

UNDERSTANDING TRUMP'S SUCCESS
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For decades, Republicans have apotheosized amoral businessmen as the avatars of capitalism. During election campaigns mostly Republican candidates have taken the high road while their well-paid henchmen have carried out the effective dirty work of besmirching opponents. Now, at last, there has come upon the scene a candidate who fulfills all their utopian capitalist fantasies and, moreover who personally slathers out the slander. In its face his competition withered on the vine. Unshielded they couldn't take the heat they were so used to surreptitiously dishing out. Donald Trump is the Republicans' Monkey's Paw.

Trump's direct aggressiveness has been a large component of his unexpected success, but before I reveal his key winning trait, some retrospective is useful.

Trump launched his presidential bid on June 16, 2015 with an unexpurgated attack disparaging Mexican illegal aliens. Because the Hispanic vote is critical for victory I thought his announcement would be the death knell of his presidential chances. And it is still the most formidable barrier to a Trump victory in November. He will have to win some over. African Americans he'll never win over.

A month later, draft dodger Trump savaged John McCain, asserting that a soldier is no hero for being captured. With that snide comment against a presumed American icon I thought he had dealt himself a knockout blow.

But in the weeks that followed his popularity only rose. On August 25, he called Jeb Bush "low energy". He repeated this mocking insult in debate after debate. It unnerved Jeb and sealed his fate. Bleeding terminally, the hope of the Party bigwigs collapsed. And that may be the best thing Trump ever did or ever will do; America must never become a Monarchy.

To all the early vicious attacks against him, but often unprovoked, Trump lashed out with blistering personal tirades. He chose his targets well – the Press, Muslims, Mexicans, Mitt Romney, George Bush, and most of his opponents (except Carson and to a lesser extent Kasich); as with all great candidates, he commandeered compelling tales.

Throughout all the repartee, the most astounding thing to me was how impervious Trump appeared to all attacks and critiques. Here was a master egotist among master egotists. By early fall it dawned on me; this is Trump's winning formula.

For it is exactly what we want in a leader – someone with such apparent confidence he or she is bereft of any hesitation or shame. Linked to this, whereas many of Trump's opponents are liars, Trump displays indifference to truth or falsity. The truth to Trump is whatever he feels will get him what he wants.

Who that we all know possessed such qualities? Four, namely Moses, Jesus, Mohammed, and Hitler are masters of a coterie of notable mythological or historical figures. Allow me a few paragraphs to list some particulars for these charismatic four and then I will point out the single other class of people that have these qualities inscribed in their DNA.

Moses was brought up as a prince. It took him some time in exile to codify himself as God's spokesman. He grew so convinced of his truths, that he imposed a series of horrendous plagues on an innocent populace to spite a single stubborn opponent. And he was no kinder to the rebels in his own fold.

Jesus, a prince to his mother, was even more certain but kinder (because he had no army). He never killed his opponents until they died, whereupon he doomed them all to eternal damnation. Gentle Jesus spake, "Anyone who loves their father or mother...[and] their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." And, "Whoever is not with me is against me." These are the undying mantras of egotistical tyrants. Certainty followed him until his dying paroxysm on the Cross.

Illiterate Muhammad took time before receiving his enlightenment. And then, what curbs and carnage accompanied his revelations! He stamped these by asserting that his truths were valid for all time to come and retroactive for all time past. No one could add, subtract, or change a syllable. And for all who did not follow him, Allah, the merciful and beneficent, designated the fires of Hell.

We need not dwell on the personality of Hitler, who actually incinerated much of a continent once he had himself apotheosized. Years before he became Der Führer he threw legendary temper tantrums if anyone challenged his poisonous rantings. Of course, when any grown-up throws a temper tantrum, most of us cower in silence, fearing that discretion is the better part of valor.

One question before I reveal Trump's key. What class of people share with Trump and the four horsemen of the Apocalypse unabated egotism, arrogance, certainty (after some mandatory initial momentary Biblical doubt), credence only for self-proclaimed truth, and punishment for opponents? Every three-year-old! Surprisingly often, that child is the parent of the adult.

Almost all of us find following coddled, spoiled-brat adult three-year-olds irresistible. Their sense of omniscience and indifference to being caught in bald-faced lies are features both they and we equate to leadership. The irony is that unbridled egotism imparts to the grown three-year-olds a courage of convictions that does make for some of the best leaders. We are designed so that brilliant minds reside compatibly in infantile souls.

Now that we have the key insight, we must address two vital issues. First, what is the nature of the leader's heart? Hitler's was evil, but three-year-olds can be kindly disposed when not crossed. Trump does not appear to be evil – many of his wavering social positions seem reasonable. If he does win, it will not take long to learn whether the person at the helm is good or evil.

The second key issue is the sterling quality we hope to but rarely do see in a leader - growth as a human being. It is not likely to find much of this in Trump. Almost certainly, you can't teach an old three-year-old new tricks.