred to be wrong with the blunt-talking Trump than to be right with the mush-mouthed Hillary Clinton. One reason that Trump may have outperformed both McCain and Romney with minority voters was that they appreciated how much the way he spoke rankled condescending white urban liberals.*

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I believe the Gruber comment was a far more lasting and damaging display of the elitist contempt than many realize. It facilitated the ability of the right to personalize and identify their enemy, as Alinsky advised in his Rules for Radicals. Gruber may have done more damage than Hillary's 'deplorables' comment.