

## **ONE**

### **THE PATHOLOGY OF LEADERSHIP**

After the warning of thousands of historians over hundreds of years, one would think that by the 21<sup>st</sup> century the pathology versus the health of leadership would be sufficiently recognized and understood to protect our species from what happened again with America.

In the wake of hurricane Katrina's September 2005 near-obliteration of New Orleans a key revelation of something that had radically changed in America escalated concern in the world at large.

For many Americans it was something to laugh off as just another "Bushism"—as had become the term for the presidential language mangling that entertained the nation on late night television shows. But elsewhere what caught in a warning pocket of the mind looked neither humorous nor harmless.

Worldwide people were transfixed by the horror on television of the devastation of a major American city by the hurricane. And what they saw or heard was that the elected president of this most powerful country on earth remained on vacation at his ranch in Texas.

They learned he was venturing out only for political fund raisers, to play golf, and to "mug for the camera." Finally, in apparently his first unscripted public response to the disaster, he joked of the good times he'd had during his reported drunken and reckless earlier days in the devastated city.

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As he put it, New Orleans was a great place as it was where he used to “enjoy myself—occasionally too much.”

Thereafter, while on television screens circling the earth bloated black bodies could still be seen floating in the flooded streets, the world heard of more such “jokes.” By the mother of this president. By this president’s most powerful U.S. congressional leader. By a U.S. congressman and presidential party loyalist proclaiming “We finally cleaned up public housing in New Orleans. We couldn’t do it, but God did!”

Of such were the eye-openers that like a global drum beat extended the working definition of Bushism from the humor page to the psychiatric ward.

The point in reviving these memories is not to play politics. It is to underscore how at the core of the bad jokes, frightening pronouncements, callous actions, and cynical deception written off as just Bushism there will long haunt the thinking world a matter of grave continuing concern. For the Katrina disaster revealed—as did both earlier and later glimpses into the syndrome this book will define—the disconnect from reality that to the psychiatrist most reliably separates madness from normality.

This was and is not—as more and more openly and publicly one hears it said—a case of traditional insanity in this case or in the case of leaders elsewhere, for example, in North Korea, Iran, or the Iraq of Saddam Hussein.

It was and is something much worse.

In the case of prototypical concern here, of America, as the disconnect from reality widened out beyond the president and his political party to engulf the nation, the corruption of national elections, pre-emptive launching of the disastrous Iraq War, defiance of both U.S.

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constitutional and long-established international law, the condoning of torture and the computerized surveillance of everyone in America, the world was forced to face what the comparatively new field of evolutionary systems science reveals.

Contrary to the still prevailing *Origin of Species* impression of evolution as a slow and lumbering something out of which change evolves over thousands of years, what chaos and complexity theory now show us—and both natural and social science can now measure—is how quickly we can be seized by the thrust of a dark drive *backward*, rather than forward, in human and planetary evolution.

In the case of America it was as if the whole nation suddenly become a throwback to the days of King George the IIIrd. With George III the madness has long been medically identified. It was a case of the genetically transmitted hereditary disease of porphyria, which had afflicted Mary Queen of Scots and other British royalty. Its consequences have also long been known.

Hauntingly mirroring our time, it was skillful use by a self-serving political clique of the mad King George's raging insistence on grinding more money out of the colonials that brought on the American Revolution.

With the case of the 43rd American president and those who engineered his election and sustained him in office—i.e., his enablers and followers—this report must open painful wounds. But this is the vital first step for constructing the new field of science this book advocates to provide an early warning system to protect our species and planet from potentially worse further abuse.

The first—and, as of this writing, still the only—book by a bona fide psychiatrist paints a picture wholly contrary to the carefully engineered image of the bold, decisive leader grounded in honest and forthright good

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old time moral values and basic horse sense.

In *Bush on the Couch: Inside the Mind of the President*, Dr. Justin Frank, director of psychiatry at George Washington University, quietly, carefully—and with a touch of the healer’s compassion so conspicuously missing from the so-called compassionate conservative—opened the casebook on the reality behind the folksy surface. The picture of an “untreated ex-alcoholic with paranoid and megalomaniac tendencies” was noted in reviews, but this was like trying to describe a tornado with a fuzzy snap shot rather than the experiential furor of a very real dark funnel whirling across the distant prairie.

Chapter by chapter Dr. Frank laid it out for everyone who could bear to read the book. The roots in family and childhood of a “drive to rid the world of dangerous people as not simply the policy judgement of a president—but as the drive of an undernurtured and emotionally hobbled infant, terrified of confronting the dangers within his own psyche.”

Message in the Bottle fills a chapter on how “remarkable little attention has been paid to Bush’s twenty-plus years of problem drinking.”

In God I Trust probes the shock foreshadowed by the pre-2000 year election quote: “I feel like God wants me to run for president. . . I know it won’t be easy on me or my family, but God wants me to do it.”

Twisted Tongues probes how “his abuse of language can be seen as the psychic equivalent of a smoker’s persistent cough—easy to overlook, perhaps, but all too frequently a warning that something in the patient has gone very, very wrong.”

Without the professional ability to follow Frank’s psychiatric analyses this litany might seem rather mild. But in the chapter Outlaw—which probes the link between a pattern for pathological lying and arrests for disorderly conduct in college days, for drunk driving later, on up to defiance of the U.S. Constitution and international law—what

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Dr. Frank is getting at begins to come across with tornado force.

“He behaves more and more like a criminal who sticks tenaciously to his story,” Frank writes—later noting “The individual who lives outside the law ultimately stops seeing the world as being real.”

Behind the effects lies the lingo of psychiatry—which, in contrast to Dr. Frank’s bold and indeed heroic contribution, with but a handful of exceptions, thousands of American psychiatrists and psychologists understood, and privately among themselves recognized and deplored in the case of the president, but *publicly* remained silent.

The symptoms of Adult Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, or ADHD—short attention span, impulsiveness, disinterest in abstractions or complexities, impatient, easily frustrated, poor control of emotions.

The symptoms of dyslexia, or the symbol-processing difficulty, as recorded in all the purportedly humorous little books compiling the scrambling and mangling of words and thoughts when forced to speak without a script.

“He may seem decisive, but his behavior represents the fall-back position of someone trying to manage the anxiety of not being able to think clearly,” Dr. Frank observes.

Here Frank’s analysis most directly connects with my own experience as a psychologist.

Many have tried to write off the American president in question—or alarming leaders who anywhere else gain power—as “stupid,” or as only the simple puppet of others.

You don’t gain the kind of power in question without unusual “street smart” survival skills and capacities as an actor able to both disarm and instill the crazy-making roller-coaster mix of hope with the underlying gut-cutting edge of fear into the pliable others.

As with the pathology of leaders past, present, and—should we fail

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to heal its causes—the future, in these cases the world is generally faced with the riddle of what seems to be an unstable amalgam of two or more people. Crafted both by oneself and by others paid to do so—as is customary for most people of celebrity or notoriety—one persona is the reasonably “normal” person that his adherents and supporters see, prone then to discount anything that conflicts with this impression.

Another persona, however, is the quite definitely “abnormal” man behind the “normal” man that psychologists, psychiatrists, and both progressives and in this case many alarmed conservatives came to see, prone then to discount anything that conflicts with this impression.

My own research with dyslexia and background in testing long ago sensitized me to the link between the quasi-normal or otherwise impaired intellect and the development of compensatory capacities for coping with these deficits.

Along with a high degree of gut level shrewdness, as Dr. Frank documents, this syndrome can include truly incredible skills for lying, cheating, and the fashioning of the blend of charming and bullying that allows one to get away with it and continue to advance despite a history of failures.

The problem with being able to gain power in this way—while beneath the facade one is unable to think or express oneself clearly—is what became a globally unsettling realization during the decisive years affected.

Why did the world so rapidly seem to fall apart?

Involved here, one detects, was the unsettling realization this was the swaggering, self-proclaimed “I am the decider” commander-in-chief of the most powerful—and militarily, economically, politically, and environmentally most potentially destructive—nation on the planet.

A related aspect is what might be called the Pressure Cooker Factor.

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Up to a certain level the winning mask of normality can suppress the pathology, and admirers flock to and help advance one. But the higher one rises the greater the pressure from all sides escalates—until behind the mask one cracks, with hell to pay for all involved.

The problem with this kind of morass for leadership is that it leaves one open to becoming the tool of one's pathology and the agenda of a conventionally intelligent but morally defective clique or cabal of designing others—as can be seen in the case of the rampage of regressive money we'll examine in chapter three.

The most unsettling deficit is what can be seen behind Dr. Frank's probe in chapter six, *The Smirk*.

Behind the “tough guy” smirk—which scores of photos reveal this president shared with his vice president, original defense secretary, and many adherents—Dr. Frank reveals the self-protective projection of contempt for others and the escalation of a deeply ingrained sadism and delight in destruction.

Well documented is the picture of the boy who delighted in blowing up frogs by shoving lighted firecrackers down their gullet.

Who becomes the fraternity president who delights in branding pledges with a red hot coat hanger to the naked rear—who when asked about it says it was “Insignificant! There's no scarring mark physically or mentally!”

Who as governor, after blessing the execution of the first woman for Texas, delights in mocking her—“Please don't kill me,” photos show him whimpering, lips pursed in mock desperation.

Who even in seemingly harmless nick names delighted in this way of subtle demeaning and trying to dominate followers, enablers, and leaders of other nations. “Turd blossom,” for example, for his notorious political advisor Karl Rove. “Pooty-poot” for Russian president Vladimir Putin.

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Of course it is uncomfortable to be forced to face this.

One wants to run away and hide for shame.

But beyond history, within the over-riding perspective of the need for a new psychiatry and management science of evolution, it's crucial it be faced that this was a man *twice* engineered into election and re-election in America.

This was a leader who, despite the marching of protesting millions in the capitals of nations on this planet, in defiance of international law—in keeping with a pathology clearly displayed and remarked with concern from childhood, to college days, to governor, to president—delighted in launching the disastrous multi-trillion-dollar war in Iraq and yearned to push on to Armageddon in Iran.

This was a leader who, faced with the senseless slaughter of hundreds of thousands, the destruction of homes and the fleeing of millions of refugees, the creation of an elite new training ground and holy war for terrorists, and the agony of mothers, fathers, wives and children of the maiming and death of thousands of American soldiers, persisted in trying to run out the clock on his presidency—and leave the mess to be blamed on his successors.

All of us, clinicians included, are conditioned by the projection of normality in either everyday or political life to find it difficult to recognize pathology short of being repeatedly, so to speak, hit over the head with it. But in anything approaching sanity on this bloody planet surely by now one cannot dismiss the observation of a cumulating picture such as this as “just politics.”

In Dr. Frank's final chapter, *I Am the Chief*, the dark inner funnel of the tornado bursts out of the distance into one's own living room.

“The evidence suggests that behind Bush's affable exterior operates a powerful but obscure delusional system that drives his behavior,” Dr. Frank

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observes. “The most precise psychiatric term to describe his pathology is most frequently used to identify a particular condition exhibited by schizophrenics that, as we’ll see, has broader applications as well: megalomania.”

In the nine pages concluding this chapter, Frank explains what megalomania is in psychiatric terms and consequences to rival the paintings of Heironomous Bosch.

“Magalomaniacs love to break things,” he observes. “It makes them feel all powerful.” The core of concern is captured in the following description of the characteristics of Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) in the standard DSM-IV handbook for psychiatrists and clinical psychologists.

1. Has a grandiose sense of self-importance (e.g., exaggerates achievements and talents, expects to be recognized as superior without commensurate achievements).
2. Is preoccupied with fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance, beauty, or ideal love.
3. Believes that he or she is "special" and unique and can only be understood by, or should associate with, other special or high-status people (or institutions).
4. Requires excessive admiration.
5. Has a sense of entitlement, i.e., unreasonable expectations of especially favorable treatment or automatic compliance with his or her expectations.
6. Is interpersonally exploitative, i.e., takes advantage of others to achieve his or her own ends.
7. Lacks empathy: is unwilling to recognize or identify with the feelings and needs of others.
8. Is often envious of others or believes that others are envious of him

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or her.

9. Shows arrogant, haughty behaviors or attitudes.

With only five of these nine symptoms you're considered a highly probable case of NPD.

To every one of the nine defining symptoms can be linked specific policies, actions, events—and unguarded glimpses behind the mask—of the Bush years.

Yet to the astonishment of much of the rest of the world an amazing number of Americans were able to discount what happened to the nation originally founded to serve as a beacon of hope to the world as no more than the fun and free-for-all partisanship of a good prize fight or football game.

Which brings us to the pathology of enablers and followers.