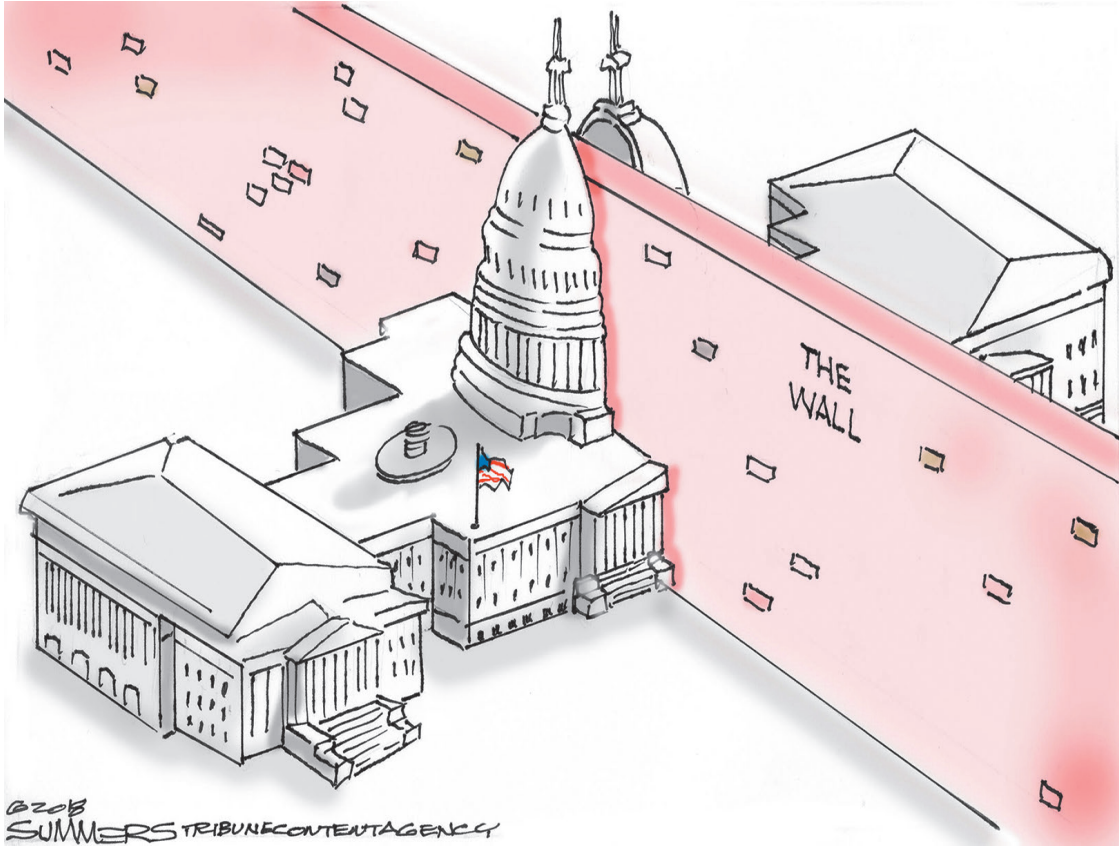


O P I N I O N



Jonah Goldberg

For a very long time now, I have been predicting that the Trump presidency will end poorly because character is destiny. I've said it so often, I occasionally need to be reminded that I didn't coin the phrase. The Greek philosopher Heraclitus did when he observed "ethos anthropoi daimon," most often translated as "man's character is his fate."

Character is one of those topics, like culture or morality, that everyone strongly supports yet also argues about. When James Q. Wilson, one of the greatest social scientists of the last half-century, turned his scholarly attention to character, many of his colleagues in academia were repulsed. Even though every one of them surely believed in some notion of good character, it was assumed that to talk of it, let alone seek a definition of it or a plan for how to cultivate it, would be an exercise in lending aid and comfort to the moralizers of the right.

But Wilson, a man of both good and conservative character, had a more humble and universal definition than his colleagues might have expected: decency, politeness, self-restraint, commitment, honesty, cooperativeness and the ability to think of others' well-being.

Weirdly, it's gotten to the point that when I say President Trump is not a man of good character, I feel like I should preface it with a trigger warning for many of my fellow conservatives.

Most of the angry responses are clearly rooted in the fact that they do not wish to be reminded of this obvious truth. But others seem to have convinced themselves that Trump is a man of good character, and they take personal offense at the insult. They rush to rebut the claim, citing banal or debatable propositions: He loves his children! He's loyal to a fault! He's authentic! Never mind that many bad men love their children, that loyalty to people or causes unworthy of loyalty

is not admirable, and that authentic caddishness is not admirable. Moreover, he is not remotely loyal to his wives or the people who work for him.

What's most worrisome is that these defenders are redefining good character in Trump's image, and they end up modeling it.

Others assume that I am referencing the president's style, specifically his insults and Twitter addiction. What his defenders overlook is that his insults are not simply an act; they are the product of astonishing levels of narcissism, insecurity and intellectual incuriosity.

The president who became a celebrity by telling reality-show contestants "you're fired" has not fired any of his Cabinet officials face to face or even on the phone. He relies on others, or on Twitter, to deliver the news. He loves controversy because it keeps him in the center ring, but he hates confrontation.

Nearly all of the controversies that have bedeviled Trump's administration are the direct result of his character, not his ideology. To be sure, ideology plays a role, amplifying both the intensity of anger from his left-wing critics and the intensity of his transactional defenders. Many of the liberal critics shrieking about the betrayal of the Kurds implicit in Trump's decision to withdraw from Syria would be applauding if a President Clinton had made the same decision. And many of the conservatives celebrating the move would be condemning it.

But Trump's refusal to listen to advisers; his inability to bite his tongue; his demonization and belittling of senators who vote for his agenda but refuse to keep quiet when he does or says things they disagree with; his rants against the First Amendment; his praise for dictators and insults for allies; his need to create new controversies to eclipse old ones; and his inexhaustible capacity to lie and fabricate history: All of this springs from his character.

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Letters to the Editor...

The Nugget welcomes contributions from its readers, which must include the writer's name, address and phone number. Letters to the Editor is an open forum for the community and contains unsolicited opinions not necessarily shared by the Editor. The Nugget reserves the right to edit, omit, respond or ask for a response to letters submitted to the Editor. Letters should be no longer than 300 words. Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned. The deadline for all letters is noon Monday.

To the Editor:

It is not the role or responsibility of the public school system to teach our children gender politics, as per the book titled "George" by Alex Gino, being considered by the middle school.

I believe this is still a free country where values are taught at home.

Also, regarding Laird's expansion to 500+ families — my question is when is enough, enough?

Jeanne Brooks

incapable of pumping their own gas? This is a non-partisan issue. Salem, let's take action now.

Ed Derksen
Black Butte Ranch

♦ ♦ ♦

To the Editor:

I wish to thank the Sisters-Camp Sherman Fire Dept. for once again providing Christmas dinner for a lot of folks who otherwise would not be with other people and enjoy a good meal on this day.

It's amazing, though, to notice when signing in, how many people DO NOT donate. I think everyone could afford a few dollars to help keep this dinner going. We have no family here or anywhere that would come here so

See LETTERS on page 9

To the Editor:

Gasoline is an important item in most family's budgets. The current national average for regular gas according to CNBC is \$2.28 per gallon.

Why are Oregonians the only U.S. residents

Sisters Weather Forecast

Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
Partly Cloudy 47/33	Cloudy 49/33	Cloudy 43/26	Cloudy 39/26	PM Rain/Snow 39/27	Rain/Snow Showers 42/35

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Website: www.nuggetnews.com

442 E. Main Ave., P.O. Box 698, Sisters, Oregon 97759

Tel: 541-549-9941 | Fax: 541-549-9940 | editor@nuggetnews.com

Editor in Chief: Jim Cornelius

Production Manager: Leith Easterling

Graphic Design: Jess Draper

Community Marketing Partners:

Vicki Curlett & Patti Jo Beal

Classifieds & Circulation: Lisa May

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