

Good Riddance To The Narcissist Elon Musk And His Asshole Peers

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Their presence permeated our society like secondhand smoke last year. But building a society with more equality is the best 2023 New Year's resolution of all.

[The Year Big Tech Stocks Fell From Glory...](#)

By Lynn Stuart Parramore, cultural historian

The presence of narcissists permeates our society like secondhand smoke, poisoning public discourse. Wherever you turned — newspapers, websites, podcasts, social media or cable TV — their behavior dominated the headlines in 2022, becoming ever more normalized and even celebrated. Though in far different fields, men like [Ye \(formerly known as Kanye West\)](#), [Elon Musk](#), [Donald Trump](#), [Johnny Depp](#) and [Sam Bankman-Fried](#) will forever be linked by this ignominious characteristic.

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True narcissists [self-centeredly disregard the needs of others and care little for pesky matters like consequences](#). They can also tend to be [manipulative, arrogant, grandiose and hungry for admiration](#). Always busy concocting [fantasies of unlimited power or brilliance](#), narcissists delight in reeling others in to play supporting roles in dream worlds, where they are always the stars.

Why have they gained so much power and influence? Why are so many people in thrall every time they open their mouths or fire off tweets? Are they the problem or a symptom of something bigger than their own egos?

The truth is that our society *breeds* narcissists. We put them on pedestals and get a strong hit of vicarious pleasure when they act out.

And they most definitely are acting out. Over the past 12 interminable months, America has witnessed the rantings of [Hitler-loving Ye](#); [Musk's edgelord trolling](#) on his new plaything, Twitter; [Depp and his toxic TikTok fanboys](#); and Trump being Trump on any given day.

[Amber Heard reflects on what went wrong: 'I'm not a likable victim'](#)

Then, just when we thought we had reached Peak Narcissist, along comes crypto bro Bankman-Fried, all of 30 years old, seizing the stage with his [alleged fraud fiesta](#). Feliz Navidad!

Young Bankman-Fried has been [accused of running a con](#) that rerouted billions from his FTX cryptocurrency exchange to his personal piggy bank and sister company, Alameda Research. Many people lost big sums when FTX blew up — and [some did not have that wealth to spare](#). They include FTX employees, who were [encouraged to invest their earnings back into the company](#).

A privileged son of two Stanford law professors, Bankman-Fried disarmed with his unruly mop and ["schlubby" T-shirt-and-shorts uniform](#). While seemingly not vain like Ye or Depp or openly thuggish like Trump and Musk, he nonetheless exhibits traits that point to something sinister behind the "just-a-regular-dude" persona.

Bankman-Fried practices the dark arts of narcissistic manipulation, styling himself as a guy who [shuns material things](#). Yet his most recent home address (before his detention in a Bahamian jail) was a [marble-clad penthouse in one of the world's most exclusive resorts overlooking a marina for mega-yachts](#). Not exactly low-key.

[Brand Up, Brand Down: Crypto tanks, and has big tech's bubble burst?](#)

If what Justice Department prosecutors say is true, this is a guy who runs from accountability like the plague ("[I got bad legal advice](#)") and resorts to minimizing (it was all [just an accounting error](#)), all the while playing people's heartstrings ("[I am, and for most of my adult life have been, sad](#)").

Bankman-Fried epitomizes the narcissistic altruist. He claimed all his actions were designed to help others. That helped divert attention from his antisocial antics. Psychologists label this the ["White Knight narcissist"](#), a person who hides selfish agendas behind florid displays of do-goodery. Here is a man who loses no opportunity to proclaim the philosophy of "effective altruism," which holds that he must earn as much money as possible to save the future of humanity — yet [screwed over the charities he promised money](#).

Effective altruism is what happens when you take utilitarianism — the theory that actions are right if they benefit the majority — and hand it off to pretentious tech bros. ([Musk is also reportedly a fan](#).) Described as an ["ideology of hubris"](#), it's really just a vapid belief that rich guys know best and that money can magically translate into salvation.

Like all his narcissistic brethren, Bankman-Fried likes to gulp down his own Kool-Aid, deluding himself that he's one of the goodguys, but forgetting to actually treat people with basic respect. "[The altruistic thing to do is to take chances](#)," Bankman-Fried once said, leaving out the part about taking them with other people's smoney.

Self-serving statements like these will flood our ears as we ring in the new year, along with such gems as "[We got to stop dissing the Nazis all the time](#)" (much obliged, Ye); "[Massive fraud of this type and magnitude allows for the termination of all rules, regulations and articles, even those found in the Constitution](#)" (you don't say, Donald); "[My pronouns are Prosecute/Fauci](#)" (way to go, Elon); and "[I will f--- her burnt corpse](#)" (thanks, Johnny).

This is narcissism at scale. But where do we go from here? To try to transform these vile statements into action — or persuade someone else to.

That's what the House Jan. 6 committee spent 18 months explaining Trump did with the insurrection. Just a few days ago, one man attacked another in New York's Central Park, shouting "Kanye 2024!" Police are investigating it as a potential antisemitic hatecrime. Encouraged by their narcissist-heroes, maybe someone hunts Dr. Anthony Fauci down in real life instead of trolling him. Or kill their partner instead of joking about it with a buddy. ([One out of 3 women in the U.S. experiences violence from a domestic partner](#).)

This is all insanely dangerous — to say the least. But how did we get there?

[How Did EVs Handle America's Arctic Blast?](#)

For one thing, our society teaches boys how to be toxic. From their earliest days in the nursery, day care center or preschool, boys see too [few men in nurturing roles](#). At school, they learn to interact with others through competition and domination. This model breeds "heroic solists," [author Margaret Heffernan warns](#), who suppress instincts for empathy and view [everything through the lens of "what's in it for me?"](#)

Being the winner becomes all-important. In college, young men find fraternities that link manliness to degrading women, out-drinking peers and egging one another on. Social media reinforces the me-me-me instinct: my aspirations, my clothes, my vacation, my life. See me! Emulate Me! The more extreme you are, the more attention you get.

Boys (and girls) grow up idolizing movie stars, rap gods and politicians who gleefully validate their worst instincts. They enter a workforce in which they regularly see the boss putting profits over every human value. All the while, the fear of being losers in a cutthroat capitalist system haunts them. If they manage to attain power, some turn into men who, as [economist Robert Reich describes Trump and Musk](#), "wield sledgehammers to protect their fragile egos" and live to "exercise raw power over people." If not, they may take out their grievances on the women, groups and ethnicities believed to have stolen their power.

[Twitter poll: Elon Musk should step down as CEO](#)

At the very least, they can bully vicariously. One key thing about narcissists — they operate in the fantasy realm. It's all a game to them, and they're eager to take others along for the ride.

But there are a few hopeful signs. When conspiracy enabler Alex Jones [squirms at Ye's antisemitic musings](#) and shock jock Howard Stern calls Depp a ["huge narcissist"](#), you have to wonder whether the narcissists in our midst have finally gone too far, even for America. At this moment, Bankman-Fried is a disgraced man [under house arrest at his parents' place](#). Trump seems to be [losing ground](#), and Republicans on the House Judiciary Committee finally took down their ["Kanye, Elon, Trump"](#) tweet. Musk [asked Twitter users whether he should](#)

[step down](#) as CEO, and they voted "yes."

Unfortunately, until we address roots causes, there will always be another blustering bully, another Trump, another Ye.

2022 ended with this rogues' gallery (dishonorable mention goes to Fox News host [Tucker Carlson](#), Silicon Valley swindler Elizabeth Holmes and, if we're going global, Russian President [Vladimir Putin](#)). But as a new one begins, maybe it's time to consider how to promote pride in characteristics and values that are socially beneficial — like honesty, helping others and strength through self-restraint. We can remind ourselves that democracy depends on the sharing of power and resources, on the sense of a common fate.

Remember, a society with more equality is a society with less narcissism. Perhaps building one of those is the best 2023 New Year's resolution of all.

[**Facebook whistleblower Frances Haugen tells Elon Musk to PUBLISH Twitter's algorithm - and says social media is afraid of government intervention because it would mean 20% drop in profits**](#)



Frances Haugen, who disclosed Facebook malpractice last year, is advising Elon Musk to make Twitter's algorithm public if he truly wants to have an open online public square.

[**Twitter sued after billionaire Elon Musk failed to pay \\$136,250 rent on San Francisco offices - CEO hasn't paid for any of its global offices in WEEKS, as HQ falls into disrepair**](#)



Elon Musk's Twitter is being sued by the tech giant's landlord in San Francisco for non-payment of rent.