

ASS- holes

A Theory of
Donald Trump

AARON JAMES

Bestselling author of *Assholes: A Theory*

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That Donald Trump is an asshole is a fact widely agreed upon even by his supporters, who actually like that about him. But his startling political rise makes the question of just what sort of asshole he is, and how his assholedom may help to explain his success, one not just of philosophical interest but of almost existential urgency.

Enter the philosopher Aaron James, author of the foundational text in the burgeoning field of Asshole Studies: the bestselling "Assholes: A Theory." In this brisk and trenchant inquiry into the phenomenon that is Donald Trump, James places the man firmly in the typology of the asshole (takes every advantage, entrenched sense of entitlement, immune to criticism); considers whether, in the Hobbesian world we seem to inhabit, he might not somehow be a force for good i.e., the Stronger Asshole; and offers a suggestion for how the bonds of our social contract, spectacularly broken by Trump's (and Ted Cruz's) disdain for democratic civility, might in time be repaired.

You will never think about Donald Trump the same way after reading this book. And, like it or not, think about him we must."

Assholes: A Theory of Donald Trump Details

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Author : Aaron James

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From Reader Review Assholes: A Theory of Donald Trump for online ebook

Billie Pritchett says

Aaron James does a good job contextualizing Donald Trump as the type of person who feels there's something intrinsic to his nature that entitles him to special advantages. There's some advice for what we as a society could do to deal with the unjustifiably entitled, which involves ignoring or censuring those people to the extent that we can, and also not letting the feeling of entitlement rub off on us. The book is a bit fluffy, though, I think. It's short and yet too long for that.

Andrew says

3.5 stars

Basically, Donald Trump is looking like Hobbes's Leviathan. Just the biggest, most dominating asshole of them all, showing up American politics for the circus it has become. And from that point of view, the phenomenon makes perfect philosophical sense.

Only proving that philosophers don't always deal in the real world ;-)

Martin Burrows says

First and foremost, what you need to know about this book is that it is not a joke book, in spite of what the title may make you think. It is a serious analysis of Donald Trump's personality, as well as other similar politicians. The book is written by Aaron James, a PHD from Harvard, and chair of the Philosophy Department at the University of California in Irvine. The way the author uses the term "Asshole" in this book is really to describe a particular personality type that really has no other name. It's a personality type that is much more than just a narcissist, or even an authoritarian personality. It combines elements of those personalities plus others. Some have compared Trump with Hitler or Mussolini. Although both of those dictators had an authoritarian personality type, they built their personal philosophies around a strong core political philosophy. That's the element, that according to James is missing in Trump. His only core philosophy is Trump. No matter what your political persuasion is, this book is worth a read. It's very short and can be read in one sitting, but you are bound to gain insight into today's politics as well as the future of America.

Juan says

La traducción del título del libro no es la más acertada, *Trump: ensayo sobre la imbecilidad*, del original *Assholes: A Theory of Donald Trump*.

No trata realmente de la imbecilidad –la de Donald Trump o la compartida por todos–, sino de otra cosa. *Asshole*, nos dice el diccionario, es en su segunda acepción una persona estúpida, incompetente o detestable:

Asshole.

2. Usually vulgar : a stupid, incompetent, or detestable person.

En el contexto del libro Trump es las tres cosas, con la condición de que al ser las dos primeras no deja nunca de ser la tercera. En cambio en español imbécil es un tonto, y la imbecilidad implica flaqueza:

Imbécil.

1. Tonto o falto de inteligencia.

Imbecilidad.

4. Flaqueza, debilidad.

Trump es justo lo contrario, un estúpido que teniendo o no la razón, siempre se asegura de una cosa: salir fortalecido de cualquier situación, por encima de quien sea y lo que sea. Quizá calificarlo de patán, rufián o simplemente hijo-de-puta hubiese sido más acertado.

El ensayo analiza por qué Trump puede ser calificado de *asshole*, lo que esto implica –como que inherente a las características de su personalidad cualquier cosa que salga de su boca podría carecer de aval en la realidad y cuán poco esto importa–, deriva hacia un análisis de este tipo de personalidad en general, y regresa a por qué Trump no puede ser la solución al descompuesto sistema político estadounidense, sino acaso la garantía de que este sistema se desgaste aún más.

Basado en un libro previo del autor, *Assholes: A Theory*, y enfocado a la figura del candidato republicano a las elecciones presidenciales del año 2016 en Estados Unidos de América, el análisis del autor va más allá del personaje, siendo aplicable a la cultura de glorificación de la estupidez y la doctrina de la autoestima injustificada que domina a la sociedad estadounidense quizá desde la década de los 1990s.

James Martin says

A brief sequel to his *Assholes: A Theory*, in which James considers—during the 2016 GOP primary—what it might mean for our republic if we elect Trump. Contains a good discussion of the role and nature of government, in which James contrasts the views of Rousseau and Hobbes, as well as practical advice on how we could take the reigns and save our country from entitlement capitalism. James does a better job than most at getting inside the heads of those who find Trump viable, without contempt but also without giving in to them.

Joy (joyous reads) says

Just what kind of asshole Donald Trump is?

It should be cut and dry, isn't it?

Review to come.

Scott Rhee says

Numerous women, throughout the years, have made claims of sexual misconduct perpetrated by Donald Trump. He is on record admitting that he has committed sexual assault, and that, because of his celebrity status, “they let you do it”. He has repeatedly, throughout the years, insinuated that he would fuck his own daughter if she wasn’t his daughter. He has also been accused of rape and attempted rape three times in his life, including a 13-year-old girl and his own ex-wife, Ivana Trump. There is no question---even in the minds of most of his supporters---that Trump is an asshole, if not an outright criminal. Like most rational-minded folks, I lean also toward criminal, but somehow (so far, at least), Trump has escaped prosecution or even a slap on the wrist.

This probably says more about the Republican party and Trump supporters than it does Trump himself, although Trump is part and parcel of the whole problem. Trump is an asshole, yes, but he is being kept in power by a cabal of even more-powerful assholes. Assholes need other assholes to continue their assholery. (I’m pretty sure I just made that word up, but you get the gist...)

In 2012, a philosophy professor named Aaron James published a book called “Assholes: A Theory”. With a good bit of humor, James intelligently and philosophically addressed a serious problem: the proliferation of assholes in our society. Strangely enough, James wrote about Donald Trump in the book, using him as a textbook example of an asshole.

In 2016, prior to elections, James published a follow-up, a short 127-page treatise entitled “Assholes: A Theory of Donald Trump”. While it is, for the most part, cheeky and funny, there is a seriously un-funny implication to the book, much like his longer 2012 book: when non-assholes start giving up in despair at calling out asshole behavior, the assholes win.

James, in both books, first defines an asshole as “the guy (they are mainly men) who systematically allows himself advantages in social relationships out of an entrenched (and mistaken) sense of entitlement that immunizes him against the complaints of other people. (p. 4)”

Let’s break that down further:

We all know assholes in our daily lives, and, yes, some of them are probably women, but, statistically speaking, most of them are men. Why? Most likely because we still live in a predominantly patriarchal society. Men still hold most of the positions of authority. Men are also raised from a young age, for the most part, to believe that it’s okay for them to be assholes. That’s what makes them men. “Boys will be boys”. That’s the kind of thinking that creates assholes like Harvey Weinstein, Roy Moore, Louis C. K., Bill Cosby, Woody Allen, and Trump.

These are the “advantages in social relationships” that James is referring to: the so-called “white” privilege and “male” privilege that are awarded men from birth. Most men don’t even have to work at being assholes. They just are.

Like Trump. He was born to it naturally. In a sense, one can’t blame him for that. That’s just genetics, or nature, or sheer luck of being born with that silver spoon. What we can blame him for is taking that privilege to the extreme and saying, “I deserve everything.” It’s the same “entrenched (and mistaken) sense of entitlement” that led Charles Koch to once say, “I just want my fair share---which is all of it.”

Assholes like Trump truly believe that they deserve everything because they've been given everything, and they honestly don't care if they hurt people in the process. Trump is that asshole in the slow lane that cuts you off in the fast lane, almost resulting in an accident. No matter how hard you curse him out, he can't hear you, and he wouldn't care if he did. In fact, he'd probably just give you the finger.

Trump is giving everyone in this country the finger every day that he is president.

James could not have foreseen the nationalistic, white-supremacist, Nazi-sympathizing racist douchebaggery of Trump, but he nearly predicts the authoritarian attempts by Trump to promote violence, silence the media, and play the victim. His book prophesizes (not that it was too hard) the ridiculous, unrealistic, and cruel attempts to implement his own policies, whether it's resurrecting the coal industry, building a wall on the Mexican border, or initiating a travel ban on Muslims.

James couldn't have guessed any of that, but he knew that, with electing an asshole like Trump, most of that was at least a possibility.

Dann says

Assholes: A Theory of Donald Trump poses as lighthearted political satire but ends up turning into shameless liberal propaganda. Author Aaron James borrows from his previous book, *Assholes: A Theory*, and uses Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump as a template to discuss the sociological role and function of the asshole personality type, along with several of its differing variations (with particular emphasis on the political asshole). It all starts out fairly clever and reasonable, but before long it becomes apparent that James isn't talking about the real Trump, but the caricature that liberals have painted of him (an ignorant, totalitarian, racist hate-monger). One need only to look at the multiple comparisons to Hitler to see that this "theory" is nothing more than facetious tripe. Ridiculous garbage, *Assholes: A Theory of Donald Trump* is the raving of a real asshole.

Claudia Turner says

Accidentally reviewed his other book. No this one felt rushed and was pretty useless but at least we can all agree Trump is an asshole.

Jessica says

The distasteful title of this book should not dissuade you from picking it up. James takes his reader by the hand through a series of political and philosophical discussions that help provide useful context for understanding the rise of Trump within the framework of America's founding political philosophy. I closed this slim volume feeling more settled and even somewhat optimistic about the future. James points out ways in which Trump, although inadvertently, has done good in society - for instance, in his rants against "political correctness," he has finally kicked aside the Nixonian tradition of using racism as an unexamined and unacknowledged foundation of GOP coalition building. Now we can clearly see and acknowledge such behavior.

As the book progresses, James moves nimbly from a discussion of the very well known definition of an

asshole into deeper and more sophisticated waters, reminding us of the philosophers, men and ideas that laid the foundation for the great experiment that is America - Hobbes and Rousseau, Jefferson and Madison, republicanism and democracy - and finally situates the reader in the center of today's political environment, challenging her to take up the mantle of republicanism: to listen with an open mind and argue with measurable reason and restraint; she also is reminded that democracy's success rests on the perspective that disagreements are solved through words, not violence, and that democracy cannot succeed if the public disavows its duty and responsibility to hold elected officials accountable for their actions.

An excellent resource for anyone living in Trump's America, whether you supported his candidacy or not. The election may be over, but our roles as participants in the democratic republic we all love has only just begun.

Mischenko says

Flat out didn't like this book. It's a fast read, but felt repetitive with worthless information...

Doug Wells says

The saving grace, while only slight, for this one is that the author has a compelling protagonist. I did like this line - "I'm suggesting a thin theory of the man: he's a showman, a cut-down master, an ass-clown, civically oblivious, a sexist, a racist, a xenophobe, a partial ignoramus, an authoritarian, a demagogue, a threat to the Republic, and an asshole all at once." Always have liked the term ass-hat, and what better place to use it?

emere says

Así que la conclusión es sencilla: no puedes formar parte de un estado republicano si vas a romper todas las leyes o reglas que conforman el estado republicano: Trump no es un imbécil sólo por el hecho de no saber lo que hace, creyendo que sí. Sino también porque lo ignora voluntariamente: No quiere un mejor país o un estado prolífico, únicamente está sediento de poder.

Me encantaría poder decir mucho más, pero veo mucha de la situación respecto a Trump reflejada en nuestro país que es tan maravilloso y está tan mal gastado.

Considero, además, que el populismo mediático que se está haciendo en cada país está llevándonos a tomar malas decisiones conjuntas. Me encanta sobre todo el ejercicio que hace respecto al concepto de gobierno, poder y república, donde no "necesitamos" un gobierno, siempre y cuando el ciudadano sea apto y esté al nivel de la misma institución, donde se pueda manejar conjuntamente al estado, simultáneamente, los individuos deberán aprender a cumplir con todas las responsabilidades políticas y sociales para poder mantener el orden, o de lo contrario las entidades gubernamentales comienzan a ganar peso y poder, centralizando y con eso provocando el posible (casi seguro) mal manejo de recursos y toma de decisiones.

Creo que aprendí más de política general aquí que en cualquier diplomado.

Mientras Leo says

Me pasa por leer sobre este tema

Rachel Blakeman says

For what looks like kind of a novelty title this is pretty earnest philosophical look at Trump and his potential effect on our country and democracy. If you like serious philosophy you may like this. It was a little too earnest for my tastes.
