

PSYCHOPATHY, Part I

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Introduction

The original Greek roots of psychopathy are *psyche* and *pathos*, which mean "suffering of the soul." According to present psychiatric criteria, psychopathy can be diagnosed on the basis of the following five traits:

1. inability to learn from negative experience,
2. impairment of conscience,
3. emotional superficiality,
4. irresponsibility,
5. and impulsiveness.

In my experience, all five traits are present in the more severe, psychotic, or very disturbed cases which I will call sociopath. People having only the first three traits are more specific to the neurotic level and will be called psychopaths.

Freud defined psychopathy as a personality type with a deficient superego, that is, a personality with deficient internalization of laws, mores and authority figures. This is accurate, yet partial and incomplete. It also describes both the psychopath and sociopath without differentiating degree of severity of disturbance. The psychopath is a neurotic personality who is still reachable in spite of an overdeveloped will, which blocks receptivity.¹ The sociopath has exaggerated the will to a pathological level and can no longer be reached directly. He must be inhibited from destructive behavior, which he can indulge in for little – if any – real reward, i.e., repetitive petty theft.

For the purposes of this paper, I would like to propose that the word "psychopathy" be limited to a personality disorder that can be classified among the neuroses. The word "sociopath" would then refer to similar but grossly escalated behavior that may become antisocial. Using this terminology, the sociopath would carry the psychopathic attitude to a point that society could no longer tolerate and would then incarcerate, institutionalize or in

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some other way control this rampant personality. This paper will discuss psychopathy only, for my observations are derived from my private practice with middle-class New Yorkers from 1976 through 1978. Throughout this paper I will use the male gender for convenience. All observations described for males apply to females as well, unless a specific distinction is made.

For the purpose of developing a working hypothesis from which to elaborate a complete definition, I will postulate that the psychopath is a personality essentially dominated by the will. In a healthy personality reason and emotion are integrated with the will to form a harmonious whole. However, the psychopath uses reason and emotions as tools primarily to fuel and support his desires. The objective of this kind of personality is neither happiness nor reasonableness but willful control of his environment and other people as much as possible. "My will be done at all costs" is the frequently conscious, but sometimes unconscious, statement that epitomizes, in a nutshell, the fundamental attitude and values of the psychopathic character.

Underlying all of the above are the following basic attitudes:

- arrogance: "I am better than you and therefore justified in my action."
- willfulness: "What I want is right; you are wrong if you oppose me." (As we shall see, this attitude is central to psychopathy.)
- self-centeredness: "I am most important. No one except me will take care of me – therefore, I must do it alone."

The psychopathic personality has been the subject of many previous papers that seemingly have not been able to find a solid, clear, specific definition of this character type.² I believe this is curiously syntonic with the psychopathic personality itself, whose etiology is rooted in confusion and whose controlling and manipulating defenses often create confusion. Also, since psychopaths, with their extreme sensitivity and awareness, are able to project many different images of themselves while retaining the basic defense system, it is indeed difficult to reach a sufficiently broad, yet precise, definition.

I do not mean that the same individual can mold himself to each specific circumstance. Quite the contrary: psychopaths are frequently very inflexible. Rather, different psychopathic individuals,

while retaining the basic traits and defenses of this character structure, may seem superficially quite diverse. Their body-types differ widely; they range across the entire spectrum of success/failure; they go from a severely repressed sexuality to promiscuity. Sometimes one individual can completely reverse his sexual modality several times in his life, or even during a year. He will oscillate between repression and promiscuity and/or homosexuality and heterosexuality. Changes in sexual preferences should not be interpreted as major, final, or even decisive during therapy.

Inability to Learn from Negative Experiences

Many authors have noted the inability of the psychopath to learn from experience. This seems to be most commonly observed among criminals and socially maladapted people who are hospitalized or otherwise institutionalized. However, in the neurotics who form part of the general population and who can come under the heading of psychopath as the term is used in this paper, the same phenomenon applies. Indeed, the neurotic cannot learn from either the positive or negative experiences of life. This seems to be caused by a deep impairment of the personality.

Of note is the research done by Karl Syndulko of the University of California (1982) using neurometries and, specifically, Evoked Response Techniques. Syndulko reports that, especially in older psychopaths, there is an inadequate response to harsh or irritating stimuli, which he relates to the apparent inability of psychopaths to learn from negative experience. But then, assuming our hypothesis is correct, is it not logical that such a response would become habitual – even fully automatic – after a lifetime of using the will to block out negative stimuli? As my tentative definition indicates, the will has perhaps been over trained to repress any information labeled "painful" or unpleasant or simply opposing what is labeled pleasurable and desirable. Thus, perhaps Syndulko's clinical observations are simply the physiological correlate of a lifelong attitude so strong it has become automatic.

This further supports the hypothesis that psychopathy is an extreme distortion of the will function. This extremely powerful will function can even be used to induce slight morphological

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change, enabling the physical body to resemble an idealized figure and/or role model. For example, during a prolonged therapy a client in heavy transference on the therapist began to copy the therapist's stance, gait, and mannerisms. Although aware of this, he was unable to find his own natural gait until the transference began to dissolve. Another client's signature was so like his father's that by changing only the middle initial banks paid checks he forged using his father's checkbook. He also signed like his father involuntarily on his own checks. When he was able to correct this through a concentrated effort of will, his handwriting also changed and in a short time his manner of dress, choice of sports, and sexual preference also changed. Some months later his flat feet began to be corrected as his arches raised slightly.

Sometimes the psychopath can simply want to change his body and, within limits of course, may achieve some degree of change. Mimicry of role models is especially seen in childhood and, to some extent, adolescence. Frequently, such mimicry can be quite striking, and when a psychopath describes his childhood hero it is possible to see a physical similarity between the child's idealized image and the physical reality of the adult. This image may or may not be a parenting figure. It can be an heroic fictional character or simply represent the dominant parent's more obvious strengths or weaknesses (in a compensatory reaction). The child may also shape himself into what the parent *wants* him (consciously or unconsciously) to become as an adult.

The psychopath's basic statement in life is: "What I want I get," or "My will be done" instead of "Thy will be done"—the humble statement of acceptance of the unpredictable true or Divine justice as conveyed in the Lord's Prayer. Reason is bent to the will and used to justify and rationalize obviously hostile and antisocial behavior. Feelings and emotions are similarly distorted, sometimes via repression and sublimation and at other times in an openly manipulative manner, which may or may not be conscious. The degree to which the will dominates the personality and remains unchecked either by reality or by appropriately exercised superego functions defines the degree of psychopathy in the total personality makeup. Therefore, we can safely say that all humans have some degree of psychopathy and, when the threat to the basic system is too great, psychopathy will be reverted to as an

extreme defense. In other words, the will is used as a protective barrier that blocks further challenging of the precarious balance established by the ego and defenses. This becomes especially true when the characterological defenses are challenged. Indeed, patients frequently react willfully against confrontations that involve their characterological attitudes and defenses. In such instances, the psychopath defends the blocking by refuting, denying, displacing, and projecting, and, in a word, becoming unreachable. This is one reason why, in the late 1920s, Wilhelm Reich's "Character Analysis" methods worked so well. It led the therapist to selectively confront the character defenses, thereby bypassing the willful blocking that results when a patient is excessively confronted, becomes "saturated" and is no longer receptive. When the will is used in this exaggerated form, it is really protecting another defense system that the psyche perceives as indispensable. Thus, psychopathy can be considered as a defense of the defense itself. This is most easily observable in group therapy where the patient is sometimes overconfronted and becomes unreceptive to the point of denying the obvious.

Impairment of Conscience

Psychopathy can be considered from two distinct but complementary angles, both characterized by an overdevelopment of the will function that (1) is used intrapsychically as a basic character defense and/or (2) is used interpersonally as a defense of the defensive system itself. In one case, the will blocks unacceptable material arising from the unconscious; in the other, it blocks unacceptable material in external sources. In both cases, however, the stratagem remains the same: "I (conscious ego) *must* be right. You (unconscious other) *must* be wrong." *I* is the ego, *you* are an internal or external challenge to the ego's absolute supremacy.

This indicates an exaggerated commitment to the ego at the expense of the unconscious, intuitive, involuntary aspects of the being. When this lopsided commitment exceeds certain limits, psychosis ensues, with a strong paranoid component. As the estrangement from the rest of the personality progresses, the ego finds itself more and more isolated, which makes it increasingly afraid of invasion. It tries to protect itself from this invasion by

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using the will further to (1) consolidate the fragile barrier to the unconscious, which further alienates the ego from the whole person, and (2) control the environment in an attempt to control the hostile internal forces being projected outward defensively by the unconscious. This is a classic clinical description of a paranoid threat from the outside. In reality, the threat comes from internal, unconscious sources.

This results in a lack of genuine concern for others and an inability to love. Some believe it is a primary source of narcissism. In any case, it leads to antisocial behavior, whether expressed in the intimacy of a couple's mutuality (a neurotic manifestation) or in outright hostile behavior toward society at large (the psychotic phase).

Many authors have described psychopathy as a central derangement that, while externally invisible and frequently highly adaptive, involves a deeper derangement similar to the schizophrenic state. In his classic book *The Mask of Sanity* Harvey Cleckley describes the phenomenon abundantly, reaching the conclusion that psychopathy is a mask of sanity that covers up a serious derangement of the personality at its deepest level. Using many examples, Cleckley describes well-functioning, adapted businessmen, scientists, physicians, people from all walks of life and backgrounds who are seemingly well-balanced, productive, and integrated. The example of a psychotic psychiatrist is most revealing. This person functioned "perfectly" five days a week, and was respected by his colleagues and the community. Frequently, however, on weekends he would go to a distant village where he was unknown, get drunk and act out his sexual and increasingly violent fantasies. Only when he was caught by the police and could not extricate himself (which he was able to do many times using his credentials and respectability) did this poor man's real pathology finally surface. Only then, with great relief, did he allow the "mask of sanity" that he wore during his work week to drop; only then could treatment begin.

This is an excellent example of an individual whose personality integration permits him to function well in his chosen environment, while at the same time the moment that this external environment, which requires integration and efficiency, is suspended the person reverts to bizarre behavior and openly

antisocial acting out. This split in the personality, according to Cleckley, corresponds to a disturbance no less serious than schizophrenia, the difference being that schizophrenia is overtly manifested while psychopathy is not. In fact, the central disturbance is protected or covered up by a mask of sanity. While I have some reservations about Cleckley's observations, I do agree that the disturbance in the psychopath is deeply rooted and is covered by an external, highly capable and efficient personality that is nevertheless, and in a partial and difficult way to describe, disconnected from the central functions of human affects. If this is the case, the objectives generally postulated by mankind (i.e., love, compassion, acceptance) as desirable and positive, are not consistent with the objective of the psychopath who, being disconnected from some essentially human characteristics, must search for other objectives and values.

Emotional Superficiality

Thus, we see the psychopath searching for power, thrills, and excitement. We see the personality consistently dissatisfied, rarely in harmony with his environment, always looking for something new, something challenging, something exciting. If the premise that basic human pleasures such as love, giving, and creativity are not fulfilling, this behavior is consistent. Such a premise dehumanizes to the very same degree that it is believed on an unconscious level. One possible explanation can be that there is a disconnection between what is called "ego" and what is called "heart," a hypothesis that would be supported by the existence of at least three of the five traits that characterize a psychopath. If true, then real fulfillment on the simple, daily level that loving and being creative give are devalued by an ego that does not appreciate, indeed has contempt for, these two highest human expressions. Real self-esteem that develops as a result of being creative and loving is truly unreachable. This is not to say that the psychopath cannot care for and even love other people. Psychopaths can seem very loving and supportive (if not threatened), but they do not deeply feel nor truly accept the love of others. Their difficulty is receiving rather than giving, for to truly receive they need to reconnect inside, which is very threaten

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ing. Thus, the psychopath has great difficulty receiving love and even caring for himself. A deeply rooted feeling of worthlessness ensues which is both sustained and continually recreated by ongoing violations of conscience and ethical behavior as defined by the society in which he exists, which is not necessarily the same as the one to which he has primary allegiance. For example, gang members usually remain loyal to their gang "code" which may flagrantly violate society's laws.

On another and possibly more significant level, there are some "laws" that spring innately from the deepest layers of consciousness; these are "Universal Principles" that have been voiced by all major prophets throughout history. One that concerns us here is, as Jesus put it, "Love thy neighbor as thyself, that is the essence of the Law." We all know that were these moral principles observed they would lead mankind into the unfoldment of life and the steadily increasing capacity to love. It seems that the psychopath draws a clear line between himself (often taken to include select others, such as family) and mankind, which he not only does not love but sees as valid prey for his own unrestricted ambitions or desires.

Excellent examples of psychopathy can be found abundantly in today's movies. In one, the younger brother of a deceased President of the United States (assassinated 19 years before) searched for the assassin. The trail led to his own father as the ruthless, conscious murderer of his son, the President. The motive given by the movie is that the father used his wealth and power to pave the way to the presidency for his older son, the father expected the son to return the favor by furthering the father's inordinately ambitious and totally insane plans for increasing his already vast empire. However, when the son reached the presidency, he opposed his father's empire-building megalomania and used his power to enforce human values. When the father is confronted by his younger son 19 years later, he accepts without emotion, regret or the slightest hint of pain his responsibility in the assassination and commits suicide in the same cold and unemotional way that he described the murder of his eldest son. What is important here is the hidden psychopathy of the father who does not hesitate to consciously murder his own son when his ambitions and plans are thwarted; equally significant is his ruthless treatment of himself

when finally discovered. This is full-blown psychopathy and describes very clearly the split in the personality that will destroy itself when it sees that it can no longer avoid the consequences of its acts – but does so without emotion, fear, or anxiety, having previously coolly calculated what the probabilities of escape are. When the evaluation is negative, rather than incur the pain necessary for change, the person opts for total annihilation and takes the final way out, suicide.

As a psychotherapist, I can only observe and describe what I believe may be the psychodynamic and emotional origins and manifestations of psychopathy. However, there might also exist physiological, genetic and/or chemical causal agents.

Origins and Psychodynamics

Confusion/Double Messages The source of psychopathy is primarily betrayal and confusion in early childhood which leads to self-doubt internally and mistrust externally. A typical double bind involves seduction (sexual or otherwise), denial of this act by the parent and repression by the child of the normal expectation derived from the seduction. Seduction is to be understood here in the broadest sense; that is, the promise to give something *in exchange* for something, i.e., candy for compliance.

Etiology of Ego Dominance N. Cameron cites the striking example of a seven-year-old boy who repeatedly engaged his female peers in games with excessive sexual content. This ultimately led to a confrontation with the school counselor and his parents. When asked to describe his actions, the boy first looked cautiously at his mother, who seemed to support him. She smiled, her eyes shone, and she clearly became excited at her child's exploits. Seeing his mother's pleasure and probably mistaking her vicarious sexual excitement for approval, he escalated the specifics of his sexual games. In turn, the mother's excitement grew until she was literally waiting for each new tidbit. When the boy finished, she was glowing. But suddenly, and without warning, the mother became moralistic, excessively puritanical and very hard. The boy was crushed.

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Such confusion between the verbal (in this case repression of sexuality) and the non-verbal messages (the mother's obvious excitement) are the root of psychopathy. Out of the enormous pain inflicted, self-doubt is created. In the above case, for example, the boy is forced to doubt one of his two perceptions. Since the parent can do no wrong—at least until the defense sets in—the child is confronted with the possibility that at least one of his perceptions is completely erroneous. Doubting one's perception of reality is extremely threatening, even for adults. It leads to self-doubt at the deepest levels which, sufficiently sustained, can lead to insanity.

Emergence of the Dominant Ego

For the child, the constant conflict between the spoken and unspoken word, the overt and covert behavior, or even frankly opposing behavior between the parents, leads to such excessive pain and confusion that eventually the solution becomes to withdraw all authority from the parent(s) who inflict the pain. Simultaneously, the pain itself is denied. In denying parental authority and power, while also denying his own feelings through repression of pain, the child has to fall back on his own ego as the only valid discriminating agent. He must deny, eventually, any feedback which opposes this ego, for what would be left? Eventually, this makes it impossible to accept challenges to this ego because it would leave the child without any reliable, trustworthy, external or internal discriminating agent.

Etiology of Mistrust

An equally important consequence of this same parental dynamic is loss of basic trust, or development of mistrust. In this case the intent of the parent is perceived as not truly what is best for the child, but is focused on what the adult wants for him or herself. The adult's manipulations are clearly perceived; the child knows the real intent, and when there is a discrepancy with what the adult does, the child at first is puzzled, but soon learns to mimic the "tricks" of the adult. Thus, the child learns to mistrust the underlying intent of the parent; he also learns that, like the parent, he can use any means to achieve his ends (seduction, threat, manipulation, sheer power, etc.), and that this (to achieve what he wants) is what counts. The means, however despicable or painful,

are never challenged as such, only results count. This becomes the "credo" by which the child and later the adult he becomes lives.

Frequently the child's real needs/wants are not heard or satisfied. I have seen children make a perfectly reasonable request in a calm, undemanding manner and be rejected without reason. Perhaps the cause is simply that the parent is tired, bored, or has had too much of his child that day, or any other "reasonable excuse" *from the adult's point of view* (the reality of which I am not denying). Nevertheless, from the child's point of view the request, being reasonable, is irrationally refused. Worse, instead of refusing, the adult may simply ignore the child. This is the worst kind of hurt, and possibly the most psychopathogenic of them all, for eventually, being persistently ignored, the child *must* be heard/seen/understood. He must be acknowledged as a living being; otherwise, how can he be assured of the adult's love, which ultimately is his link to life itself? Later, this dynamic can help explain the psychopath's desperate need to affect society. It also explains his grandiosity and his omnipotence, characteristics that are frequently found among psychopaths.

Irrational rejection and disregard for reasonably-voiced requests are both seen (from the child's perspective) as willful, unjustified aggression. Since this aggression must be okay (for is not the adult/God doing it?), the child legitimately mimics it. And so, by screaming, being willful, and seemingly very demanding (from the adult's point of view) the child gets results which placate him temporarily but also teach him that this is the way to obtain those basic *satisfactors* to which he was entitled from the beginning.³

There is an old proverb: "Sow winds, reap hurricanes." Sow willfulness by example, cultivate it by ignoring repeated requests, and you shall reap the same request, transformed into demand, and backed by however much energy and persistence is required to have it met. Again, the "real need" here must be taken in a balanced perspective; no extremes are advocated, a spectrum is being described. But if willfulness becomes the main vehicle for satisfying needs that, at first, were quite reasonable, an exaggerated will function must be developed. The logical next step is a commitment to power and a disregard for the conscience whose

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voice (at first very strong, but gradually becoming weaker) must be ignored until it is repressed.

Inevitably, when this dynamic is taken into adult life, it leads to a great loss of self-respect and self-esteem, a most important aspects of the psychopathic personality. But centrally it leads to mistrust of the intent behind each and every act of the world, people, friends, lovers, and even therapists. Always, a selfish motive is searched for (the original parental dynamic) and, if not found, assumed to be there anyway. All else is interpreted in the light of this selfish motive. Thus, the image of distrust is confirmed, and the personality lives in a vicious circle: mistrust is assumed to be valid and the assumption is proven by interpreting words and actions in the light of the selfish intent underlying all events, whether or not this intent is real and/or verified. Since mistrust originated with the parent(s), it is extended to all society. When external mistrust is coupled with internal self-doubt and conscience is repressed, denied, manipulated or simply ignored, the ego bolstered by the will remains the only trustworthy agent. Mistrust (of the world) and doubt (of self) constitute the paranoid component so frequently found among psychopaths.

From these origins, the defensive position epitomized in the statement "I am right, you are wrong" or "My wishes/desires/impulses/needs count, not yours," emerges as the dominant life motive of the psychopath. To put this into practice, the will must be developed as much as possible. Ultimately, there is a real severance of the parent-child bond of love and trust, possibly the most important bond of our lives.

The reader may wonder why I have included both parents in the development of psychopathy. Generally, it is assumed that the mother is the dominating influence on the child's development. However, my observations tend to indicate that the trauma, which originated in betrayal and confusion and led into self-doubt and loss of basic trust, can be inflicted by either parent or, more intensely, by both parents and/or the interaction between them and/or the child. Frequently, the seductive behavior comes from one, while the other ignores (denies) what is happening or actively represses the logical consequences of the behavior. For example, a boy may perceive that his father wants him to be "the man" with the mother/wife the father cannot handle. The father may see his

wife as demanding, threatening or sexually aggressive. And the boy may be right in his perception of the unconscious dynamic of the family. The boy is then expected by all, including himself (superego function), to replace the father, and attempts (and fails, of course) to fulfill the role. However, when he wants the privileges of the adult – authority over others and himself, and perhaps intimacy (if not actual sex) – he is perceived as wanting more than either parent wants to give and is strongly reprimanded or controlled. Later, the boy will believe that since he assumed the role of the adult he should have the privileges of the adult and that there should be no limits on his rights. He feels betrayed. These are the seeds of psychopathy.

This defense system can evolve over a protracted period – from the oral stage up to and beyond the genital stage into prepubescence, for psychopathy seems to be learned behavior until it becomes an automatic character trait. Indeed, the specific manipulation suffered by the child is later used by him, first against the manipulating parent, and later as a basic behavior pattern. The basic ingredient is will, which gradually the voice of conscience diminishes until it becomes barely audible. Instead, power reigns as the supreme value; power to survive, sometimes to win.

Perhaps this serves also to explain why overt antisocial/psychopathic behavior emerges during pre-adolescence. It is a question of raw power. Before then, even if the characteristic defense is fully developed, the child cannot mobilize enough real power and does not have the independence to challenge the adult world and act out. Being sensitive, intelligent and very externally oriented, the child coolly evaluates the situation and acts accordingly until he either has enough power or is cornered, his survival at stake.

Etiology of Emotional Superficiality

The cool evaluation previously described requires a highly developed but distorted ego. However, the child must also develop an uncanny ability to understand and "figure out" others. He learns this from his parents, for if he is to survive, he must be able to anticipate and outmaneuver them or be taken over.

A successful psychopath is simply one who exercises sufficient control over his environment. The psychopath defines failure as

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the inability to do this: his will was *not* done. Since this character structure is defined by its commitment to outer will, or willfulness, when his will is not done the personality is very threatened and experiences a failure of its defense system. The degree of threat is correlate with the importance ascribed to the "failure." Such a personality is very vulnerable to its external environment, having little to fall back on when control is lost.

Therefore, controlling the external environment is of utmost importance to a psychopath. For example, the psychopath can either sublimate (repress) his sexuality (and use the energy thus created to control his environment)—a preferred procedure—or he can use his sexuality promiscuously, with apparent abandon, and appear as a highly sexual being. On closer examination, however, one can see sexuality being used for control of others rather than for pleasure, even in the second instance. In denying parental authority the child also denied a primary source of sexual identification. Indeed, one frequently finds in psychopaths a great deal of confusion about sexual identity and/or sexual roles. Homosexuality seems much more frequent among psychopaths than among other character structures, and there appears to be relatively little shame about revealing it even though some shame or defiance commonly surrounds the revelation of homosexual behavior in this culture. This reflects the firm conviction that "what I want I get," and/or that "my will be done" is the correct position. Normal censoring mechanisms are simply not operant. Indeed, one gets the strong feeling from psychopaths that sexuality is just one more tool or weapon in the arsenal used to fight, overcome, and control others and the environment.

One of the fundamental defenses of the psychopath is the misuse of truth, by which I mean changing ever so slightly the rationalization or justification of a basically truthful, realistic concept or situation, and ending up with an apparently reasonable explanation to back up what he wanted. In logic this is called sophism, after the Sophists of ancient Greece, who excelled in proving obviously absurd points for the simple pleasure of exercising their minds. Such playing around with half-truths may seem entertaining and harmless (as long as it is kept in perspective), but it is pernicious and truly destructive the moment perspective is lost. And, of course, it quickly becomes impossible to maintain any

perspective if the person has a stake in the issue itself. Thus, psychopathy employs sophistry to rationalize its willfulness. Therein lies the danger both to society and to the individual, who soon gets lost in a rational maze of his own making and, without the compass of conscience, loses himself.

The most brilliant examples I have read of this very dangerous manipulation is C.S. Lewis' novel, *Perelandra*. On Venus (the Garden of Eden) consciousness of self is emerging, setting the stage for the eternal battle between good and evil. The novel describes, in exquisite detail, how the Evil One begins the process of tempting the Queen (Eve). His tactic is to sow doubt in her mind, which he nurtures carefully. Doubt of the smallest, apparently insignificant issues lead to doubt of Self and eventually to doubt of the King (Adam) and of God; this is the Fall or Original Sin. The protagonist (a messenger from God) seems powerless; every statement he makes to the Queen is changed ever so slightly and used to prove the Evil One's point. Relentlessly the Evil One progresses. If any one of the questions he asks or issues he raises is considered singularly, they seem almost (but never quite completely) reasonable and rational. The tricks and roundabout ways in which doubt is instilled are so subtle that they can only be seen if one clearly sees the whole thrust and momentum of the Evil One's extremely long-range plan, an impossible task for the Queen, whose temptation goes on over a long period of time.

To me, this is the essence of the psychopathic process – for I believe that, at least in early childhood, we aU do have both voices speaking. Good and evil eternally re-enact the drama in every child, and choices are made. In the adult this great dialogue is never so obvious or easily perceived, yet it still remains, latent, waiting to be found in its now mature expressions. This great re-discovery is, of course, what emotional growth (or at least one of its major phases) is all about.

Etiology of Secrets and Lies

If sexual identification was deficient and primary identification with a parent was at least partially denied and consciously repressed, what constituted the nuclear points around which the evolving personality coalesced? In addition to Piaget's three well-known organizers of the ego, many writers have contributed to

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the concept of character structure originally developed by Wilhelm Reich. These writers have observed that a complex defense system, both conscious and unconscious, becomes so deeply rooted that it becomes formative, a true creator of the person's reality. People who truly believe "the world is dark" (what I call an "image") see the world in shades of gray and, curiously, their reality becomes exactly what they assumed it would be. Thus, willfulness begets willfulness, anger generates angry responses, fear frightens people. In this context, the intent behind parental manipulations, coupled with the manipulations themselves, become a central mechanism around which the character structure organizes.

In the case of psychopathy, there are at least two basic parental manipulations:

1. Before the child starts emulating parental behavior and before the defense systems are organized, the parent(s) probe deeply into the child's personality, assuming control. In the process, the child's budding defenses are violated, leaving him vulnerable and easily manipulated. The child learns to defend against this invasion by emulating the parents, figuring them out, and furnishing the behavior patterns he thinks they desire. An exquisite example of this is the tiny chapter called "Curtain Raiser" by C. Rogers and B. Stevens in their book *Person to Person*. If nothing else, this vignette should be read for the pleasure it gives.

2. In addition, double binds are created by the parent(s), each containing very real feelings or even real acts that are denied. More often, the behavioral or non-verbal message is the real feeling of the parent, while the verbal expression is different, sometimes dramatically so. The child emulates the parent by learning to create contradictions of his own: saying one thing and doing another; feeling differently than he is speaking or acting. He learns to create lies and secrets, to cover up, believing the lie to be the solution.

Lies imply secrets; I believe these secrets become powerful nuclei around which the personality develops neurotically. By having secrets, the child develops a feeling of "safe self" where he has no doubts and his reality is unchallenged. Unfortunately, the price for these secrets comes high. For each secret requires a lie to cover it up, and each lie in turn becomes another secret. The whole structure develops around lies. An example might be to pretend to be self-assured, confident, successful, while in reality remaining

fearful, feeling unsuccessful and filled with doubt. It is hard to keep track of the many successive lies required to maintain such a situation, and easy to slip and get caught in contradiction. Nevertheless, in therapy one sees adults struggling with top-heavy structures of lie upon lie, all designed to protect a secret the adult believes, erroneously, is vital to his existence and socially unacceptable. For example, this seems the case with some people in the upper echelons of society. Many seem to have strong psychopathic traits, combining power and ruthlessness with an extraordinary ability to juggle large quantities of secrets with the attendant lies. All of these traits are frequently seen in people with a prominent position, especially the "ruthless" ones.

A psychopath's sense of success or failure is based almost entirely on success or failure in his external life. Rarely does one see a "successful" psychopath in therapy. It takes an important life crisis to bring them to the realization that something is fundamentally wrong. The crisis usually occurs when one or more of the basic "images" or secrets which the psychopath considers vital are about to be exposed, have already been exposed to the world, or are about to become conscious, exposed to the Self. These secrets or images are frequently unconscious or preconscious. In this state they remain unchallenged by reality, accepted *de facto*.

Guilt and Self-Doubt

An extremely important part of a psychopath's psychodynamic is the guilt that necessarily derives from his acting out, from his violations of others, and even from his outright antisocial behavior, both past and present. Although the psychopath has learned to dissociate and bury the guilt in his unconscious, it nevertheless remains there. This guilt, itself one of the secrets, may be completely repressed or barely preconscious. When I have confronted such issues in therapy, without blame or punishment implied, my patients invariably have felt relieved that their secret is finally exposed. However, it is not enough when confronting a present-day issue to merely expose the secret. *Restitution must be made* if true change is to be achieved. Ideally such restitution should be on the same level as the damage, using the same vehicle through which the antisocial, negative, or "bad" act was done. For example, if the act involved money as a vehicle, the psychopath must return

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the money, preferably to the victim, and if that is impossible to society through donating to a benevolent cause. If the abuse was emotional, true regret must be felt and expressed to the one hurt. Of course, this concept of restitution is limited, as it often cannot realistically be put into practice. How does a murderer or rapist enact restitution? This is a difficult question, yet I believe restitution is probably an absolute requirement in the healing of psychopathy, unless the psychopath can truly experience what happens to others when he acts out, which is very difficult for this type of personality. He may have difficulty reconnecting to that part of himself which is separate, split-off and terrified.

The confusion, guilt and self-doubt are, of course, never openly revealed. Instead, the psychopath presents himself as a very self-assured, self-confident, possibly blustering individual, such as the ominous subtype. These facades or masks can be bolstered by outright lies if necessary. This is a reactive mechanism needed to support his image and protect him from the underlying guilt, self-doubt, confusion, and fear. The need to support this image is so great and the internalized authority so weak that the psychopath, if pressed, will escalate the lies, tricks, and manipulations until frankly bizarre behavior and obvious inconsistencies and contradictions begin to appear. Most of these will be denied on the conscious level. Confrontation will be strongly resisted and behavior patterns denied as long as possible. Attempts to rationalize and justify will become intense and crass. All of these dynamics, with which the psychopath continually lives, alienate the ego more and more from the deeper, genuine feelings and higher functions where reality and truth are known. This split between the ego, the defenses, and the negative aspects on the one hand, and the feelings, conscience, and higher intuitive functions on the other, increase within a vicious circle that must eventually collapse.

Real and False Needs

The best way to control others is to know their needs and, in what amounts to a seduction (for the intent is never to really deliver), to offer to fulfill them. The psychopathic personality is a master at this. Usually, he learned it from another master, a psychopathic parent. However, to be constantly involved with other people's needs implies abandoning the perception of one's

own. This is the price the psychopath pays for his control – denial of his own real needs, which are replaced by false needs. Some real needs include loving and being loved; having sufficient food, warmth, security and support; experiencing sexuality, pleasure and joy as well as constructive creativity and freedom. Some false needs are power, gratification of greed, selfishness and promiscuity, control, and general narcissistic ego gratification.

Development of the Will

The psychopath's dynamics lead him further and further from real into false needs. When the resulting anxiety and emptiness ensue, he tends to further escalate his demands for false need gratification at the expense of his real needs. He wants these real needs fulfilled, but represses them until he is no longer aware of them. Thus the hunger for more and more power, money, and control keeps increasing to the point where the psychopath becomes dictatorial but still remains unsatisfied. Underneath all of this the immature, childish aspects of the psychopath's personality are searching for the healthy limits which healthy parents normally impose. When these limits cannot be found, the psychopath continuously escalates the provocation until a limit is imposed and his sense of boundary, which is deficient, is re-established. By denying authority and accepting only his own reality as valid, he probably made it extremely difficult for the parent to exercise any real authority over him during his formative years. In addition, even if such authority was exercised, he never accepted it and either rebelled openly or sullenly submitted, only to wait for a later opportunity to rebel and impose his will. Rarely is the parental authority accepted as realistic and necessary. Later, authority will always be a major problem for the psychopath. He will always maintain the master/slave dynamic – master to those who are weaker, slave to those stronger, but never his own man. In this sense, his basic integrity has been undermined by the sacrifice of the real needs to the false ones and by the commitment to achieving his ends at whatever cost.

Thus the psychopath lives in a world of his own making where objective reality is denied whenever it counters his will. Put another way, the psychopath's fantasy is to be king, unquestioned, unchallenged, absolute. The tragedy is that to some extent he is

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and was in childhood able to alter reality sufficiently to partially obtain his desired results. He therefore concluded that by further escalation of his will function he could eventually obtain what he secretly needs, his *real needs*. This gross misconception is frequently very illusive and is based on a grandiosity that lies somewhere within all psychopaths, even the ones I describe as submissive.

The exaggerated self-confidence which developed as a reaction to the intense self-doubt requires constant external validation since it is not based on a solid foundation or true sense of self. This means that great dependency lies under the appearance of self-assurance. Insecurity leads to constant manipulation of authority figures to obtain their validation. This occurs even though the parents have been discredited, withdrawn from, or rebelled against to the degree that they no longer represented the main links to life, the main authorities, the main socializing forces.

The manipulation may take the form of seduction (sexual or otherwise), aggression, more or less overt hostility, and attempts to impress or control. All of this, but especially the self-doubt, leads to self-hate, self-contempt and self-debasement at unconscious levels. Somewhere, the person is aware of what the ego is doing, of how destructive it is. This must result in low self-esteem and worthlessness.

Alienation from the Higher Self

We must understand that when we ask psychopaths in therapy to turn inward and examine themselves they believe we are asking them to look at the worst in themselves. They do not know that they *are* capable of loving and giving and that they *do* possess the higher faculties upon which true self-esteem lies. Under these conditions, unless the patient knows and experiences that the therapist *does* see his core or heart, we ask the impossible of him, for without a secure knowledge that at least part of him is good, lovable, respectable, and kind, and that this part is seen by the therapist, he is not going to reveal his most undesirable aspects. Only to the degree that one is anchored in the true security of the potential to love and be honestly and genuinely creative, and only to the extent that true self-respect exists, can a human confront and transform his negative aspects. Only with the knowledge of forgiveness will the thief reveal his theft, the killer his crime, or the

liar his lie. Without forgiveness, it would be foolish and even suicidal to reveal these negative aspects. This is true for all humans. But the psychopath's alienation from the deeper, intuitive parts of the psyche where this knowledge exists makes it particularly difficult for him to reveal himself. For true self-respect, self-love and genuine self-assurance are divorced (hidden) from the ego. Therefore, therapy for the psychopath consists of reconnecting with these long lost aspects of his own psyche. For these reasons, it is fundamental that the therapist see these qualities, trust them, and convey this knowledge to the patient. The therapist must strongly support the higher, nobler aspects, while simultaneously confronting the unreality, the willfulness, and the arrogance.

Since the nuclei around which the personality developed were not positive but were dark secrets jealously guarded in the deepest parts of the child's psyche, the primary identification (or sense of self) is also based on these secrets. Given the family dynamics, these secrets must have been primarily negative impulses of rage, rebellion, and hatred toward the seductive, betraying, lying adult. Thus, when the adult psychopath identifies with these feelings, which are deeply repressed and at the same time judged as bad and unacceptable, the split between the higher functions and the negative aspects becomes so great that the "higher functions" of compassion and identification with the other are momentarily lost and the personality is left with its early, undeveloped primary identification based on negative impulses. This furthers self-doubt and reinforces the premise that the only valid, reliable part of the personality is the willful ego.

Reality and life itself constantly prove that the ego alone cannot provide true security, or even solve many of the problems we constantly face and often successfully resolve. Our ego is puny indeed compared to the forces of nature; it is often not even possible truly to control our most immediate environment and events in any secure, predictable way. For this, our higher functions (the intuitive "knowing" upon which we rely so much) are much better equipped. The psychopath does not consciously accept this aspect of his personality, although he uses it when convenient. These higher functions are seen as an outside authority that opposes the psychopath's will and leads to frustration. For all intents and purposes, the intuitive faculties are seen as dangerous

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as were his parents. All authority, even his own conscience, is doubted, manipulated, and mistrusted. The psychopath never completely trusts and accepts anything—not man-made law, inexorable Life itself, nature or God. All is used when it is consistent with the ego's wishes and denied, suppressed, manipulated, or overwhelmed when it opposes the ego. External authority is only tolerated at best. It may be deferred to when unavoidable but it is seen as the enemy. Resentment is constantly accumulated, stored, held in reserve for the proper time when the slightest provocation will justify its sudden, irrational release, usually against a weaker person or an abstract, impersonal entity such as "society in general."

Psychopathic Subtypes

Every therapist has seen widely different kinds of psychopaths in his office. While they possess common traits, such as willfulness, manipulation, and control, the extreme differences observed postulate the need for subtypes.

1. The *ominous* psychopath has a masochistic component. The personality presents itself with a strong ominous overtone. The normal seductive behavior is backed up by an unspoken threat that can overwhelm and, by its unspoken existence, enforce the psychopath's will.

This subtype has an imposing physical appearance. The head and eyes are especially charged, bright and powerful. The eyes may have a hypnotic quality that can truly "pin down." This psychopath believes that the entire world is hostile and aggressive, and thus sees hostility as the only means of getting his needs and pseudo-needs gratified. Therefore, he uses all of his power and selfish, ruthless drives to defeat the phantom enemy who stands in his way. This is an essentially paranoid position which leads to a provocation that becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. When the world responds to him on that level, his assumption is verified. The ominous psychopath does not see the connection between cause and effect that would necessitate accepting responsibility and lead to change. Rather, he truly believes the world is hostile and that his response is appropriate.

It is very difficult for a person with this structure to reverse this position and see that his own ominousness is really the cause of the hostility he receives. Since the ominous psychopath's main commitment is to power, he usually presents an extremely powerful personage. However, this is frequently a mask covering unfulfilled needs and cannot be backed up if challenged.

2. The *submissive* psychopath has an oral component. The energy and power drive are much less obvious. The personality appears soft-spoken, placating, and submissive, which represents an attempt to have his will fulfilled. This subtype is self-effacing and may have difficulty with assertive or aggressive action. There may be considerable castration anxiety and/or sexual suppression. Need is denied even more than in the other subtypes. There is a continuous attempt to maneuver, manipulate, and control indirectly, as opposed to the overt threat of the ominous psychopath.

The oral component is fairly obvious and defended actively against. The placating, submissive attitude is experienced as "nice and sweet," or sometimes as "sickly sweet." The submissive psychopath essentially wants something from others, such as love and approval, often from a person of the same sex. This is due to the lack of basic support the infant experienced and now continuously hopes to find in adult life. However, in becoming submissive, the personality forsakes its real self, its principles, intuitive feelings, and honesty. Unable to stand up for himself, the person undermines his own integrity and augments the deeply embedded sense of worthlessness and self-contempt. This vicious circle debases the personality, diminishes the remaining self-respect, and increases the need for love, validation, and support from the outside.

As this vicious circle progresses, the personality becomes more and more dependent and demanding in a covert way, wanting to force others to give what he is unwilling to ask for. Thus, the person becomes extremely self-centered and blind to reality and the needs of others around him. People withdraw reactively, giving less and less love, support and verification, which increases the circle and keeps it going. The submissive psychopath will often clothe his dependent neediness under the label of love. He cannot understand why this apparent love is not returned by others. Because there is a constant attempt to get something without

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expressing it, the other frequently senses the deception and feels invaded and abused. This perception is correct since the psychopath is suppressing his real feelings of hostility and aggression.

3. The *withdrawn* psychopath has a schizoid component. Although he appears ominous and threatening, like the submissive subtype, the withdrawn psychopath is not openly aggressive but rather very fragile and will collapse into schizoid states under stress. He lives in isolation and loneliness, claiming not to need or want anything from the world, life, or others. Needs of all kinds are strongly suppressed. This is due to the person's unconscious knowledge that he has difficulty coping with life because of the underlying constantly threatening fragmentation. Thus, this psychopath attempts to cover the inner explosive drives and keep the outer world from confronting him.

The withdrawn psychopath is really terrified of facing the fragmentation he instinctively feels beneath the surface, which would lead to what he experiences as defeat. The suppression of needs is a matter of pride: the less he needs the better. His arrogant fantasy says: "I withdraw from you because you do not comply with my expectations." As this statement indicates, psychopaths constantly justify (internally to themselves) all their actions. This person desperately wants to remake the world according to his unvoiced fantasies. Since he realizes the irresponsibility of this, his defense is to withdraw, although the longing and real need remain.

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Glossary

Ego: A part of the psyche that becomes the interactive element between the deeper levels of the psyche and the social world, and the observer of the self as a whole on all its levels. It includes volition which in its positive manifestation orients the person toward life, joy, pleasure and fulfillment, and in its negative aspect seeks power and control.

Character Defenses: The defensive systems contained in the character structures and used in this paper specifically in the bioenergetic sense.

Character Structure: A system or pattern that is described in generalized terms, for the purpose of systemization and comprehension, which does not necessarily typify or even resemble a specific person but may describe – more or less accurately – layer or facet of the total personality significant enough to allow the therapist to understand and confront it in a therapeutic modality. Knowledge and comprehension of it as a model helps. The system used throughout this paper was devised by John Pierrakos and Alexanderer Lowen.

Real Needs: Needs based in reality and common to all humans as a species. However, the real needs of each individual vary according to culture, age, socio-economic levels, etc., so that the real need of any individual must be examined in the context of that person's reality and temporal position in life. For example, the real needs of a divorced adult will differ substantially from the real needs of the same person when married or as a youth initiating life.

False Needs: Superimposed needs whose fulfillment is not really necessary or even desirable for the person's full maturation as a complete, balanced individual. Among these one can frequently find a real need exaggerated to the point of becoming unnecessary and destructive. An example might be money: it is necessary and thus there is a real need to have an adequate standard of living (which needs to be defined for each individual). It is unnecessary and a false need to accumulate an enormous fortune beyond the point where its creation is a source of joy and pleasure and results in fear, tension and anxiety instead.

Grounded: Literally means contact with the ground, the physical earth. It is broadly used to describe contact (or lack thereof) with reality, sexuality, or the "other" in Freudian terms (a partial description), the degree to which an external object can be cathexed. Groundedness contrasts and is in opposition to narcissism. It is also used to express the degree of acceptance of life's inexorable laws. To the degree a person is grounded he will accept life's unpredictability, fluctuations and pains in a flexible manner that will tend to maximize the pleasure principle.

Higher Self: That aspect, common to all, which is able to love, create, give and receive. However, the Higher Self is also taken to mean that spark of the Divine that wisely leads us through life and continues after death. It is also called the Soul. It is undefinable and only real when personally experienced.

Reason, Will and Emotion. Three basic functions of the ego. When in balance, they act harmoniously and appropriately, loving and caring reactions ensue. In reality, most people have two out of the three reasonably developed, and the life-task is then to develop the third undeveloped one. However, to the extent that only one of the three dominates, an imbalance occurs to the point of serious disturbance (see my article "The Modifiers").

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Notes

1. Will" here is meant as in "willpower" or "willfulness."
2. See Cameron, *Personality Development and Psychopathology*; Cleckley, *The Mask of Sanity*; Diamant, *Case Studies in Psychopathology*-
3. By *satisfactor* I mean a reasonable (even minimal) quantity of love, attention, care, and compassion for his shortfalls, in addition to his basic physical needs. I am fully aware that children can be very willful and demanding. I am also aware that even trying to satisfy all the child's "reasonable requests" is not only impossible, but leads to ever increasing demands as the most important need for firm boundaries gets vaguer and vaguer. I am not advocating a "satisfy all the child's desires" policy; there are many times when a parent must firmly enforce a boundary and place limits on his child, even though these limits may seem harsh. And, obviously, the child is not an innocent party in all these interactions. But when the child's demands are impossible, the parent should try to remember that the child can be talked *with* (not at), that he can understand a great deal, and that if the parent wants fewer difficulties later, present real needs must be met rationally whenever possible.

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