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Humanists of the Treasure Coast

A caring community for the non-religious...



Monthly Newsletter - July 2026

**Our Newsletter is long and informative.
Be sure to scroll down for complete newsletter!**

<<First Name>>, we foster a thriving non-religious community that welcomes those who promote rational, ethical lives that aspire to the greater good of humanity, and nurture the world around us. We are dedicated to raising awareness of Secular Humanism, constitutional separation of government and religion, and ending discrimination against the non-religious.

If you aren't a Member of Humanists of the Treasure Coast yet, click to [Learn More about Joining our Community!](#)

Program Meeting using the Zoom link below!

Click here to join the Sunday Meeting!

Virtual Happy Hour using the Zoom link below!

Click here to join the Wednesday Meeting!

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Humanism means...

Relying on human reason to solve problems

Promoting human freedoms and happiness

Recognising human responsibility for each other and our natural world

Embracing our human values

Making the most of our human potential in the one life we have



Announcements

HUMTC's New Radio Spot

Have a listen to our latest NPR radio ad delivered by Jo Anne Gillespie and Tony Copeland, and written by Communication's Director, Paul Ivice.

The ad will be running the week of July 4th and a few days beyond.

[Click Here to Listen to Radio Ad](#)

At our March 2026 Board meeting, we voted unanimously to donate to three national organizations that do the lion's share of work protecting our rights afforded by the First Amendment of the Constitution and our Humanist values. These organizations' support the separation of church and state.

The following donations were made with proceeds derived from HUMTC's inheritance from the estate of former member Doreen Howes.

[American Humanist Association](#) - \$3,000

[Americans United for Separation of Church and State](#) - \$3,000

[Freedom from Religion Foundation](#) - \$3,000

We encourage all members to consider joining these hardworking organizations to help keep our fundamental freedoms from being trampled.

American Humanist Association

Americans United for Separation of Church and State

Freedom from Religion Foundation

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President's Corner

The tides seem to be turning. Can you sense it? I believe we have numerous reasons to feel positive about the direction of current political and religious trends.

Despite the reigning administration's formation of a White House Faith Office, a Religious Liberty Commission and an "Anti-Christian" task force, along with Vice President J.D. Vance declaring, "We will always be a Christian nation," recent statistics showing the rise of secularism don't lie.

An article by author Phil Zuckerman, a sociology professor at Pitzer College in Claremont, California, published in the May 2026 issue of Freethought Magazine titled "Being Secular," said that in 1969 only 4 percent of Americans responded that they had "No religion." Today, that number is somewhere between 22 percent and 29 percent. Zuckerman further states, based on recent Public Religious Research Institute survey data, "Americans who say that religion is an important part of their daily life has dropped down to 49 percent, the lowest ever recorded."

The PRRI survey indicated that the percentage of Americans ages 18 to 29 who are unaffiliated is at nearly 40 percent, an all-time high. An even more startling statistic is

Attitudes are changing as well. Among the general American population, 60 percent say they would vote for an atheist for president, and 75 percent say, “it is possible to be moral and have good values without believing in God.”

While there have recently been a smattering of articles claiming a slight rise in religiosity, the research data don’t support it. You may have read about the Trump administration’s “Rededicate 250: A National Jubilee of Prayer, Praise & Thanksgiving,” which took place May 17 on the National Mall near the Lincoln Memorial. For all its hoopla and promises of massive crowds, attendance was relatively sparse.

These political and religious trends signal that Humanists of the Treasure Coast can benefit our surrounding community with a home serving Humanists, atheists, agnostics and freethinkers up and down the Treasure Coast and beyond. As our website’s home page says, “If you are good without god, you are not alone”—and need not be alone.

*[Be sure to also see the PRRI article, “Survey: As the Nation Marks 250th birthday, Seven in Ten Americans Believe Democratic Freedoms Are in Danger,”](#) in the articles section of this newsletter.

sincerely,

Jo Anne Gillespie, President
Humanists of the Treasure Coast
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Sunday Programs for July.

“Walking the Talk”

July 5th:

– Open Discussion – How can we demonstrate our patriotism in word or deed?

July 12th:

Founders”

– Did you know that Thomas Jefferson owned a copy of the Qur'an? - A video

July 19th:

"Beyond Belief - 2006 Conference with Sam Harris - A video"

– Our Love of Other Human Beings Does Not Need to be Nurtured by Delusion

July 26th:

"Profiles in Humanism"

– Rita Wolper

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Upcoming Events

HAPPY
humanists
HOUR

Saturday, July 11th, 4 pm to 6 pm
House of Brews, Jensen Beach
3311 NE Main St., Jensen Beach



The House of Brews is a local place where friends gather to enjoy a bite to eat, share great company and truly experience specialty beers & boutique wines. Hope to see you there!

[Click here to RSVP House of Brews!](#)

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Welcome To Our New Members

Virgil Thorp (Fort Pierce)
Brian Judge (Hobe Sound)
Robert Lindsey (Stuart)
Jorin Gedamke (Stuart).

Benefits of Being an HUMTC Member

Becoming a member of HUMTC is easy and beneficial. As a member you will receive our meeting notices and monthly newsletter, and you will belong to a community of like-minded people. Once you become a member you can register for our Members Only page on our website. On the Members Only page you can access our library of Sunday programs in case you happen to miss a Sunday. You also have access to our newsletter archive. The Members Only page also contains our Caring Community Team member's contact information in case you need help or assistance--an errand run or a ride someplace. All in all, that's a pretty good deal. We highly recommend you become a member today!

Membership rates are \$35/yr. for an individual and \$60/yr. for a couple or family. To join, go to HUMTC.org and click on the "Join Now" button at the top of the page for a six month trial.

Humanists in Action

Juneteenth Celebration in Fort Pierce

Humanists of the Treasure Coast staffed a booth at this year's Juneteenth Celebration in Fort Pierce. It was a hot day, but there was music, plenty of booth visitors and an assortment of food options.

Thank you to Greg Jarrett, Tracey Lee, Maclain Mawhinney, Jo Anne Gillespie, Wilburforce Reid and his wife. for helping to staff the booth.



Greg waiting for folks to inquire about HUMTC.



Maclain and Greg share their thoughts.



Maclain flashing the peace sign on a very hot Juneteenth.



Our new brochure.

Swimming with Liz

It was a beautiful day for a "Swim with Liz" at Jensen Beach Park at the end of June--and the water was perfect. Thanks to Alex, Tony, Corinne, Frances, Jo Anne, Amanda and her husband John, and our Jensen Beach lifeguards who were so helpful. A good time was had by all and Liz loved it.



(L to r) Francis Rowan, Tony Copeland, Jo Anne in Gillespie, Alex Gialousis, Corinne Flannery, Amanda Born's husband John. Liz Murad in the beach mobile.











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**Interested in Alternatives to Legacy News?
You might want to try some of these independent media
outlets:**

[The Atlantic](#)
[Mother Jones](#)
[New York Times](#)
[Big Tent USA](#)

The Following are Available on [Substack.com](https://substack.com):

- [The Jim Acosta Show](#)
- [The Beautiful Mess by John Pavlovitz](#)
- [Civil Discourse with Joyce Vance](#)
- [The Contrarian by Jennifer Rubin and Norm Eison](#)
- [Jim Hightower's Lowdown](#)
- [Legal AF Podcast](#)
- [Letters from an American by Heather Cox Richardson](#)
- [Lincoln Square Media](#)
- [Meidas Touch Network](#)
- [Steady with Dan Rather](#)
- [Talking Feds by Harry Litman](#)
- [Today's Edition Newsletter by Robert Hubbell](#)
- [That's Another Fine Mess by TCinLA - \(Commentary with a lot of "F-Bombs"\)](#)
- [Thinking About... by Timothy Snyder](#)
- [Andrew Weissmann](#)

Articles

What's "Supreme" About Our Extremist Supreme Court?

by [Jim Hightower](#)

Question: How many legs does a dog have if you count the tail as a leg?

Answer: Four – calling the tail a leg doesn't make it one.

Likewise, calling a small group of partisan lawyers a "supreme" court doesn't make it one. There's nothing supreme about the six-pack of far-right-wing political activists who are presently soiling our people's ideals of justice by proclaiming their own anti-democratic biases to be the law of the land. On issues of economic fairness, women's rights, racial justice, corporate supremacy, environmental protection, theocratic rule, and other fundamentals, these unelected, black-robed extremists are imposing an illegitimate elitist agenda on America that the people do not want and ultimately will not tolerate.

Indeed, the imperiousness of the six ruling judges has already caused the court's public approval rating to plummet, to a mere 38 percent, an historic low that ranks down there with Trump, and threatens to go as low as Congress.

six culprits themselves.

The “integrity of the judiciary is in my bones,” pontificated Neil Gorsuch, who now stands accused of having lied to senators to win his lifetime appointment.

“[We are not] a bunch of partisan hacks,” wailed Amy Coney Barrett, a partisan extremist jammed onto the court in a partisan ploy by Trump in the last few hours of his presidency.

“Judges are not politicians,” protested John Roberts, who became Chief Justice because he was a rabid political lawyer who pushed the Supreme Court in 2000 to reject the rights of voters and install George W. Bush as president.

Remember, in America, The People are supreme! We don’t have to accept rule by an illegitimate court. For reform, go to [FixTheCourt.com](https://www.fixthecourt.com).

Survey: As the Nation Marks 250th Birthday, Seven in Ten Americans Believe Democratic Freedoms Are in Danger

Seven in ten Americans — but less than half of Republicans and white evangelicals — prefer the United States to cooperate with other nations rather than use military force
WASHINGTON (June 17, 2026) — A [new national survey](#) released today by Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) finds that **Americans are more than twice as likely to agree that “We are in real danger of losing important democratic rights and freedoms” than “the important democratic rights and freedoms we have will remain protected” (68% vs. 29%).** Most Democrats (86%) and independents (70%) agree with the first statement, while Republicans are divided (51% vs. 47%).

“The fact that nearly seven in ten Americans believe we are in danger of losing critical rights and freedoms should set off alarm bells,” explained *PRRI CEO Melissa Deckman, Ph.D.* “The partisan divide on this question represents a profound threat to the democratic experiment at 250.”

Americans are far more likely to say they would prefer “the U.S. to be a reliable neighbor that cooperates with other nations and only uses military force as a last resort” than “the U.S. to be known as a mighty nation that does not hesitate to use military force to defend our interests” (70% vs. 27%). However, a slim majority of Republicans agree with the second statement (52%), and white evangelical Protestants are evenly divided (52% vs. 47%). Solid majorities across all other religious groups prefer the U.S. to cooperate with other nations.

and founder of PRRI*. “On measure after measure, we find Republicans and white evangelicals embracing stances that are aligned with President Trump’s MAGA agenda but increasingly at odds with their fellow Americans.”

At home, most Americans remain committed to a vision of America that is religiously and racially diverse. Nearly two-thirds of Americans prefer the U.S. to be a nation made up of people belonging to a wide variety of religions rather than one primarily made up of people who follow the Christian faith (64% vs. 34%). White evangelical Protestants and Republicans are outliers, preferring to live in a nation primarily made up of Christians (68% and 60% respectively). Nearly eight in ten Americans prefer the U.S. to be a nation made up of people from all over the world (77%) rather than one primarily made up of people of Western European heritage (20%).

Nearly six in ten Americans agree “President Trump is a dangerous dictator whose power should be limited before he destroys American democracy” (59%), up from 52% in March 2025, compared with 38% who agree “President Trump is a strong leader who should be given the power he needs to restore America’s greatness.” Most Democrats (91%, up from 87% in March 2025) and independents (66%, up from 56% in March 2025) agree with the first statement, while most Republicans agree with the second statement (78%, down from 81% in March 2025).

More Americans hold favorable views of Pope Leo XIV than President Trump (56% vs. 34%). Democrats (73% vs. 5%) and independents (55% vs. 25%) are more likely to view Pope Leo more favorably than Trump, while the reverse is true among Republicans (47% vs. 79%). Among religious Americans, white Catholics are nearly 30 points more likely to hold favorable views of Pope Leo (75%) than Trump (46%), and Latino Catholics are more than 40 points more likely to hold favorable views of Pope Leo (64%) than Trump (23%).

[Trump’s favorability has declined](#) from 41% before the 2024 election to 34%, with 62% of Americans now viewing him unfavorably. Trump’s favorability remains high among strong Republicans (91%), but has declined among those who are not very strong Republicans (70% to 63%) and independents who lean Republican (65% to 48%).

Less than four in ten Americans rate Trump’s handling of immigration favorably (37%), and only three in ten hold favorable views of Trump’s handling of the war in Iran (29%).

Other notable findings:

- Americans are divided on whether the American Dream — that if you work hard, you’ll get ahead — still holds true (49% agree vs. 50% disagree). Since 2024,

- Just half of Americans are extremely or very proud of being an American (51%) or of America's 250-year history (49%). Only one in five are very proud of the way democracy is working today (18%).
- Less than half of Americans are extremely or very proud of America's economic achievements (34%) and America's moral example for the world (24%).
- 44% of Americans agree that God has granted America a special role in human history, down from a high of 64% in 2013.
- Six in ten Americans agree that America is in danger of losing its culture and identity (60%, up from 55% in 2016).
- Americans are divided on whether the values of Islam are at odds with American values and the American way of life (50% agree; 46% disagree). Since 2011, Republicans have grown more likely to agree (from 63% to 76%), and Democrats less likely to do so (40% to 30%).

Methodology

The survey was designed and conducted by PRRI. The survey was made possible through the generous support of the **Ford Foundation**, the **William and Flora Hewlett Foundation**, and the **Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock**.

The survey was conducted among a representative sample of 5,469 adults (age 18 and up) living in all 50 states in the United States. Of those respondents, 5,140 were part of Ipsos's Knowledge Panel and an additional 329 who were recruited by Ipsos using opt-in survey panels to increase the sample sizes in smaller states. Interviews were conducted online between May 1-18, 2026. The margin of error for the national survey is +/- 1.53 percentage points at the 95% level of confidence, including the design effect for the survey of **1.34**. In addition to sampling error, surveys may also be subject to error or bias due to question wording, context, and order effects. Additional details about the Knowledge Panel can be found on the Ipsos website: <https://www.ipsos.com/en-us/solution/knowledgepanel>.

About PRRI

PRRI is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to conducting independent research at the intersection of religion, culture, and public policy.

THE SCIENCE BEHIND DONALD TRUMP'S DANGEROUS
PERSONALITY DISORDER



by Vince Greenwood, Founder of DutyToInform.org

I'm a clinical psychologist specializing in forensic evaluations. That's the background I brought to the political arena in 2020 when I tried to contribute to the efforts of politically active mental health professionals who felt they had a duty to warn the public about specific psychiatric vulnerabilities in Donald Trump that could pose a threat to the Republic. With his defeat, we thought we had put the threat to rest, but it has come roaring back. Some of us in the mental health community felt our findings should have had a more significant impact. After all, many of us had spelled out psychological disturbances that demonstrated Trump was unfit for office, clinically dangerous, and really was and is an existential threat.

My goal in this article is to describe the scientific underpinnings that inform our duty to warn that Trump is a clear and ever-present danger. I hope this information can provide an additional vantage point, an additional plank in our argument, one with empirical support, to possibly influence persuadable voters.

Let me start by observing that Trump certainly is a unique character — flamboyant, politically incorrect, and enthralling to his supporters. He is the central protagonist in our current political crisis. Strikingly, he is unmoved by the wrath directed at him by his political opponents. This defiance, coupled with his ability to 'troll the libs,' is a central part of his appeal. Supporters and detractors would agree that he is riveting and seems to operate in a realm of his own making.

However, as I will argue, he is anything but unique. [He is a garden-variety example of a particular and precisely delineated psychiatric condition](#). He is, sadly for him and dangerously for the rest of us, a prisoner of his psychopathology, a puppet on the strings of a set of destructive personality traits that dictate his behavior. He is at the mercy of those traits, and, by extension, so are we.

As mental health professionals, we have an ethical duty to not only inform but to warn: even with all he has done and all he has threatened to do, because of his

the threat that Trump, saddled with this condition, represents and mobilize us to do whatever we can to defeat him at the ballot box.

How can we assert that we underestimate the dangerousness of the man because of his condition?

Let's start with a bit of [history](#) on this dangerous disorder. This condition has been with us from antiquity through medieval times to the present. Descriptions from Greek and Roman mythology, the Bible, and classical literature are remarkably consistent in revealing the presence of a small group among us that are intellectually coherent but lack the capacity for moral reasoning. Such individuals do not seem to experience emotional suffering — there is no psychosis, no anxiety, no depression — but seem impervious to punishment. They display a constellation of personality traits frequently associated with immorality and criminality but also, in some cases, socioeconomic success, even if that success is gained through dishonest means. No culture or station in life is immune from this condition. It is described across all of written history, and we find it among the wealthy and the impoverished.

It wasn't until the 19th century that the condition was named and attached to the small group of individuals in society who are devoid of moral sensibility. The term used comes from the German word *psycho-pastiche*, which translates to 'suffering soul.' The English word is a psychopath.

Our understanding of such individuals took a quantum leap in the 20th century due primarily to the work of two men. Hervey Cleckley, an American psychiatrist from Georgia, devoted his career to studying this condition and published his insights in a book titled *The Mask of Sanity* in 1941. Considered one of the great works in the field of psychopathology, it depicted the psychopath as an individual, while appearing to be a perfectly average person, indeed often a charming person, who nevertheless displays a particular set of traits which inevitably lead to menacing behavioral patterns that are harmful to others. The harm manifests itself at times in criminal acts, but always in exploitive behavior, marked by arrogance, cunning and deceit. Cleckley identified 16 such traits and behavior patterns. Examples include untruthfulness, lack of sincerity, superficial charm, inability to feel remorse or shame, and limited insight into their personality.

In the 1970s, Robert Hare, a Canadian psychologist, and his research team developed a checklist to diagnose the condition. This measurement tool enabled us to develop a detailed and scientific understanding of the condition since it generated many studies. As a result of that groundbreaking development in defining and objectively measuring the condition, we can now say that clinical psychopathy is one of the most thoroughly validated and best-understood conditions in the field of psychopathology.

Trump's dangerousness.

The Psychopathy Checklist has 20 items. These items reflect the very problematic but stable and long-standing traits and behavior patterns that Hervey Cleckley and some other leading experts in the field had identified. For each item, the diagnostician is asked to give a rating on the pervasiveness of the trait. The guidelines to diagnose psychopathy are straightforward, but the demands on the diagnostician are rigorous.

First, you are required to collect voluminous data, basically detailed life history information. The diagnostic process for this condition demands:

- (1) information from the patient's childhood, adolescence and young adulthood since the condition of psychopathy expresses itself early in life.
- (2) Life history information in which the trait is expressed in observable behavior (e.g., evidence of lying is preferable to the accusation of his lying).
- (3) Information that reflects the patient's typical functioning and lifelong patterns rather than descriptions of more flamboyant, occasional behavior.
- (4) And well-resourced information with some type of external validation.

Second, you are required to undergo specialized training to administer the Checklist. The training involves learning extensive definitions and behavioral examples of checklist items, how to collect and evaluate the quality of life history information from different sources, securing feedback on videotaped case studies to increase precision on the administration of the checklists, and other skills to ensure a reliable and valid diagnosis.

Before I give the findings for Trump with the Checklist, let me note that none of the items on the Checklist are good news — they all represent worrisome traits or behaviors. Some examples of the items include deception and gaslighting, callousness, promiscuous sexual behavior, history of juvenile delinquency, and lack of a conscience. For each item, you get a score of 0 (no meaningful expression of the trait in the person's life), 1 (moderate expression of the trait), or 2 (strong expression of the trait — it is persistent and pervasive in the person's life). With 20 items, a perfect score on the psychopathy end of the spectrum would be 40 (a very rare occurrence), and a perfect score on the non-psychopathy side would be 0 (also rare). The average score for individuals in a maximum security prison setting is 22. I mention that because the typical cutoff to get a formal diagnosis of psychopathy is 30. It's a high bar that even most serious criminals don't meet. Remember, the essence of this condition, as identified by the experts, is more about traits than criminality or antisocial behavior. One in 140 (less than 1%) in the general population meets the criteria for the diagnosis.

The average score in the general population is 4 (few of us are perfect angels). Here, I suggest a thought experiment to emphasize a point. Imagine that your son or daughter is dating someone seriously, it looks like the relationship is headed toward

probably sick with worry. If you saw a score in the teens, I suspect you'd be trying to figure out ways to end the relationship. Scores in this range are a bit unusual, weird one might say, in a statistical sense. But something more than weird. Something ominous.

{For the evaluation of Donald Trump, we first need to ask and answer the question: Can you diagnose someone for clinical psychopathy at a distance? A strong "yes" is answered if you have sufficient life history data. Fortunately, with Trump, we are awash with information. He is arguably the most well-chronicled candidate in history. A partial list of informational sources would include 13 autobiographical efforts as well as his social media posts, 71 biographies, many of which are richly sourced, and hundreds of interviews from print, radio, and television. A clinical interview is not necessary to diagnose the former president for this condition. Indeed, there is [research](#) to indicate that the interview can detract from the assessment of a psychopath because of their facility for lying.}

Thus, we have abundant life history data for Trump, and I have had the advanced training to administer the Psychopathy Checklist, which I did in 2020, and again recently. Here are the results:

Hare Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (HCL-R)

1. Glibness/superficial charm — 2
 2. Egocentricity/grandiose sense of self-worth — 2
 3. Proneness to boredom/need for stimulation — 2
 4. Pathological lying and deception/gaslighting — 2
 5. Conning/lack of sincerity — 2
 6. Lack of remorse or guilt — 2
 7. Shallow affect — 2
 8. Callous/lack of empathy — 2
 9. Parasitic lifestyle — 0
 10. Poor behavioral controls — 2
 11. Promiscuous sexual behavior — 2
 12. Early behavior problems — 2
 13. Lack of realistic long-term goals — 1
 14. Impulsivity — 2
 15. Irresponsibility — 2
 16. Failure to accept responsibility for own actions — 2
 17. Many short-term marital relationships — 1
 18. Juvenile delinquency — 1
 19. Revocation of parole — 0
 20. Criminal versatility — 2
- Total = 33

balls and strikes. Donald Trump passes the threshold for a formal diagnosis of clinical psychopathy.*

What does the diagnosis tell us? The Hare Psychopathy Checklist came onto the psychiatric scene in the late 1970s. It became the gold standard for selecting subjects for research on the condition, with the cutoff score usually set at 30. The Checklist triggered an explosion of studies. Google Scholar now cites some 83,000 studies associated with the Psychopathy Checklist. Therefore, we can say a great deal about the condition, and we can say it with confidence and fidelity.

What have we learned about the condition? We have learned that the condition is more due to nature (what one inherits) than nurture (how the environment impacts us). And that what is largely inherited appears to be a different brain. Brain imaging technology has enabled us to pinpoint some of the distinctive features in the brains of psychopaths that help explain their hard-wired traits.

Most critically (and most relevant to the appraisal of Trump), we have achieved insight into the essence of the disorder, what psychologists call the deep structure of the condition.

How do you go about zeroing in on the essence of a psychiatric condition? The challenge with a large and expanding data set like that which exists for clinical psychopathy is to find a way to distill it. Investigators turned to factor analysis, a robust data reduction technique that enables us to explore and identify primary, underlying factors in a large data set. It is a tool often used in personality research to reduce findings of many specific traits, behavioral observations, and other meaningful data points into more basic underlying factors or clusters of traits.

What has come out of the empirical wash with these solidly-built statistical techniques is the clarity that the psychopath is ruled by three distinct clusters of traits (known as the “three factor model” of clinical psychopathy). The three core, governing traits of the psychopath are:

- (1) Impulsivity — characterized by the inability to inhibit impulses or grapple with any issue that doesn’t serve the psychopath’s immediate, egocentric needs
 - (2) Remorselessness — characterized by an utter lack of conscience, linked to an inability to experience states of guilt, shame, and fear that might curb immoral behavior.
 - (3) Drive to dominate — characterized by a one-dimensional focus on “winning” in all relationships, fueled by an arrogant, manipulative, and deceitful mode of behavior.
- All of the behavior and all of the choices of the psychopath flow from these three governing traits.

The Three Core Traits of Clinical Psychopathy

Let's start with the impulsivity cluster of traits. The impulsive way of being is captured by the descriptors egocentric, superficial, and irresponsible. These are words we all use and have associations with, but they have a specific and clinical meaning in the psychology of the psychopath.

Egocentricity, for the psychopath, refers to the fact that their attentional field is limited to a "what's in it for me?" boundary. The psychopath, Donald Trump, cannot engage the world beyond his selfish interests. His attention is tethered, captured by the moment's immediate frustrations, provocations, and opportunities. His sizing up of a situation along the lines of his narcissistic needs is automatic and hard-wired. It is not complicated by factors such as deeper aims, accommodating other people's interests, or worries about future consequences.

The psychopath's attention is confined to the "What's in it for me?" And "How do I win the moment?" impulses. For Trump, these impulses are acted out immediately and with no possibility of reflection or restraint. His condition prevents him from ever getting beyond pre-school level with executive functioning.

The clinical meaning of the term superficiality refers to the psychopath's inability to process his triggered emotions in the upper parts of the brain, where crude impulses for almost all of us are refined to more complex, "deeper" states (e.g., tenderness, melancholy, pride, empathic pain, gratitude, enchantment, and so on). The psychopath's brain is deficient in areas instrumental in developing deeper aims and values. Thus, he has no bedrock of complex emotions or values that could bolster his efforts to persevere or even take on nuanced or demanding situations that call for emotional depth and perspective. The psychopath is a different creature, and a rather compromised one.

The flavor of the irresponsibility component of the impulsivity trait for the psychopath is mostly about not getting the job done and not following through on one's obligations or promises. Psychopaths avoid responsibility because they recognize they have neither the skills nor the temperament to handle complex problems. This is what [Tony Schwartz](#), ghostwriter of by Trump, observed in his 18 months at Trump's side. In recent reporting Schwartz testified to Trump's disorganized, unfocused, easily bored, and undisciplined way of being (personal communication). This set of traits leaves him overmatched in trying to take on a thorny or complex issue that requires sustained focus.

Trump's disdain for the details of governing masked his inadequacy to solve problems that required discipline, deliberateness, and focus. He bragged about not reading briefing papers and wouldn't even tolerate PowerPoint presentations. He fired Chris Christie as head of his transition team, telling him they could take an hour off from the Inauguration party to figure out how to run the government.

different creature' reputation noted by almost all who work closely with clinical psychopaths . What seems to separate psychopaths/malignant narcissists from the human pack is their callous treatment of others and the lack of remorse in any situation where they may have caused harm. It is hard for us to grasp what this is like — to have no capacity for shame or guilt, no matter what selfish or harmful behaviors one might commit. Distress in others simply does not register in the brains of psychopaths.

Psychopaths/malignant narcissists are utterly insensitive to the threat of punishment. The daily struggle 99% of us have between “I want” (what’s in it for me) and “I should” (weighing that impulse against deeper values or concern for others) just doesn’t take place with the psychopath. At an emotional level, there is nothing there to curb their selfish, cruel, or immoral tendencies.

Note that this remorselessness cluster of traits is about the absence of emotions instrumental in our concern for others. Thanks to advances in brain imaging technologies, we now have accumulating evidence that this deficit in humanizing emotions is reflected in structural brain abnormalities of psychopaths. There are differences between psychopaths and 99-plus percent of us in parts of the brain responsible for processing feelings of empathy and the emotions of shame, guilt, and fear. Many psychopaths are extroverts, even charming extroverts, but at the core of their being, there is a coldness, a deadness concerning humanizing emotions. The title of the landmark book on the condition — *Mask of Sanity* — captures this gap between what you see (a charming but superficial extrovert) and what is underneath (a cold and callous calculator).

This brings us to the third cluster of traits: the drive to dominate. Although deprived of the capacity to care or empathize, the psychopath is not detached in his relationships with others. He is very engaged, turbo-charged, in the game of dominating others. His focus is one-dimensional and aggressive. Since dominance and “winning” are the only dance cards available to him, the psychopath often becomes adept at them.

Psychopaths tolerate two kinds of relationships: transactional and fawning admiration. The transactions are one-way and exploitative. All of life is a game to be won. If you are in the psychopath’s orbit, you will be used and eventually harmed. What may start as selfishness and lack of reciprocity inevitably moves to dereliction and cruelty.

When we crunch the numbers on this drive to dominate cluster of traits, two themes emerge with the psychopath: first, there is a kind of hostile aggressiveness of manner, as captured by the traits antagonistic, arrogant, and garrulous; second, there is a default mode of lying and cheating to get the upper hand, as captured in the traits deceitful, manipulative, and insincere.

The [research findings](#) about these three central and unyielding traits enable us to understand and explain Trump’s destructive behavior. As an example let’s take his

(more needless deaths than all of the deaths in WWII, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War combined.)

Trump's impulsivity trait guaranteed a botched federal response to COVID-19. The crisis demanded discipline and hard work. Trump didn't attend coronavirus task force meetings, and became bored with the daily press conferences as soon as it became clear they were hurting his poll numbers. The crisis demanded a set of executive skills to develop a detailed and comprehensive response. Trump's impulsive nature precluded that.

In theory, Trump could have delegated authority to others who were capable, he could have collaborated with public health officials, or consulted any number of think tanks that had detailed plans on how to manage a pandemic. After all, it would have made him look good. But the drive to dominate trait ensured that was never going to happen. Collaboration is anathema to the psychopath. The psychopath is like a leopard who rejects traveling in a pack and relies solely on their cunning to seek out their prey.

From the outset, Trump treated the crisis as a media spectacle that he was driven to dominate. By instinct, he did not view the crisis as threatening the country but as a way to promote his brand of "stable genius." His primary mode was to tell a story about the crisis that made him look good rather than actually manage it.

Lacking any gear of compassion, Trump barreled forward in the only gear he possessed: win-at-all-costs-political-domination. He refused to wear a mask and mocked those who did; he tweeted out support to protestors who flaunted social distancing guidelines; he doled out ventilators and protective equipment to governors based on their political leanings and loyalty to him; he peddled exaggerations about the administration's achievements; he promoted bogus treatments; and he conducted rallies and White House events that became super-spreader events.

And his destructive response to Covid was platformed by his hard-wired trait of remorselessness. Trump had no moral fear of the consequences of his neglectful and divisive behavior. Feelings of shame and guilt are totally foreign to him. A psychopath does not have the emotional infrastructure to care about overflowing morgues or peddling false claims to an anxious and vulnerable public.

Trump, being a psychopath, has no capacity for shame or guilt, feelings which might have slowed his impulse to deceive and divide. We now know from Trump's interview responses to Bob Woodward for his book *Rage* that he was fully briefed in January 2020 about the lethality and transmissibility of the virus. And yet, he lied shamelessly to the public from the beginning about the threat out of concern for his political standing.

madness being the psychopathology of clinical psychopathy/malignant narcissism, especially the traits of impulsivity, drive to dominate, and remorselessness.

As another example, let's examine Trump's behavior from election night in 2020 through the January 6 attack on the Capitol from the perspective of these three governing traits. At 2:30 am on election night, Trump came on TV and, in a combative and petulant mode, declared that he had won the election, indeed won in a landslide. He claimed that he was a victim of fraud and the election was being stolen from him. "Stop the Steal" was launched with a direct assault on our democratic system without a moment of reflection.

During the next two months, Trump's impulsive traits of irresponsibility and failure to plan were on full display. However, in this case, that set of traits worked to the country's advantage (that is, assuming you are in the camp that believes liberal democracy is a good thing). It was clear that Trump wanted to subvert a free and fair election that he had lost. It was also clear that he was incapable of pulling it off.

His task, the coup, required a modicum of planning, focus and organization. As we saw with the response to COVID-19, he was incapable of such organization. What did he do during that period? Insider accounts reveal he just yelled and whined at whoever was in his proximity or who he had on the phone. Oh, and he would fulminate at the TV screen. He hectored (only hectored) his advisors, the Vice President, the Attorney General, election officials, and GOP allies about the steal and demanded that it be stopped. They, in turn, kept their mouths shut but inched away from him, recognizing his absurd claims and that he didn't have the executive skills or temperament to pursue them to pull off his coup. It was time to send in the clowns: there was a second tier of conspiracy theory types waiting in the wings to step in: Sidney Powell, Michael Flynn, the My Pillow Guy, the return of Rudy Giuliani.

And yes, his new minions came up with a few Hail Mary plays, such as the fake elector scheme. At the 11th hour, he tried to intimidate Mike Pence and prevent him from certifying the election. But that was it. Michael Wolff, in his book [Landslide](#), which gave the inside account of the Oval Office during the transition, summarized it well, "Beyond his immediate desires and pronouncements, there was no ability — or strategy, or chain of command, or procedure, or expertise, or actual person to call — to make anything happen." Trump's contribution was limited to belligerent, bloviated bleating.

Trump's drive to dominate trait dictated that he could never accept electoral defeat. "Win at all costs" took over. During the interregnum he made no pretense of attending to the business of the country. All efforts to return his attention to pandemic issues, vaccine rollout, or security matters failed. There was no possibility of engaging him in, or even discussing with him, an orderly transition to the new administration.

took the form of meltdowns. He lashed out at the Vice President, the Cabinet, his staff, and the sycophants — people he viewed as subordinates who were now committing insurrection by refusing to kowtow to the “Stop The Steal” mission.

That mission culminated on January 6 when he implored his supporters, “We will never give up... we will not take it anymore... we will stop the steal... if you don’t fight like hell, you’re not going to have a country anymore.” If that rhetoric meant delegitimizing a duly elected president, taking a wrecking ball to our democracy, so be it. He would have no remorse, no embers of shame, guilt, or concern that might give him pause.

His set of psychopathic traits powered the failed effort to undermine a free and fair election and the peaceful transfer of power. We can predict these traits will infuse his efforts between now and election day and beyond. A man with no capacity for restraint or remorse is an alarming opponent. He will do anything to win, whatever the risk, whatever the collateral damage.

Because of our natural ability to empathize and care, and to assume that others have such humanizing emotions, we underestimate the threat posed by diagnosed psychopaths and their set of destructive traits. Thus, we need to drive home certain truths about Donald Trump.

Because of his **impulsivity**, Trump can’t help but:
Act quickly without considering the consequences
Take huge risks since he craves sensation-seeking
Continue to display no aptitude for governance, and
Fail to plan or persevere with any substantive task

Because of his **drive to dominate**, Trump can’t help but:
Lie with impunity to get others to bend to his will
Demand fealty from others
Engage in frantic efforts to avoid loss of status
Foment divisiveness and polarization, and
Privilege power and dominance over the welfare of others

Because of his **remorselessness**, Trump can’t help but:
Blithely ignore democratic norms, the tragedy of lost lives, or appeals from anyone to rein in his reckless and derelict behavior.
Set any limits on his behavior since he is undaunted by the fear of punishment.
Deflect all responsibility for any damage he may inflict.
Have no feeling of discomfort at the suffering of others, and
Be lax in his response to legitimate threats because of his inability to process emotions related to danger

is a life incapable of developing a caring obligation toward others, incapable of remorse for callous or immoral behavior, and incapable of pursuing anything beyond his immediate self-interest.

And it is also a life destined to inflict harm and suffering on others. With the empirical support of thousands of studies on his condition, we have to warn that Donald Trump, because of his hard-wired and immutable traits, is more dangerous than even his harshest critics exclaim.

Please be informed. November is coming.

Please note that the term malignant narcissist is also used frequently to describe the psychopathology of Donald Trump. There are a number of thoughtful discussions, especially by Dr. [John Gartner](#), about the construct of malignant narcissism and how it explains Trump's aberrant behavior. I use the term clinical psychopath because much of my analysis is based on the voluminous research associated with the Hare Psychopathy Checklist whose developer, Robert Hare, chose that term. There is substantial overlap between the construct of malignant narcissism and the diagnosis of clinical psychopathy. You would not be wrong in equating the two terms: they are essentially describing the same creature.

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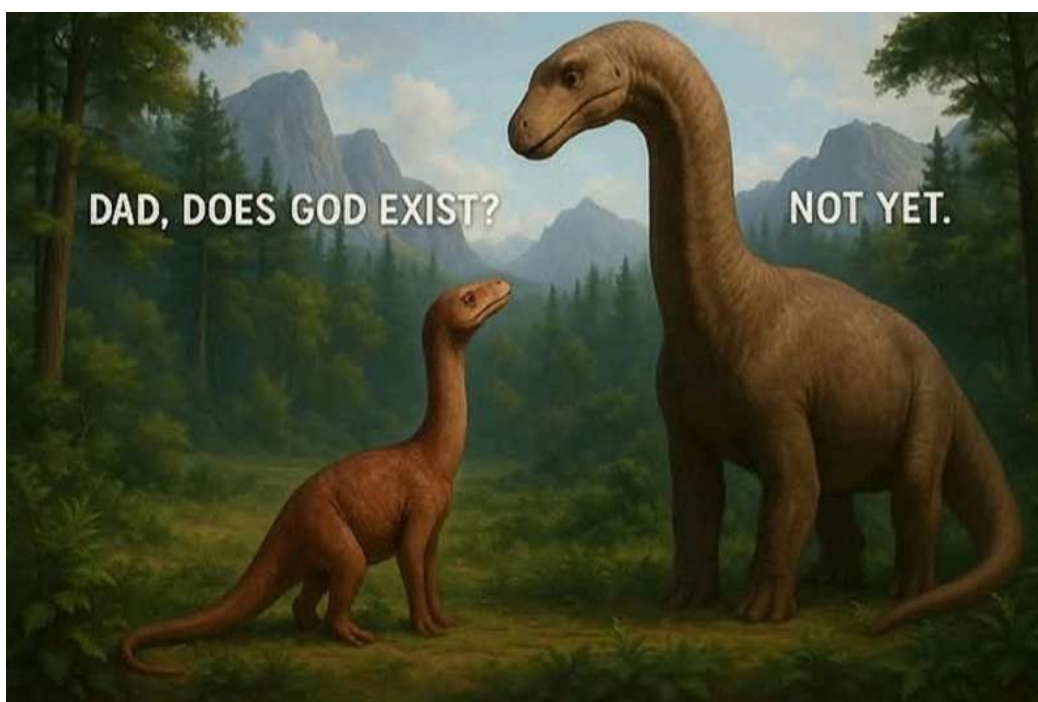
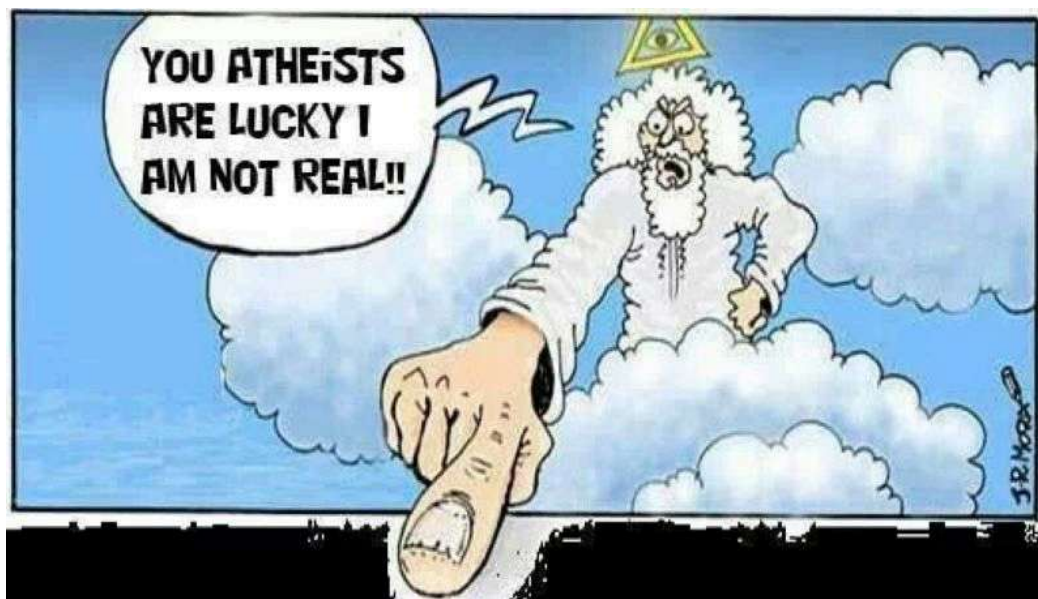
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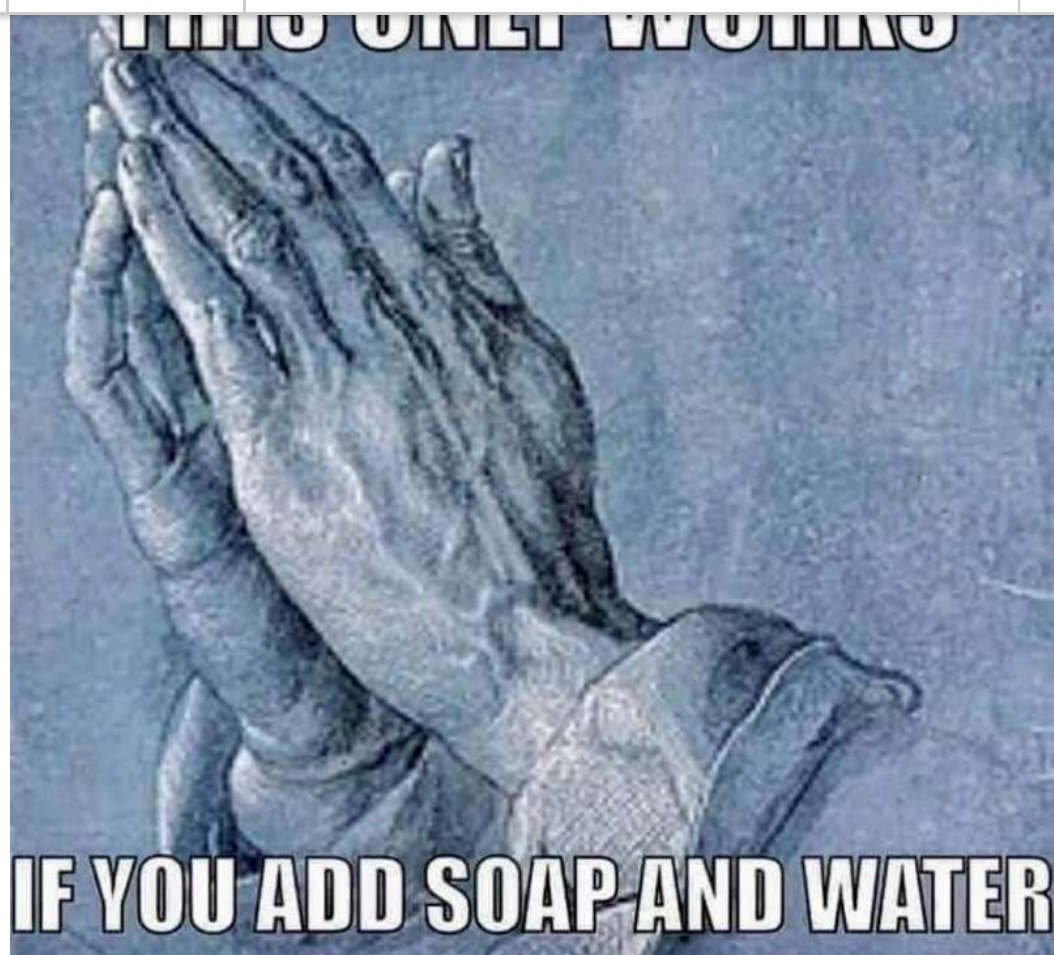
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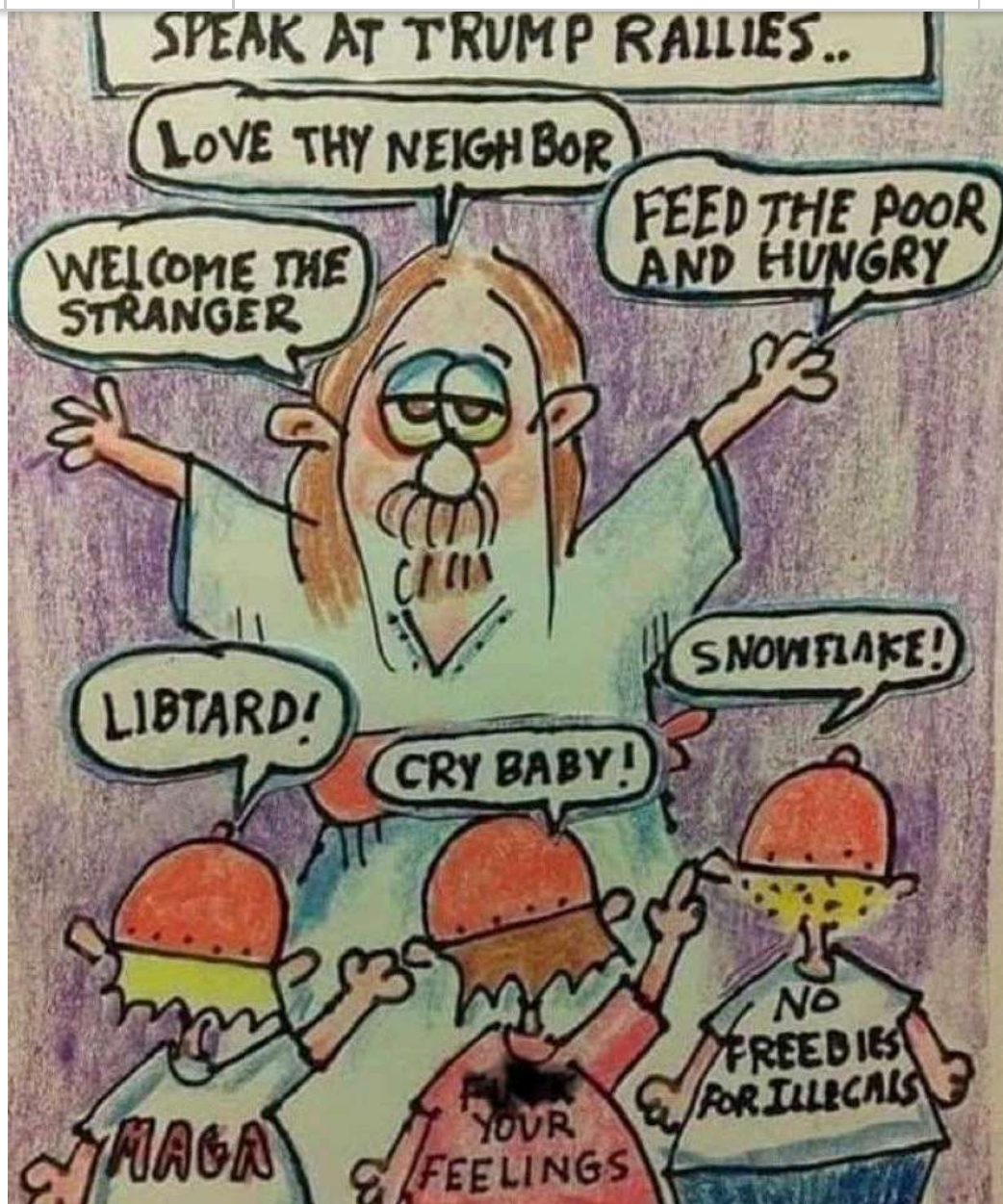
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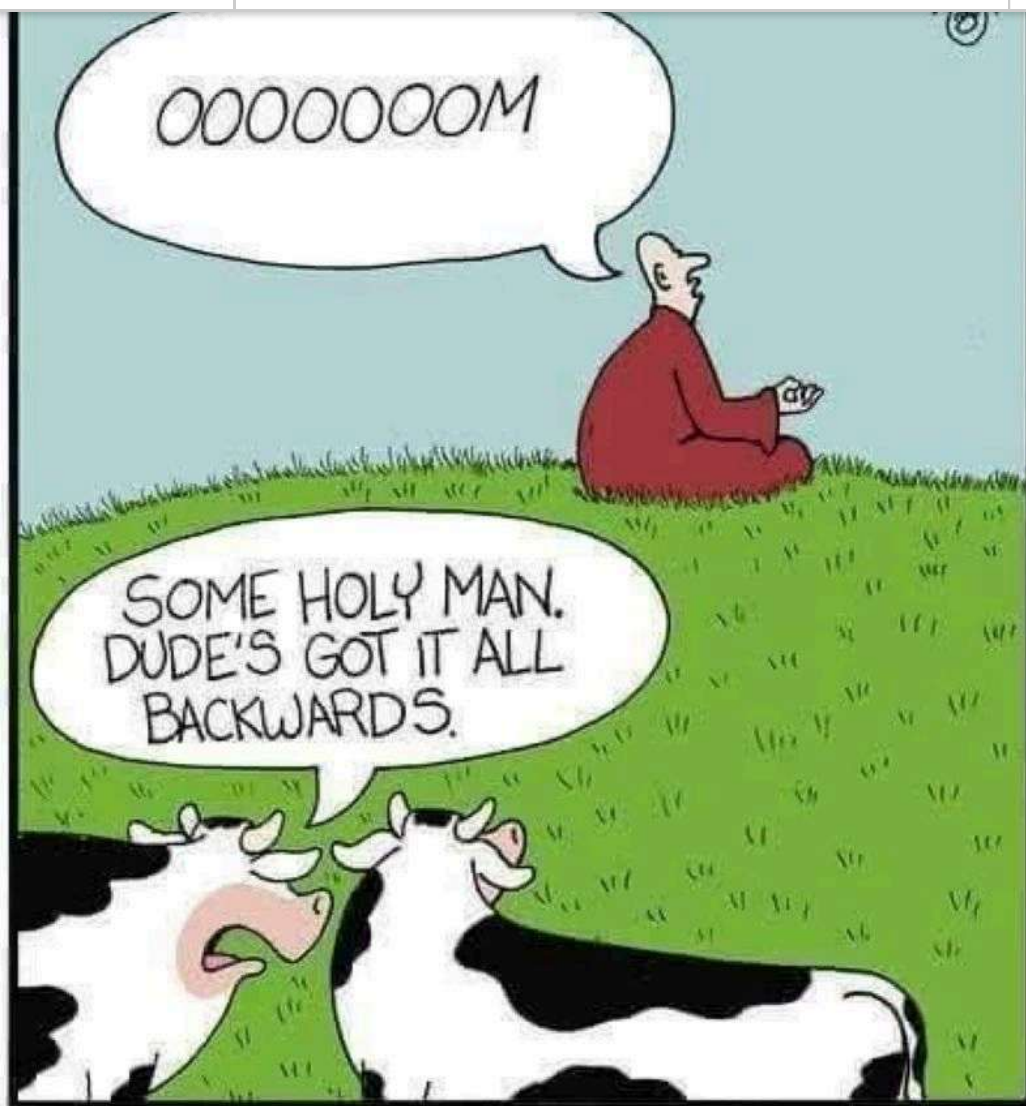












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