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### **Donald Trump as Sociopath**

I am not sure if I can be sued for calling anybody a sociopath, or for calling the President of the United States a sociopath, but here goes. I think I am safer calling President Donald Trump a sociopath because he is a public figure. If you already know what it means that Trump is a sociopath, you don't have to read this.

Roy Cohn was Donald Trump's chief mentor. When you know the character of Roy Cohn, you will see how bad that is. Read about the link between Donald Trump and Roy Cohn on the Internet. Several major newspapers and magazines have done articles on the relation. Wikipedia has an article on Cohn. See the play-turned-miniseries-turned-movie called "Angels in America". Al Pacino did a good job with the part of Cohn. Cohn was a lawyer. He guided Senator Joseph McCarthy during the early to middle 1950s when McCarthy drove witch hunts against supposed Communists. Neither man cared much about Communists but they knew they could use fear of Communists to get power. Cohn was smarter than McCarthy and led McCarthy from behind. Cohn was a master of using fear to get power, of lying, and of attacking anyone who threatened or from whom he wished to take. He did not defend, he attacked. Trump knows about witch hunts because he studied under Cohn.

I describe one kind of sociopath. There is more than one kind but there is no point in going into that topic here. What follows is not a professional description of a sociopath. What follows is based as much on people I have known as on academic reading. I use the pronoun "he" because I am dealing with a man. Women can be sociopaths too. Ted Bundy and Adolph Hitler were sociopaths. In Star Wars, the Emperor was a sociopath and he turned Anakin Skywalker into one too. The crazy villain with the white cat in James Bond movies is a sociopath. Tom Riddle (Lord Voldemort) was a sociopath.

Sociopaths thrive in politics, and, I fear, are too common in business and academia. Most know how to contain themselves so as not to be "found out" and hurt. Most political sociopaths know how to limit themselves so other people don't see them for what they are and go after them. When a sociopath gets power, then he can let go and indulge. That happens with tyrants. Likely Vladimir Putin is a hugely successful highly functional sociopath.

Mostly this essay gives points about what a sociopath is, points that I think apply to Donald Trump. I do not say expressly at each point how Trump is like that. I do a little of that at the end of the essay. I do not give every point I can think of about sociopaths or Trump, mostly because I forgot some points. Feel free to use your imagination.

-A sociopath is like a highly adept con man with no remorse or inhibitions except practicality.

-The chief desires of a sociopath are power and veneration.

-Some kinds of security also are high on the list of what a sociopath desires. Sociopaths do not desire all kinds of security and some sociopaths do take risks that normal people don't take and other sociopaths don't take. I don't go into this issue here.

-It is not clear why power and veneration are the chief desires. To an extent, sociopaths desire power, and even veneration, to protect themselves, part of the desire for security. But power and veneration are needs apart from the need for security.

-I can come up with plausible biological reasons for why power and veneration are desirable and for why we have sociopaths but again I refer you to the Net. I do not use biological reasoning here.

-A sociopath might develop other desires such as for fine food or attractive sex partners but he does not develop a well-rounded life. He stays focused on a small set of desires.

-A sociopath understands morality and human sentiment but does not feel it much. He feels enough to know how other people in general feel. The feeling does not move him as it does us. A sociopath is like somebody who can hear quite well what is going on in music but can take it or leave it. A sociopath can hear that one piece of music is more beautiful than another but his feeling is "so what?"

-A sociopath uses his knowledge of morality and sentiment not to understand or help other people but to use people to gain power and veneration.

-Sociopaths are almost compulsive liars. They can tell the truth if to do so causes no harm to them, the truth is easy, and the truth gets them gain. If they can lie and get away with it, they seem to prefer to lie. Perhaps they lie to stay in practice. Maybe they like whatever confusion even a casual lie causes in other people, which confusion gives them an advantage. They simply do not see truth versus not-truth the same way that normal people do.

-Sociopaths are adept at telling more lies to cover up previous lies.

-When confronted with an awkward situation, sociopaths immediately lie to get out of it. A case is Donald Trump lying about what he said during the press conference after his meeting with Vladimir Putin, and lying about the content of the meeting.

-(Some people are compulsive liars but not full-blown sociopaths. Some people who likely would not have been sociopaths or compulsive liars can learn to be compulsive liars. Children brought up in a household with compulsive liars learn to be compulsive liars. I am not sure if a person who had little predisposition to becoming a sociopath can learn to be a sociopath. I think it is something you have to start out with a knack for, like some kinds of gambling. Some ethnic or religious groups have a higher ratio of compulsive liars than others, higher than what I see as normal and healthy. Compulsive lying

can be an acceptable, or tolerable, stance in some cultures. I do not go into specifics because I am already in enough PC trouble.)

-Sociopaths are not usually psychopaths. Usually they know reality from unreality (not always) but can live in lies much more easily than normal people can.

-Sociopaths have no remorse about lying or about any hurtful acts. When an event is over, unless the sociopath needs revenge or to carry on exploiting, then it is over. Go to the next gain.

-Sociopaths are adept at reading other people. In fact, sociopaths might understand more about the nuances of morality and guilt than most ministers or moralists, and might be better psychologists than most professional psychologists.

-Sociopaths are adept at reading social situations. They are not like Sheldon Cooper.

-Sociopaths don't read people and social situations so as to help people. They read so as to best use the person or situation. They read so as to know what lies to tell so as to get the most they can.

-Some sociopaths take pleasure at causing harm, pain, and chaos, at hurting other people, and at the suffering of other people. Heath Ledger's portrait of the Joker was like this. Sociopaths sometimes do what we see as indulge their emotions, and one natural emotion is to hurt others. So maybe sociopathic pleasure in other's pain is what happens when sociopaths don't control this emotion because they don't feel they have to control it. The Emperor in Star Wars had moments like this and he trained Annikin to have moments like this (cutting off the head of Count Dookoo). But not all sociopaths are serial murderers who take pleasure in torturing their victims. Some merely hurt people as a method to get something else, like a professional torturer or a political boss.

-Sociopaths always have excuses. They have layers of excuses. They tell flagrant lies as excuses and then expect people to accept. They blithely rattle off excuses that contradict. This excusing is part of compulsive lying and this trait also appears in some groups.

-Sociopaths are adept at sowing discord, at "divide and conquer", at "dirty tricks" aimed to get people to dislike and distrust each other and so to weaken others. In "The Two Towers", "Wormtongue" is called that because that is what he does. In "Star Wars", this is what the Emperor does between the Republic and the Trade Federation, between Annikin and the Jedi, and between people and machines. Although not apparent in the movies, in "Lord of the Rings", that is how Sauron, long ago, destroyed the only power that had defeated him in war and that could have protected Middle Earth. Putin is trying to do that now in America.

-Sociopaths like to be seen as heroes, saviors, and conquerors. They love being the conquering hero. They love publicity and adulation as long as they control it, and it does not lead to prying. They love being the center of attention in some situations but not in all. They like being the one who defeated the

great foe, so they often make a great foe so they can defeat the great foe so they can be the savior and conquering hero. Defeating the great foe is also an effective road to power. This is what Joe McCarthy tried to do with Communism.

-Sociopaths like to be seen as perfect, at least in some ways. They like to be seen as error free in those arenas that count. (I don't know if positive perfection or negative freedom from errors is more salient and I don't know how to separate them.) A sociopath might pretend to know all about horse racing, or physics, how the stock market works, or how to govern. A sociopath might like to be a perfect charmer. If any other person points out a flaw in the sociopath in one of his preferred arenas, the sociopath gets quite upset although the upset might not be apparent. The sociopath asserts the other person is wrong and the sociopath is right although it might be obvious that the other person is right and the sociopath wrong. The person who showed up the sociopath is marked as an enemy and might be marked for later vengeance even if the person meant very little by the criticism and forgets about it almost immediately. Any aide who accidentally criticizes Donald Trump while trying to help Donald Trump is "a goner".

-The sociopath likes to be the smartest person in the room although the sociopath might also make a show of not showing right away that he is the smartest person in the room. The sociopath likes to outsmart the police or the Russians or the Democrats.

-A sociopath is adept at slyly creating problems that he can then claim to solve even if he does not really solve them, so he can claim that he did solve a problem, he was the only one who did solve it, he was the only one who could have solved it, and he was the only one who could bring unity and the power that comes of unity. It is another way to be the only conquering hero. Sociopaths are adept at making sure other people don't see that the sociopath created the problem. They adeptly blame others for the problems that they made. They find issues. Again, the Emperor in Star Wars created many problems which, in the end, he solved in his fashion. Trump created many problems with immigration and the economy which he then later claimed to have solved even if he did not solve them.

-Some sociopaths are amazingly adept at manipulating people. They know how to mix fear, threats, promises, "stroking", flattery, and cajoling to get the person to do what is best for the sociopath and they know how to tailor the mix for particular individuals.

-Sociopaths know when they have gotten what they can out of a person or situation, when the person or situation is depleted, when the person or situation is too dangerous, and so when to get out.

-Sociopaths have no problems at all with leaving people and situations. They have no loyalty although they demand loyalty in others (see below). They "leave people in the lurch", "hang people out to dry", and "get out while the getting's good".

-Sociopaths are adept at finding fall guys and scapegoats. A good instance is in the book and film "The Maltese Falcon". The character "Gutman" is a sociopath (as are most of the characters including the heroine but not the hero). The hero, Spade, knows Gutman will be happy to use his protégé, Wilbur, as

a fall guy, if useful, and Spade sets up a situation where it is useful for Gutman to do so, so that Spade can weaken the bad guys.

-Sociopaths are adept at getting other people to do their dirty work for them and then leaving those people to take the blame. Sociopaths never sign their own name. An example is the governor in the movie "Blazing Saddles", "Le Petomane", who seems an idiot but only uses the idiot pose to manipulate other people into doing what he wishes and then taking the fall for him. Hitler famously used the Brown Shirts in Germany to cause chaos and prepare the way for him, then killed their leaders when he was done with the Brown Shirts. Trump and the Right in general use Hilary Clinton as their scapegoat fall guy all-purpose blame receptacle.

-Sociopaths are adept at getting people to do more even when the victim has already given a lot. They cause problems, and allow problems to develop, so that the victim has to do more to protect previous investment. They get the victim to "throw good money after bad", when "money" includes time, effort, networking, protection, commitment, affection, and love. If you have invested x dollars already in a con, and things seem to be "going south", a sociopath gets you to not pull out but invest more. If you have invested a lot already in a love relation with a sociopath, and you are worried, he is adept at getting you to love and to give even more. If you have invested in the schemes of a political sociopath, and the country is getting worse instead of better, he is adept at getting you to do even more such as start killing the enemies of the state. "It's always darkest before the dawn".

-Sociopaths are adept at plotting (conniving). I don't think every sociopath has this skill but some of the best connivers seem also to be sociopaths. They know how to integrate lies and false information into their plots. The "Darth" name for the Emperor in Star Wars is "Darth Sidious". Literally that term comes from "left hand" in Latin but the term sounds like, and was meant to sound like, "insidious" (same root) which means somebody who quietly plots and worms his way in.

-Sociopaths deeply fear being "found out" and they react with fury at anybody who finds them out. They sometimes act with open anger and fury and sometimes with quiet anger and fury coupled with plots and revenge.

-Sociopaths get revenge unless revenge is in the way of current gain and near-future gain. Sociopaths are adept at getting what they can first, getting to safety, waiting, and then getting revenge too.

-Someone once called adept politicians "monsters of patience". Sociopaths are a vexing combination of patience, fury, delayed gratification, and immediate gratification.

-Sociopaths tend to see enemies, and insults, where there is only normal human life and banter. They make grudges and hold grudges. They can be paranoid, but, curiously, they also seem to know that paranoia gets in the way of plots, lies, and power, so they can hold their paranoia and grudges inside until they are ready for revenge. Then the victims often don't see it coming and can't recall what they ever did to deserve it.

-Sociopaths are adept at getting people to go along with them. They are adept at getting groups to go along with them. This often amazes me. It seems that people cannot really be that stupid but, in some ways, we are. We are susceptible to the cons. Sociopaths know exactly what humans in general, human groups in general, particular individuals, and particular kinds of groups, are susceptible to, and use that well. Hitler knew exactly what to tell the Germans to get them to go along with him. Women happily let Ted Bundy take them anywhere.

-Sociopaths see human desire for morality, friendship, love, family, and susceptibility, as weakness. It is weakness that invites exploitation. It is cherries waiting to be picked and eaten.

-Sociopaths know that people like to have enemies, like to have scapegoats. Sociopaths know that nothing gets people to go along better than a common enemy. Sociopaths are adept at figuring out what would be the most efficient common enemy to use in uniting a group and getting the group to follow the sociopath. Truth is irrelevant. Sociopaths are adept at finding their version of the Jews in every situation, using them to gain power, and then getting rid of the evidence. Read the graphic novel or see the movie "Watchmen" (there are strong women in it too).

-Sociopaths know how to reward followers and punish enemies.

-Sociopaths do what psychologists call "project". Sociopaths see in other people the bad traits that I am describing here. Likely they do this so they can avoid seeing the traits in themselves. They see other people as lying, conniving, and power hungry. They see other people as prone to attack them. They accuse other people of using the same tricks that the sociopath uses. They tolerate no insult or attack from others. When Donald Trump accuses everybody else of disseminating "fake news" that is because he disseminates fake news. I am not sure if sociopaths really think badly of other people, or they "screw themselves up" to think badly of other people, or if they simply act this way without caring if it is true. I am sure Donald Trump knows that he and his side disseminates more "fake news" than do Democrats or other Liberals.

-Sociopaths tolerate no hint from other people that the sociopath is not genuine or he is illegitimate. Sociopaths tolerate no hint from others that the others "see through him" or have "found him out". Sociopaths will use every device to crush those people.

-Sociopaths think in terms of "for me or against me". Pick a side and stick to it. They demand loyalty. They treat any hint of not-loyalty, of rational caution, any attempt to see the other side or the whole picture, as disloyalty, treachery. A sociopath will allow a person to recover from imagined disloyalty but only if that person debases himself (herself) absolutely and puts himself at the continual mercy of the sociopath. Count Dracula can have only slaves.

-Sociopaths need constant re-assurance unless they are deeply involved in a plot that they cannot share with somebody else. Annikin needed constant reassurance.

-Sociopaths rarely back down, apologize, or admit mistakes. They counter attack. They deny any error even in the face of clear evidence. When faced with overwhelming force, sociopaths will back down and apologize. If possible, they gather their power for a revenge counter attack later.

-We all have a bit of sociopath in us. If we did not, we could not recognize a sociopath and could not defend against him-her. The vast majority of us are only a little sociopathic and we are able to keep our bad tendencies under control. Don't worry much about yourself, your spouse, your kids, your friends, your co-workers (ok, maybe a little), your fellow parishioners at your place of worship, or even about most politicians. (My wife and I are almost totally incapable of spotting sociopaths and so protecting ourselves until it is too late. Both of us have been hurt many times. Even so, we are still not able to spot sociopaths well or to defend ourselves.)

Likely for good reasons, much of human literature (stories, plays, books, movies, TV, comedy) has to do with sociopaths. They are fun to watch from a distance. We like to feel sure that humans can detect sociopaths before the sociopaths destroy society. We like tips on how to detect sociopaths and deal with them. We like validation for our wrong belief that sociopaths lurk all around us, particularly at work and church. We like to think our declared enemies, such as terrorists, are all sociopaths. We like to think that we are not sociopaths even if our enemies see us as such, and even if we act like that toward them. We like to think that, when it comes right down to it, we are smarter than the sociopaths and we can protect our families.

Hopefully you will see a few ways in which Donald Trump fits the description of a sociopath. I point out only a few traits that particularly irk me. I do not explicitly connect the points I make below with points in the description above. Please do that yourself.

-Trump neither hates nor loves America, neither despises nor venerates it. America just is. It is a place and a group of people in which Trump can get what he wants. It is like a forest with abundant game. Trump likely never sets out to hurt America but he does not mind hurting America if he needs to hurt America to get what he wants. He comes first. Relations with his supporters come first. He likely would enjoy helping America if helping America did not deter him from getting what he wants and-or if helping America might also help him. Trump does not really pay attention to people who tell him what is good or bad for America. He pays attention to people that let him know, directly or indirectly, how to get what he wants and how to avoid losing.

-Trump wants to be venerated. He wants to be a hero. He wants people to think he is useful. He wants people to think he saved the day, he is the only guy who saved the day, and he is the only guy who could have saved the day. He wants to feel justified because he was the hero who saved the day and because people venerate him.

- I don't know if Trump wants to be loved. Likely he would enjoy being loved. Being loved comes on the heels of being venerated. But, as in Machiavelli, he would rather be feared and venerated than loved, and, if he has to give up being loved to be feared and venerated, so be it. I don't know if Trump feels that he is not lovable, or if he is not lovable if he is not also the one-and-only hero who saves the day.

-Trump does want power. But, in the case of Trump, I think veneration is more important than power. Maybe veneration is a disguise for power. I do not know about Trump well enough to sort this out, nor do I wish to know about Trump well enough to sort this out. Take veneration and power together, and you won't go far wrong.

-I don't know why Trump wants veneration and power. If he desperately needs love, I don't know why. I don't care to know why.

-To get veneration and power, Trump chose politics. To get veneration and power through politics, the conditions had to be right for a person like Trump, and, in America since the 1970s, the conditions have been right. See below. To succeed in politics and to get veneration and power, Trump decided on a particular tactic. This tactic has been used before, and is tried and proven. People who have studied history know of this tactic. People who have not studied history, and that is most people, don't know of this tactic well enough to resist. That is why it works so well and often. That is why it works in America. It is the tactic that Hitler used in Germany.

-Trump needed enough political support to get elected. He needed a group that was large enough to give him enough votes, was large enough to block other candidates in a party, and large enough to block the candidate of the other party in an election. He needed a group that was unhappy, could not find a way to get what it wanted through normal channels, and would strongly support somebody who would promise to give them what they wanted. He needed a group that was angry, frightened, and felt a fair amount of hate. He needed a group that would not wish to be sidetracked with reason or with feelings for other groups. Trump found that in what is called his "base", the White and Asian people who do not feel secure about their future. Many of them left the Democratic Party in the 1970s, moved to the Republican Party, and still did not get all that they wanted.

These are the same people who put Hitler into power and who helped Lenin and the early Mao. They are not the people who helped Stalin. (It is a myth that all peasants loved Lenin and Mao.)

-Trump will tell those people whatever they wish to hear. Trump will ridicule whatever those people don't like, whatever group they don't like, whatever kinds of people they don't like. Trump will attack whoever that group doesn't like. Trump will pretend to hate whoever they hate. If this group changed its mind, Trump would change too.

-If Trump could find another group that was more useful than this group, Trump would change his ideas and stance to gain the political support of that group.



-In and of himself, Trump has no ideas about politics, the economy, God, abortion, science, immigrants legal or illegal, jobs, factories, insurance, the cost of living, nature, climate change, NATO, Russia, China, morality, or anything. He is not stupid. He just does not bother to care about anything that does not matter in his quest for legitimacy, veneration, and power. If his base changed its mind on any topic, he would change too, and argue that he had held that opinion all along.

-Even if Trump knows an issue is important, such as education, if it does not matter to his base, it does not matter to him either, and he is likely to ignore it.

-Trump does not of himself hate Mexicans (Hispanics) or love them. He does not care about them either way. He denigrates them because that is what his base wishes to hear. Trump does not wish to build a wall or wish not to build a wall. If his base decided a wall would not work either practically or as a symbol, Trump would say the wall was the bad idea of somebody else. Trump does not care about the military in space. Trump wants a plan that will excite his base and that will allow him to funnel money to where it will do him the most good. Trump does not support anti-abortion laws or support Right to Choose. Trump supports what he thinks his base wishes to hear. Trump has no idea if tariffs will help or hurt the American worker or the American economy in the long run. Trump knows that a big part of his base thinks that America is being unfairly treated and so thinks retaliatory tariffs are correct. Trump does not care about the integrity of the intelligence community, the FBI, military, or law enforcement community. Trump does not care if their missions fail or succeed. Trump cares only that he can control their independence and suppress any critics in them. Trump does not care if every American house has ten assault rifles and thirty pistols, and Trump does not care if the state seizes every firearm. Trump knows that his base wrongly glamorizes guns, and so takes whichever side of the argument does him the most good at the time. I could go on and on with examples but hopefully you get the idea.

-His base likes people who needle and abuse others, so Trump does that. His base secretly likes lechers and womanizers, so Trump lets out enough about that aspect of his life to please them.

-Trump is a nearly pathological liar. He will say one thing one day, say the opposite thing the next day when that appears more desirable, and claim that is what he meant all along. This is what he did in his revision of his statements after the trips to NATO and Russia in July 2017. He seems to enjoy lying more than telling the truth even when the truth is neutral.

-Trump viciously attacks even his old friends when useful, such as Hilary Clinton.

-Trump never apologizes.

- When symbolic actions please his base, Trump uses symbolic actions that have little practical effect on the problem that is supposedly at issue. I am not sure if the base thinks a fake solution is a real solution or if the base simply likes drama. The wall along the US-to-Mexico border is ridiculous. It cannot work in any way proposed by Trump. But Trump is set to build it as a gesture to his base. Many people in his base must know it is a ridiculous and expensive gesture but they want Trump to build the wall anyway.

The wall, and other symbolic acts, are like the hills during the Korean war that were important precisely because they were not important, to show which side was more determined and was stronger. Both standing and not standing during the national anthem at football games, and criticizing people who don't stand, are merely symbolic.

-Trump was the leader of the "birther" movement that sought to invalidate Barack Obama by claiming he was not born an American citizen. No sane person believes this. People in the Trump base do not really believe this but they rant it much as people repeat gossip that they know likely is not true but do know it hurts the object of gossip anyway. Very likely Trump never believed it. He promoted it because it was an easy issue to promote, pretty much immune to falsification by the standards Trump himself set up. It allowed Trump to return to an issue that meant almost nothing practically but served as a rallying point and served to sort out the people who are crazy enough to be useful from the people who are too sane to be useful.

-At the same time, Trump is terrified of being considered an illegitimate President. He does not fear much that he will be found illegitimate legally because he has passed the legal hurdles. He fears he will not be (seen as) accepted by the American people and American system. He fears to have done to him what he tried to do to Barack Obama. This is why he is so touchy about the role that Russia played, any links to Russia, and any hint of collusion between his campaign and Russia. If it appears that Russia played a role, especially if they swung a few votes even if Russia did not swing the election, then Trump will be illegitimate in the eyes of many people and Trump will feel illegitimate. He will not be venerated. His power will weaken. Trump cannot see that Russia did try to influence the election, and likely did swing a few votes, but likely did not determine the outcome. That is too close for a sociopath. Trump cannot see that likely there was collusion between some members of his team and Russia but that does not mean Trump himself or any of his high level officials colluded, or that the collusion determined the election. That much is too close for a sociopath.

-Trump continues to claim that he won the election not only in the Electoral College but also the popular vote. This claim is ridiculous. Hilary Clinton won the popular vote by at least four million votes, quite a large margin. Trump claims that, where it appears Hilary won the popular vote, really he won the vote because the election was rigged in various ways. This claim too is ridiculous but his followers believe it on some level even while they know it is false on another level. Again, Trump fears not being venerated, not being seen as legitimate.

-I accept Trump as an interim President because he passed the American legal system. I believe Russia tried to swing the election, did swing a few votes, but did not determine the election. I believe some members of Trump's team colluded with the Russians. Basically, the Russians "played" a bunch of over-eager amateurs. I am pretty sure Trump knew of the collusion and approved but I doubt we will ever be able to prove legally. Because Trump lost the popular vote, and because of the role of Russia including collusion, and because I think Trump is a bad enough person, I do not accept Trump as a real President even if he is legally legitimate. Many people felt the same about George W. Bush and Barack Obama. I am not sure how people would have felt about Hilary Clinton had she won.

-Trump uses Muslims and (mostly illegal) Hispanic immigrants as scapegoats and fall guys. He does not care about these people one way or the other but they are useful as scapegoats and fall guys. He acts like he hates them because his base hates them. His actions against them are mostly symbolic so far although the "Muslim Ban" was far too effective and far too hurtful.

If Trump did not have to worry about the feelings of his base, and had only to worry about pleasing Republican business people who use Hispanics as cheap labor, likely Trump would have no trouble finding a lot of plausible reasons why America should open its doors to the downtrodden from below the border. He would not see them as criminals and takers of American jobs but as hard working people eager to be converted to the American (Gringo) way of life.