

# Sociopaths, Clueless, Losers

I first came across this Hugh MacLeod illustration in a book called, *The Gervais Principle*, by Venkatesh Rao.

Rao's book is one of my all-time favorites and it's packed with cunning. It's a breakdown of workplace and social politics using this pyramid applied to the show *The Office*.

Sociopaths know the game is all made up and rules are for suckers. They also know they must perpetuate the illusion of rules of the game. They need the Clueless to believe fully in the rules and carry them out as they manage the Losers. Losers are cynical and streetwise enough to know the game is bullshit, but lack the motivation (or perhaps have the scruples) to try to change it by becoming Sociopaths.

This pyramid applies to political reality as well as corporate.

The Sociopaths aren't often in the limelight and can be hard to identify. The Clueless encompass nearly every politician, pundit, protester, or activist. They rally and debate endlessly about details of the political and legal process, sincerely believing it's not all just made up. They believe in the *Myth of the Rule of Law*, and treat justificatory pieces of paper as if they are truly binding on anyone. The Losers are the great mass of people who know politics is bullshit, roll their eyes at the Clueless, but lack the ambition (or have the scruples) to try to become a Sociopath.

Losers may be cynical, sometimes nihilistic. But they aren't being played for fools. They have the ability to carve out some scope of a day to day life that puts up with the game, sometimes bending or breaking the rules. Sociopaths may do things that harm or benefit others, but their main drive is winning. Clueless are used and made fools of by both Sociopaths and Losers. Losers put up with them because they would rather not have the terrible jobs that the Clueless take such pride in. HOA board? Township Supervisor? Losers laugh. Clueless treat them as solemn duties and take pride in acting out what they fail to see as a farce.

I can't tell you what it's best to be. None of these options sound very appealing to me, so I try to imagine somehow being outside the game entirely, whether or not it's possible. But the framework is useful and entertaining. Once you get it, you can't unsee the world this way.