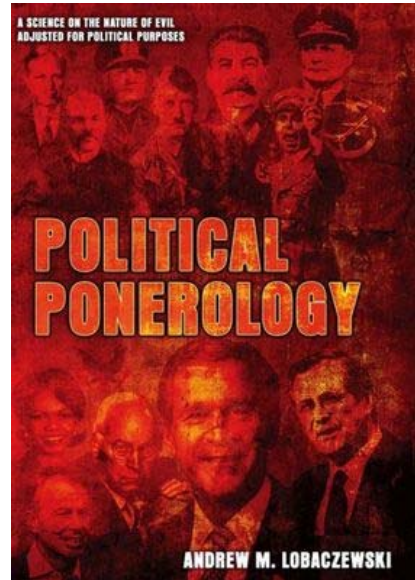


Ponerology 101: Lobaczewski and the origins of Political Ponerology

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Beginning immediately after World War II and continuing in the decades after the imposition of Soviet dictatorship on the countries of Eastern Europe, a group of scientists - primarily Polish, Czech, and Hungarian - secretly collaborated on a scientific study of the nature of totalitarianism. Blocked by the State Security Services from contact with the West, their work remained secret, even while American researchers like Hervey Cleckley and Gustave Gilbert were struggling with the same questions.¹ The last known living member of this group, a Polish psychologist and expert on psychopathy named Andrzej Łobaczewski (1921-2007), would eventually name their new science - a synthesis of psychological, psychiatric, sociological, and historical studies - "ponerology", a term he borrowed from the priests of the Benedictine Abbey in the historic Polish village of Tyniec. Derived from *poneros* in New Testament Greek, the word suggests an inborn evil with a corrupting influence, a fitting description of psychopathy and its social effects.



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Most of what we know about this research comes from precious few sources. Łobaczewski's sole contact with the researchers was through Stefan Szuman (1889 - 1972), a retired professor who passed along anonymous summaries of research between members of the group. The consequences for being discovered doing this type of forbidden research were severe; scientists faced arrest, torture, and even death, so strict conspiracy amongst their little group was essential. They safeguarded themselves and their work by sharing their work anonymously. This way, if any were arrested and tortured, they could not reveal names and locations of others, a very real threat to their personal safety and the completion of the work. Łobaczewski only shared the names of two Polish professors of the previous generation who were involved in the early stages of the work - Stefan Błachowski (1889 - 1962) and Kazimierz Dąbrowski (1902 - 1980).² Błachowski died under suspicious circumstances and Łobaczewski speculates that he was murdered by the State police for his part in the research. Dąbrowski emigrated and, unwilling to renounce his Polish citizenship in order to work in the United States, took a position at the University of Alberta in Canada, where he was able to have dual citizenship. A close reading of Dąbrowski's published works in English shows the theoretical roots of what would become ponerology.³

Like Lobaczewski, Dąbrowski considered psychopathy to be "the greatest obstacle in development of personality and social groups".⁴ He warned, "The general inability to recognize the psychological type of such individuals [i.e. psychopaths] causes immense suffering, mass terror, violent oppression, genocide and the decay of civilization. ... As long as the suggestive [i.e. hypnotic, charming, "spellbinding"] power of the psychopaths is not confronted with facts and with moral and practical consequences of his doctrine, entire social groups may succumb to his demagogic

appeal".⁵ In perhaps the first explicit mention of "political psychopathy", he remarked that the extreme of ambition and lust for power and financial gain "is particularly evident in criminal or political psychopathy".⁶

Methods are developed for spreading dissension between groups (as in the maxim "divide et impera" [divide and rule]). Treason and deceit in politics are given justification and are presented as positive values. Principles of taking advantage of concrete situations are also developed. Political murder, execution of opponents, concentration camps and genocide are the product of political systems at the level of primary integration [i.e. psychopathy].⁷

In a passage decades before its time, he observed that less "successful" psychopaths are to be found in prisons, while successful ones are to be found in positions of power (i.e., "among political and military national leaders, labor union bosses, etc."). He cited two examples of leaders characterized by this "affective retardation", Hitler and Stalin, to whom he referred repeatedly in his books⁸ and who both showed a "lack of empathy, emotional coldness, unlimited ruthlessness and craving for power".⁹

Dąbrowski and Łobaczewski experienced this horror firsthand. In September 1939, the Nazis invaded Poland using a false-flag operation that has come to be known as the Gleiwitz Incident. This was part of the larger SS project Operation Himmler, the purpose of which was to create the illusion of Polish aggression as the pretext for "retaliation". In other words, the Germans needed a plausible excuse or cover story to invade the country. Germans dressed as Poles attacked a radio station and broadcast anti-German propaganda in addition to murdering a German-Silesian sympathizer of the Poles, Franciszek Honiok, and placing his body at the scene.¹⁰ The Nazis used these operations to justify the invasion, after which they instituted a regime of terror that resulted in the deaths of an estimated six million Poles. As part of a larger goal of destroying all Polish cultural life, schools were closed and professors were arrested, sent to concentration camps, and some murdered. Psychiatry was outlawed. According to Jason Aronson of Harvard Medical School, the Nazis murdered the majority of practicing psychiatrists. Only 38 survived out of approximately 400 alive before the invasion.¹¹ During this tumultuous time Łobaczewski worked as a soldier for the Home Army, an underground Polish resistance organization, and his desire to study psychology grew.

The gothic style school that he would later attend, Jagiellonian University, suffered greatly during the war years as part of a general program to exterminate the intellectual elite of the city of Krakow. On November 6, 1939, 144 professors and staff were arrested and sent to concentration camps. They had been told that they were to attend a mandatory lecture on German plans for Polish education. Upon arrival, they were arrested in the lecture hall, along with everyone else present in the building. Thankfully, due to public protest, the majority was released a few months later and despite the University having been looted and vandalized by the Nazis, survivors of the operation managed to form an underground university in 1942.¹² Regular lectures began again in 1945 and it was probably then that Łobaczewski began his studies under professor of psychiatry Edward Brzezicki^{13, 14} Łobaczewski probably also met Stefan Szuman, a renowned psychologist who taught at Jagiellonian, at this time. Szuman later acted as Łobaczewski's clearinghouse for secret data and research.

While Jagiellonian and the other Polish universities enjoyed three years of freedom, this quickly ended in 1948 when Poland became a satellite state of the Soviet Union and the Polish United Workers' Party took full control of University life. With the establishment of the Polish Democratic Republic, Poland was placed under the Soviet sphere of influence; medical and psychiatric

services were socialized, and clinical psychiatry reduced to strictly Pavlovian concepts. Thus the "Stalinization" of Polish education and research picked up where Hitler left off. Łobaczewski's class was the last to be taught by the pre-Communism professors, who were considered "ideologically incorrect" by the powers that be. It was only in their last year of schooling that they fully experienced the inhuman "new reality" which was to inspire the course of Łobaczewski's research for the rest of his life.

During the three decades he spent living under the Communist dictatorship, Łobaczewski worked in general and mental hospitals. The dictatorship provided intensified conditions and opportunities to improve his skills in clinical diagnosis - essential skills for coming to terms with this new social reality. He was also able to give psychotherapy to those who suffered the most under such harsh rule. Early on, as others involved in the secret research observed Łobaczewski's interest in psychopathology and the social psychology of totalitarianism, he became aware that he was not the first to pursue such research and was asked to join their group. Originally, he only contributed a small part of the research, focusing mostly on psychopathy. The name of the person responsible for completing the final synthesis was kept secret, but the work never saw the light of day. All of Łobaczewski's contacts became inoperative in the post-Stalin wave of repression in the 1960s and he was left only with the data that had already come into his possession. All the rest was lost forever, whether burned or locked in some secret police archive.

Faced with this hopeless situation, he decided to finish the work on his own. But despite his efforts in secrecy, the political authorities came to suspect that he possessed "dangerous" knowledge that threatened their power. One Austrian scientist with whom Łobaczewski had corresponded turned out to be an agent of the secret police, and Łobaczewski was arrested and tortured three times during this period. While working on the first draft in 1968, the locals of the village in which he was working warned him of an imminent secret police raid. Łobaczewski had just enough time to burn the work in his central heating furnace before their arrival.¹⁵ Years later, in 1977, the Roman correspondent to Radio Free Europe, to whom Łobaczewski had spoken about his work, denounced him to the Polish authorities.¹⁶ Given the option of a fourth arrest or "voluntary" exile to the United States, Łobaczewski chose the latter. All his papers, books, and research materials were confiscated and he left the country with nothing.

Upon arrival in New York City, the Polish security apparatus utilized their contacts to block Łobaczewski's access to jobs in his field. He was terrified to learn that "the overt system of suppression I had so recently escaped was just as prevalent, though more covert, in the United States."¹⁷ In short, the U.S. was infected with the same sickness and the "freedom" they offered was little more than an illusion. In the case of scientists living abroad, the Polish secret police's modus operandi was to suggest certain courses of action to American Party members, who then gullibly carried them out, unaware of the real motivations for their actions. Łobaczewski was thus forced to take a job doing manual labor, writing the final draft of his book in the early hours before work. Having lost most of the statistical data and case studies with his papers, he included only those he could remember and focused primarily on the observations and conclusions based on his and others' decades of study, as well as a study of literature written by sufferers under pathocratic regimes.

Once the book was completed in 1984 and a suitable translation made into English, he was unable to get it published. The psychology editors told him it was "too political", and the political editors told him it was "too psychological". He enlisted the help of his compatriot, Zbigniew Brzezinski, who had just previously served as President Jimmy Carter's National Security Adviser and who initially praised the book and promised to help get the book published. Unfortunately, after some

time spent corresponding Brzezinski became silent, responding only to the effect that it was a pity it hadn't worked out. In Łobaczewski's words, "he strangled the matter, treacherously".¹⁸ In the end, a small printing of copies for academics was the only result, and these failed to have any significant influence on academics and reviewers. Suffering from severely poor health, Łobaczewski returned to Poland in 1990, where he published another book and transcribed the manuscript of *Political Ponerology: A Science on the Nature of Evil Adjusted for Political Purposes* onto his computer. He eventually sent this copy to the editors of sott.net and Red Pill Press, who published the book in 2006. His health once more failing, he died just over a year later, in November of 2007. While other scientists conducted important research into these subjects over the years, Łobaczewski's book remains the most comprehensive and in-depth. It is truly an underground classic.

Notes

1. Cleckley wrote the classic book on psychopathy *The Mask of Sanity* and Gilbert wrote *The Psychology of Dictatorship* based on his analysis of the Nazi Nuremberg war criminals.
2. It's unclear if Łobaczewski was aware of more but refused to share their names for fear of their well-being.
3. Unfortunately, like Gilbert's book, Dąbrowski's books are now out-of-print. A DVD containing scans of his work is available [here](#).
4. Translated by Elizabeth Mika in "Dąbrowski's Views on Authentic Mental Health", in Mendaglio, S. (ed) *Dąbrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration* (Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press, 2008), pp. 139 - 53.
5. Dąbrowski, K. (with Kawczak, A. & Sochanska, J.), *The Dynamics of Concepts* (London: Gryf, 1973), pp. 40, 47.
6. Dąbrowski, K. 1996 [1977]. 'Multilevelness of Emotional and Instinctive Functions' (Lublin, Poland: Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 1996 [1977]), p. 33.
7. Ibid, p. 153.
8. Ibid, p. 21; 'The Dynamics of Concepts', p. 40; Dąbrowski, K. *Personality-shaping Through Positive Disintegration* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967), p. 202; Dąbrowski, K. *Psychoneurosis Is Not An Illness* (London: Gryf, 1972), p. 159.
9. Dąbrowski, K. (with Kawczak, A. & Piechowski, M. M.) *Mental Growth Through Positive Disintegration* (London: Gryf, 1970), pp. 29 - 30.
10. See Wikipedia, "Gleiwitz Incident".
11. Preface to Dąbrowski, K. *Positive Disintegration*. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1964), pp. ix - x.
12. Błachowski taught at one such underground university in Warsaw. See Wikipedia, "Stefan Błachowski".
13. On the arrest of Jagiellonian staff, see [here](#).
14. See Jagiellonian University [website](#).
15. Later, in Bulgaria, he attempted to send a second draft to a contact in the Vatican via a Polish-American tourist, but to his knowledge it was never delivered.
16. Łobaczewski only learned the identity of his denouncer from the Polish Institute of National Remembrance in 2005. See interview conducted [November 19, 2005](#).
17. Łobaczewski, A. *Political Ponerology: A Science on the Nature of Evil Adjusted for Political Purposes* (Grande Prairie, AB: Red Pill Press, 2006), p. 23.
18. [In Memoriam: Andrzej M Łobaczewski](#)

Ponerology 101: Psychopathy at Nuremburg

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**View of the defendants in the dock
at the International Military Tribunal
trial of war criminals at Nuremburg.**

If, as many people are saying nowadays, psychopaths are the ones running our governments, how come we don't know about it? Why isn't it common knowledge, discussed in households and classrooms across the land? Why isn't academia devoting courses to it? In short, why is such a simple, yet revolutionary idea so seemingly secret? The answer may actually be in the question: it *is* revolutionary, but not in the sense you're thinking! You see, most revolutions are either caused, influenced, or hijacked by psychopaths and quite often this is done by what is called "abuse of psychiatry."

A normal person's actions and reactions, his ideas and moral criteria, all strike the abnormal individual as abnormal. If a person with a personality disorder such as psychopathy considers himself and others like him normal - which is of course significantly easier if he and his friends are in power - then he would consider a normal person different and therefore abnormal.

That explains why, when psychopaths rise to power, as they naturally tend to do, their social systems - including education and medicine/psychiatry - always have the tendency to treat any dissidents - or potential dissidents - as "mentally abnormal". As Lobaczewski wrote, "A normal person strikes a psychopath as a naive, smart-alecky believer in barely comprehensible theories; calling him "crazy" is not all that far away."

Thus, such governments generally control psychology and psychiatry via control of funding and ideationally alert "thought police" in academia, and the myriad ways in which normal people unconsciously respond to a pathological environment begin to be defined as illnesses and "psychiatric solutions", including drugs, are promoted to force normal people to live in a pathological world and think it is normal.

The truth about psychopathy must be degraded and marginalized to prevent it from jeopardizing the system itself, and this very practice is then used as an expedient tool in the hands of the pathological authorities. Anyone who is too knowledgeable about psychopathy will be accused of anything that can be trumped up, including psychological abnormality. They're "crazy", "paranoid", "mentally unstable", and "dangerous".

This, then, is at the root of the differences between those in power and the masses of people who are oppressed by them and who, ultimately and always, rise up against them. The pressures of living in a pathological world can be borne only so long and eventually, drugs, bread and circuses no longer suffice to suppress the masses of normal people. At the same time, still other psychopaths - not yet at the top - rely on the violent emotions of fanatic revolutionaries and oppressed peoples, goading them on and riding the waves of popular discontent into the halls of power, crushing their "enemies" in the process. It's always useful to get rid of a lot of normal

people. traumatize everyone else, and keep people thinking that now they have revolted against the oppressors and all will be well again!

So, you see, the idea is revolutionary because if it's ever widely known that it is really a matter of pathologicals vs normal humans rather than the various ideologies in which pathology hides and takes over, the psychopaths will be powerless. Lacking the ability to corral people into wars against exaggerated (and often illusory) enemies, the psychopaths' network of support would crumble, and the emperors would be left naked in the streets, for all to see.

As I've already discussed in previous articles in this series, psychopaths have a particular way of seeing the world. They know they're different and they easily recognize others like themselves even in a crowd. They're the enlightened, we're the rabble; they're the worthy, we're the useless eaters; they're the wolves, we're the sheep. And they know that, if those contemptible others - that is, all the rest of us - were to see them for what they are, they'd be locked up, or worse. That "injustice" - living in a world that would limit their "freedom" to prey on others - is what goads them on to create a nightmare world for the rest of us, with all the injustice of Orwell's vision and all the dead-end absurdity of Kafka's allegories. And once they have power, they intend to keep it. Objective science is thus a dangerous thing to political psychopaths and must be silenced at all costs.

On the flip side of the coin, political psychopaths benefit from the efforts of well-meaning individuals unaware of the psychological factors at play, who are nevertheless invested in their own theories as to the causes of the problems they see plaguing the world. So, ironically, these are the ideas they promote. "Know your enemy", but also fund him and make him think he's got the whole banana. With a basis of objective ideas about pathology, it's fairly easy to spot these theories. They're the ones that focus exclusively on a particular ideology (i.e. "it's capitalism!", "it's socialism!", "it's fundamentalist Christianity!", "it's Islamo-fascism!"), or are based on assumptions downplaying the role of psychopathology in the very real problems of evil in the world.

I've written about some of the problems in the field of psychology, specifically in the study of psychopathy, [elsewhere](#). Setting aside the problems of diagnosis that the catch-all "antisocial personality disorder" presents, there's the simple issue of specialization. Researchers of psychopathy for the most part deal with issues they can study up close: brains, criminals, simple behaviors. They stay out of politics, because it's both difficult to study, and not favorable to the pocketbook. Politics is for political scientists and historians. As for the political psychologists, most of them are unaware of the problems of psychopathy because of the nature of specialization (and a multitude of bogus theories) within psychology itself. It could be said that specialization itself is one of the greatest gifts to psychopaths the world over. There's little chance of scientists pooling their knowledge and forming a united front posing any danger to the *status quo* when no one knows what the other is saying!

But there was a time when political psychopaths - pathocrats, to be more precise, because in a pathological system more than one type of pathology participates in the network of control - could be studied up close and personal, and they *were*. However, the pathocrats running the prison, who made this opportunity a reality, quickly squashed any future possibility of gaining the much-needed data that could be gleaned from their captives. I am referring to that time right after the Allies won World War II, and a representative selection of Hitler's top officials were held to be tried for war crimes and crimes against humanity at the International Military Tribunal in Nuremburg.

The most wicked of the accused were executed in short order. While many saw this as justice, future generations were robbed of what could have been a treasure trove of knowledge about the

true nature of Nazism and its leading figures. Luckily, while the defendants were still living, a few American psychologists were able to glean what they could, and one of them - Nuremberg prison psychologist Gustav M. Gilbert - even wrote a book, *The Psychology of Dictatorship* which could have been the foundation of a new science.

But that is not what happened. Not only were the most interesting of the criminals summarily executed, the book about them was never reprinted and only the most dubious of its data (the Rorschach protocols Gilbert conducted) has been looked at and talked about since.

It's hardly coincidental that the bulk of his conclusions were ignored and only the weakest parts promoted (in Miale & Selzer's *The Nuremberg Mind*, for example). It's classic perception management. Those reading references to Gilbert's work, which reach valid conclusions though using dubious proofs (the Rorschach test is all but completely discredited in today's fields of experimental psychology and psychiatry, especially when it comes to psychopathy), will unfairly conclude that there is little value in his work. Ironically, Gilbert hardly mentions his Rorschach tests in the book, and yet this is where ALL attention has been focused when anyone talks or writes about the psychology of the Nuremberg war criminals. So, what did Gilbert really say?

His book was published in 1950, nine years after Hervey Cleckley's *The Mask of Sanity* first hit the shelves in 1941. At the time, it was common among historians and other academics to downplay the role of individuals in the shaping of history. As one textbook of the time stated: "With some striking exceptions, the individual counts for little in the social scheme of things... [A leader's] success will depend mainly on his happening to lead them [social circumstances] in the direction in which they happen to be going."¹ As if social circumstances were some nebulous force completely divorced of human motivations! Unfortunately, this is still the prevailing view among historians. Today it's called "structuralism" - Hitler wasn't the problem *per se*, the whole Nazi structure was.

This is certainly partially correct, but thanks to a convenient twist in the theory, it poses no problems to psychopaths (which is probably why it's so popular these days). If the role of the individual is downplayed, it's all in the structural, economic, social forces, you see! (Never mind that psychopaths and other pathologicals have inter-penetrated the social structure with a ramified network of mutual pathological conspiracies and are busily *causing* those very problems!) But with these assumptions guiding the historian's hand, any relevant characteristics of the individuals comprising that structure, and giving it force and meaning, are equally dismissed offhand. Thus, any patterns to be noticed in the nodal points of key positions of power fade into the background. By downplaying the features of the *single* individual (e.g. Hitler), the theory is willfully blind to the results caused by a *network* of similar-minded (but not normal) individuals (i.e. the psychopaths within the whole Nazi network: the SS, lawyers, bankers, businessmen, military men, etc.).

If only there weren't those darned anomalies!

According to the theory, Hitler was an anomaly of the system. A man whose interests just happened to correspond to the nature of the "structural" forces at play. But despite their popularity, these theories cannot account for the strikingly foreign nature of the times they seek to study and explain. In the minds of many, Hitler's Germany was one of those "exceptions". The brutal and anti-human nature of the Nazi regime - the "new reality" to which the Germans and their victims were subjected - became clear to the world over the course of the war, and it horrified humanity. As Field Marshal and Nuremberg defendant Wilhelm Keitel related to Gilbert, "He [Hitler] stood for a complete reversal of [the Wehrmacht's] values: brutality and injustice became virtues of 'hardness';

decency and honor became contemptible weakness."² When Gilbert asked Rudolf Höss, commandant at Auschwitz, if he had ever considered whether his millions of victims deserved their fate, "he tried patiently to explain that there was something unrealistic about such questions, because he had been living in an entirely different world."³ In this world, the leaders possessed the qualities of "uncompromising hardness and brutality, nationalism with a paranoid tinge, in-group loyalty and out-group hostility. Deceit, treachery, persecution, and murder could be condoned in this militant, ethnocentric frame of reference, and the leader was the one who excelled in these virtues."⁴

As Gilbert later wrote, the post-war trials led to "widespread speculation concerning the sanity or lack of it on the part of the whole Nazi leadership".⁵ This speculation on the part of the public was simple common sense, because one can't hope to understand a system like Nazism without a good understanding of individual AND social psychology. The Germans were experiencing the full force and iron grip of a macrosocial psychopathic reality.

Predictably, academic opinions quickly polarized between two, extreme and equally untenable conclusions. Either the Nazis (as a *whole*, mind you) were totally psychotic (think Norman Bates' character in *Psycho*) or normal people "just following orders". This cognitive error (also taken straight out of the psychopath's handbook) is still prevalent today. And as usual, the truth is not quite so simple; the competing options are not mutually exclusive. As historian of ideas José Brunner notes, "one can notice a surprisingly broad area of underlying agreement" between the opposing opinions of Nazi leaders as "sane or psychopaths".⁶ In Gilbert's work (and later, Lobaczewski's), an understanding of psychopathy, psychopathology in general, *and* normal social influences helped place the discussion in a more realistic and empirical middle ground. "Anomalies" like Nazism involve a complex network of psychopathic individuals who inspire the system as a whole, individuals with various other mental pathologies, and normal people who get caught up under their collective spellbinding influence. While leaders *can and do* play a crucial role in history, Gilbert writes:

... that does not imply by any means that leaders create history single-handedly. ... socioeconomic, political, and historical forces ... do not exist as pure abstractions, but become manifest only through the behavior of human beings... [the] interplay of personalities and social processes... cultural mores help to determine the nature of political leadership, and the latter in turn influences the development of the cultural pattern.⁷

As a German-speaking officer and psychologist responsible for interrogating prisoners of war, Gilbert was given unprecedented and unlimited access to the defendants; as he put it, "a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to prove the fascist mind".⁸ Facing trial were top-position Nazis such as Hitler's deputy, Rudolf Hess; Nazi philosopher Alfred Rosenberg; Reichsminister for armaments and munitions, Albert Speer; SS-Colonel and commander of Auschwitz Rudolf Höss; and Reichsfeldmarschall, head of the Luftwaffe, and president of the Reichstag, Hermann Göring. The Nazi war criminals held in Nuremberg provided the first opportunity for psychologists and psychiatrists to study key members of a corrupt and criminal political regime. Unfortunately, as



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The defendants listen as the prosecution begins introducing documents at the International

we've already seen, it was a short-lived opportunity.

Military Tribunal trial of war criminals at Nuremberg.

So what were Gilbert's conclusions, and what was so dangerous about them that they had to be marginalized, destroyed and misrepresented? Before I quote some of the most important ones, it helps to see what others were saying about the Nazis at the time.

Prior to Gilbert's arrival, chief of psychiatry for the European Theatre of Operations Douglas M. Kelley had access to the prisoners for a brief period of five months and wrote of his experiences and conclusions in his book *22 Cells in Nuremberg*, published in 1947. Like Hannah Arendt, who later covered the trial of Adolph Eichmann in Israel and coined the term "the banality of evil" to describe Eichmann's seeming normality, nonchalance and apathy, Kelley saw the Nazis as basically ordinary people caught up in the machinery of military orders and bureaucracy. Unable to find any signs of obvious pathology in the defendants, he labeled them "sane" and deemed Nazism a strictly "socio-cultural disease".⁹ The psychopaths, occupying that nebulous middle ground between sanity and madness, thus flew under the radar of Kelley's inquiring eye. In short, Kelley was duped by a collective mask of sanity, the mendacity of which he could not fathom.

While Kelley missed the diagnosis of psychopathy (in his view, common now, everyone is just a different degree of "normal"), he did make some prescient observations:

Strong, dominant, aggressive, egocentric personalities like Göring, differing from the normal chiefly in their lack of conscience, are not rare. They can be found anywhere in the country [i.e. the United States] - behind big desks deciding big affairs as businessmen, politicians, racketeers.¹⁰

Significantly, he also wrote that such personalities "could be duplicated in any country of the world today" and that "there are undoubtedly certain individuals who would willingly climb over the corpses of one half of the people of the United States, if by so doing, they could thereby be given control over the other half".¹¹ Today, we're seeing just how true this statement is.

Gilbert was more descriptive:

... by inculcating fear and hostility toward enemy groups and by encouraging the persecution of scapegoats it helps to constrict human empathy and ultimately "desensitizes" an increasing number of individuals to extreme aggression. This constriction of affect, combined with the militaristic "categorical imperative" and the ideological restriction of reality-testing, produces organized irrational hostility which is not only unlimited in its destructive potential but precipitates a self-destructive reaction. ... the tendency of such a system is clear: the crippling of human [conscience] and reality-testing, which allow the irrational and psychopathic to become the norm, and the normal individual to become an unthinking member of a society regimented for irrational aggression.¹²

Interestingly, Kelley established a strong rapport with Göring, the creator of the Gestapo and concentration camps, taken by his intelligence, charm, "courage", and image as a family man, in other words, some of the very qualities mistaken by many corporate employers as good "leadership qualities". Kelley even committed suicide in 1958 using the same method Göring used the day before his scheduled execution - by swallowing a cyanide capsule.¹³ Cleckley once remarked that his secretaries could always tell which of his patients were psychopaths - they were the only ones who could convince him to lend them money - and it seems that Kelley, too, fell under the sway of a

smooth manipulator. This is not to suggest that either Cleckley or Kelley were not insightful enough, but rather sharply emphasizes the abilities of a "good" psychopath!

Gilbert, on the other hand, called a spade a spade. He diagnosed Göring as an "amiable" and "narcissistic" psychopath.¹⁴ In his many conversations with Göring, Gilbert was able to make several insightful and often entertaining - although equally disturbing - observations about him, which are recounted in his book. Because the book is rare, I have compiled some of the most telling anecdotes and direct quotes illustrating Göring's psychopathy.



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Herman Göring.

Portrait of a Political Psychopath

Göring presented himself as impulsive, egocentric, aggressive, sensation seeking, unable to tolerate frustration, superficially charming, glib, remorseless, and callous - all the hallmarks of psychopathy. He showed insensitivity to danger, admitting "he just never believed that any harm could really befall him"; and sadistic aggression for which "[his] father's punishments proved to be of no avail." His mother allegedly stated, "Hermann will either be a great man or a great criminal!" Göring's first memory, related to Gilbert, was that of "bashing his mother in the face with both fists when she came to embrace him after a prolonged absence, at the age of three." As a child playing soldiers with his peers,

he would similarly bash the heads of anyone questioning his leadership to "let them know damn quick who was boss."¹⁵

As Gilbert described, Göring had "a ruthlessly aggressive personality", "an emotional insensitivity and perverted humor which were at once the seeds of outward physical boldness and of moral depravity".¹⁶ However, he "presented a front of utter amiability and good-humored bravado", i.e. a charming "mask of sanity" which he used whenever it suited his purpose. He received a very high IQ score of 138 and "Being led to believe that he had the highest I.Q. among the Nazi war criminals [at Nuremberg] he praised the excellent discrimination of American psychometric methods. When he [later] heard that Schacht and Seyss-Inquart had outdone him on the I.Q. exam, he scorned the unreliability of the test." However, Gilbert observed that his intelligence was more characterized by "superficial and pedestrian realism, rather than brilliantly creative intelligence."¹⁷

As a young man, he naturally joined the military, as it provided an outlet for his aggression, tendency to domination, and showmanship. Aware of the nature of the military hierarchy, he was rigidly subservient to his superiors, knowing that "he would some day be able to demand the same from his inferiors." Just like a modern corporate psychopath, Göring identified those with whom he needed to ingratiate himself (e.g. officer-instructors at the academy) and those he could get away with treating disdainfully (e.g. civilian teachers). "Göring explained quite simply ... that the officers could punish you, while the civilians could only threaten you or, what was even sillier, appeal to your moral sense." The model of a corrupt politician, Göring took bribes for tax-exemption and successfully managed his "business interests" (e.g. arms dealing). Gilbert observed, "during World War I Göring made the dangerous and fateful discovery that war could bring both glory and profit to one who was sufficiently reckless, unscrupulous and amiable." As Göring himself said to Gilbert, "The idea of democracy was absolutely repulsive to me ... I joined the party precisely because it was revolutionary, not because of the ideological stuff. Other parties had made revolutions, so I figured I could get in on one too!"¹⁸

In short, Göring exploited the ideology and structure of Nazism for his own personal ambition, greed, and sadistic need for power. And yet, he still gave seemingly blind support to Hitler. Why? This is a question that puzzles many psychopathy researchers and even causes them to doubt the possibility that psychopaths could ever maintain a stable position in any political or corporate system. After all, psychopaths are notoriously self-serving and impulsive. They are loyal to no one and quick to turn on their so-called "associates" and "friends". But for intelligent psychopaths like Göring, subservience to superiors is not loyalty *per se*. It is mere lip service that allows them to reap the benefits of their environment. Think of Karl Rove and George Bush - Rove played his part of cunning underling because that's where he gained the most benefits. Just as psychopaths will often abide by prison rules to secure parole or lighter sentences, even feigning religious conversion, they will work within a political structure like Nazism because they have an *interest* in doing so. Whereas in a normal society psychopaths are persecuted by non-psychopaths because of their antisocial attitudes and behaviors, in a system like the Nazi dictatorship, the rules change. In a society with no higher authority than themselves, they have an interest in maintaining it, even if that means sucking up to a delusional fanatic.

However, while alliances are created and maintained in such a system, there is another motivation at work. Self-promotion and the resulting backstabbing is just as much a part of the game. And Göring was an expert. At Nuremburg, he repeatedly showed a typical ease of yarn spinning and shirking of responsibility to others, demonstrating the real nature of his so-called "loyalties". He was caught in several obvious contradictions and lies during his testimony and was quick to denounce his fellow Nazis, shouting frequent outbursts such as the following:

"Roehm! Don't talk to me about that dirty homosexual swine! That was the real clique of perverted bloody revolutionists! *They* are the ones who made the Party look like a pack of hoodlums, with their wild orgies and beating up Jews on the street and smashing windows! ... What a gang of perverted bandits that SA was! It is a damn good thing I wiped them out or they would have wiped us out!"

As Gilbert points out, however, "These were, of course, the very same hoodlums whom Göring had trained in street-fighting".¹⁹ Sounds a bit like the American pundits who lambaste the very "Islamic terrorists" they funded and trained in the '70s and '80s, doesn't it? Alliances are only alliances when they're convenient. As soon as they're not, all bets are off. Gilbert was able to observe Göring's manipulative "divide and conquer" *modus operandi* in operation:

It was interesting to compare notes with some of the other officers who were seeing him at this time, to see how he was maligning the psychologist to the psychiatrist, and vice versa, both chaplains to the psychologist and psychiatrist, and vice versa, while fawning on each in turn. In the prisoners' dock, which was the only place he could meet the others now, he repeated the same process with militarists against civilians, Prussians against Bavarians, Protestants against Catholics, and always vice versa, smiling to each in turn, but soliciting sympathy by scorning him behind his back to members of opposed groups. ... Finally, when Speer made his spectacular denunciation of Hitler and Göring, Göring reacted in typical gangster fashion, threatening to have Speer murdered if he ever got out of the jail alive.²⁰

After seeing film evidence of the atrocities of the regime, many of the defendants broke down crying in shame, but Göring had a different reaction.

"It was such a good afternoon too, until they showed that film. They were reading my telephone conversations on the Austrian affair, and everybody was laughing with me. And

then they showed that awful film, and it just spoiled everything."²¹

On April 18, 1946, Göring offered his infamous glimpse behind the psychopathic mask of fascism to Gilbert, quoted in the last installment of this series. ("*All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger.* It works the same in any country.") And on another occasion, he said:

"What do you mean, morality... word-of-honor?" Göring snorted. "Sure, you can talk about word-of-honor when you promise to deliver goods in business. - But when it is the question of the *interests of the nation!*? - Phooey! Then morality stops. That is what England has done for centuries; America has done it; and Russia is still doing it! ... When a state has a chance to improve its position because of the weakness of a neighbor, do you think it will stop at any squeamish consideration of keeping a promise? It is a statesman's *duty* to take advantage of such a situation for the good of his country!"²²

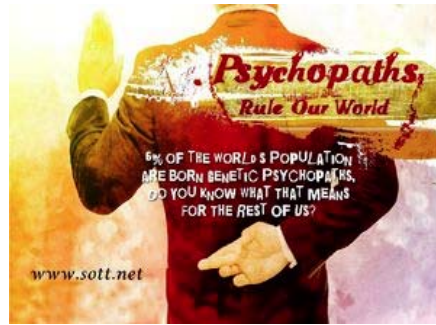
Göring wholly embraced the psychopathic "dog-eat-dog" worldview. For him, as for the psychopaths dictating "war on terror"-inspired foreign policy today, "preventive war, aggressive war, politics, and peace were all just different aspects of the same struggle for supremacy which was in the very nature of things, with the rewards going to the strongest nation and the cleverest leaders."²³ This is the stark reality behind the political propaganda of "national interests" dished out for public consumption in the world. Gilbert's most dangerous conclusion was equally blunt:

"Psychopathic personalities undoubtedly play an important part in major manifestations of social pathology, particularly when they achieve positions of leadership in social groups and movements. It is all too clear that they played a decisive role in the revolutionary nucleus of the Nazi movement, and thus determined the complexion of the government of Nazi Germany."²⁴

That's what he concluded and he wrote it in his book. That is why no one has heard of him, why none of his research or conclusions have been implemented in the practice of politics the world over, and why the Nuremberg defendants had to die. It's why political psychologists are still focused on testing for "political biases among voters" and other interesting tidbits that miss the mark when it comes to the truly important issues. And it's why the only thing anyone remembers about the Nazis at Nuremberg were their Rorschach protocols!

Meet the New Boss, Same as the Old Boss

Pretty much every current pet theory that attempts to explain the source of evil - the "enemy" in our midst - is wrong. There is no singular "Nazi mind", just as there isn't an "Islamic mind" or even a "Western or American mind" that is the source of all evil. Fighting "Islam" or even "American imperialism" will get us nowhere. The fact is, psychopaths exist in all human groups and they play an essential role in the politics of corruption, gaining support from individuals - normal *and* disordered. In short, the very qualities we often identify as those of a typical politician are those of a psychopath. They are present in all governments, and, given the right conditions, they create and maintain systems of oppression that know many labels: fascism, dictatorship, authoritarianism, communism, theocracy, and even democracy. As long as we focus on the name, we ignore the cause, and we play right into their hands.



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Notes

1. Quoted in Gustav Gilbert's *The Psychology of Dictatorship* (New York: Ronald, 1950), 298.
2. Ibid., 220.
3. Ibid., 255.
4. Ibid., 294.
5. Quoted in Miale & Selzer's *The Nuremburg Mind: The Psychology of the Nazi Leaders* (New York: New York Times Book Co., 1975), xi.
6. Jose Brunner, "Oh Those Crazy Cards Again": A History of the Debate on the Nazi Rorschachs, 1946 - 2001," *Political Psychology* 22(2), 2001, 237.
7. Gilbert, op cit., 303, 4, 5, 7.
8. Ibid., xii.
9. D. Kelley, *22 Cells in Nuremberg: A Psychiatrist Examines the Nazi War Criminals* (New York: Greenberg, 1947), 12.
10. Ibid., 171.
11. Quoted in Brunner, op cit., 240.
12. Gilbert, op cit., 309.
13. Brunner, op cit., 242.
14. McCord and McCord, *The Psychopath* (New York: D. Van Nostrand., 1964), 34-35.
15. Gilbert, op cit., 84 - 88.
16. Ibid., 109, 88.
17. Ibid., 107-8.
18. Ibid., 89-93.
19. Ibid., 96.
20. Ibid., 115.
21. Ibid., 110.
22. Ibid., 116.
23. Ibid., 116.
24. Ibid., 286.

Comment: Go to [Part 7](#) in the Ponerology 101 series

Ponerology 101: Rising to the Top

Harrison Koehli
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Wed, 13 Apr 2011 12:51 UTC

Last year, I wrote about [corporate psychopaths](#) and the "five-phase" process they use to maneuver their way into positions of influence and affluence. Heck, I might as well add "effluents" to that list. After all, an interaction with a psychopath will leave the same taste in your mouth and may just end up killing you. Plus, it rhymes. Take the example of Kevin Morrissey, managing editor for the *Virginia Quarterly Review*, who was [driven to suicide](#) after repeated harassment and belittlement by his boss, Ted Genoways.



Kevin Morrissey (right) committed suicide after the workplace bullying of Ted Genoways (left).

Morrissey's plight is a perennial one, and it gets right to the heart of ponerology. Criminal psychopaths get drunk, get in fights, lead lives of serial criminality, and when they kill people, they tend to use weapons, or any convenient object that happens to be laying around. Successful psychopaths, on the other hand, lead relatively "normal" lives. They don't break the law (at least overtly) and can come across as ideal and highly successful citizens. But whether it's after years of pushing boundaries, tearing down a person's will to live with soul-eating mind-torture, or the "collateral damage" caused by the toxic chemicals their corporations release simply because they just don't care and can make a quick buck, successful psychopaths kill too. The main difference is, they kill a lot more, and they get away with it.

But it's not just the corporate bigwigs and [Tucker Max](#)-esque "boyfriends". As we've seen, a look at the machinations of political groups like the Soviets and the Nazis with the same perspective is quite revealing. Psychopaths gaining access and prominence in political groups use the same five-phase process as the those studied by Babiak. And not only does the five-phase process occur within the cutthroat dynamics of "power politics", it also occurs as the group as a whole strives for and achieves political domination. Or, to add a little color to counter that somewhat academic exposition: scum rises to the top. It's how it gets there that is interesting, and those early stages are the most elusive and poorly studied. Until Lobaczewski wrote his book, that is.

As Babiak describes, the first phase of manipulation is gaining *entry* into the group. This is fairly easy for a psychopath in a political environment (e.g., Blagojevich, Cheney, Netanyahu, Mubarak, etc.), and given the motivations and personality types that characterize a revolutionary group such as the fledgling Nazis, even more so. Thuggish gangs need thuggish goons and are happy to sign them up and put a gun, taser, or pen in their hands. Likewise, groups with *political* aspirations value psychopathic traits, and schemers like Stalin's handler, L.P. Beria, for example, are a perfect fit. Politicians must be charming, convincing, facile liars, willing and able to destroy others' characters and lives to support their rise to power. Contrary to the whimsical fancy of hardcore fans of one political team or another, politicians cynically adopt whatever party label suits their purposes, "Left" or "Right". But such labels are merely means to an end, tools to be exploited, as is everything else in the psychopath's environment, leading to the alienation of those who eventually learn that there's a whole lot of "sound and fury, signifying nothing" behind the national games we

term elections.

In the early stages of political movements, as the core group or party attempts to gain power of a country, a convincing mask (often humanitarian in nature) may be required. People like politicians who kiss babies and promise to do "good" things. Imagine an aspiring politico releasing this press bio: "John B. Handsome enjoys watching people suffer, inflicting bodily harm at a distance, and raping young children." Ain't gonna happen, despite the fact that it's probably true (see Dave McGowan's work on [pedophile rings in high places](#), for example). However, once power has been entrenched, other than a thin facade for the sake of the cameras (and the already-mentioned fans) and foreign observers, the political psychopath is relatively free to drop his mask and display his true nature. Beria was a typical example, as was Hermann Göring in the Nazis. Everyone knew they were "monsters" and they made no bones about it. After all, who was going to do anything about it?



Torturer L.P. Beria holding Stalin's daughter, Svetlana, whom he is rumored to have sexually abused.

The second, *assessment* phase of the political psychopath's rise to power is a war on two fronts. He must not only identify possible targets and rivals within the group, but also on the outside. Within, he identifies those most dangerous to his own ambition, those whose support he must cultivate, e.g. influential power brokers, or patrons, and the pawns he will manipulate and use as patsies to guarantee his own ascendance as an "important" power-possessing being. Outside the group are political rivals, critics, and existing authorities who threaten to curb the group's hold of power and/or who need to be threatened or otherwise "enticed" to give their support. And, of course, there are those who know where the skeletons are buried. They're just a heart attack or "freak single engine plane crash" away from no longer being a problem.

Just as corporate psychopaths cultivate alliances and relationships with influential executives to ensure their protection, political psychopaths secure their power by winning the influence of a society's powerful legal, military, economic, and business institutions, as well as those of foreign nations. In the third, *manipulation* phase, political psychopaths take advantage of all these groups, creating and maintaining their own psychopathic fiction on a mass scale, spreading positive propaganda about themselves and negative propaganda about their perceived (and often entirely created) "enemies", and creating and stage-managing the conflicts that solidify their positions. The incestuous marriage of corporate, economic, military, and political power ends up creating a virtually unconquerable system of control.

While in the Nazis studied by Gustav Gilbert the career diplomats and militarists were in fact the *least* characterized by psychopathology, it is easy to see why these "sophisticated realists" of the state were so easily manipulated. The motivations of this political bandwagon were clear; they were social climbers, political opportunists, and strongly identified with their own social group. After all, these men were the leading figures (i.e. the leading social conformists) in the functions of state, law, church, and capital, and their desire to be among the new ruling elite proved much stronger than their willingness to face a disgraceful fall down the social ladder, or worse, be labeled an "enemy of the state" (G. Gilbert, *The Psychology of Dictatorship*, pp. 154 - 5). These men were products of the authoritarian culture that permeated Germany before Nazism, in which submission to authority was a cultural norm, no matter the nature of that authority. In the face of this "new

reality", men like the one-time chancellor of the Weimar Republic, Franz von Papen, took the path of least resistance and appeased the psychopathic aggression they witnessed.

The militarists, too, succumbed to the incentives to promotion and their own blind obedience to authority. Even despite considering shooting himself over the "misgivings" he had about many of his orders, Field Marshall Keitel followed through to the last because of his sense of loyalty to a superior. It's no different today. Scientists still want to keep their jobs and funding, military men and women want their promotions, and state employees large and small know on which side their bread is buttered.

As Gilbert described it, dictatorships thrive on social chaos, brute force, and appeasement. Just as common psychopaths rely on the appeasement of relatives, spouses, friends, employers, police and courts, who often rationalize their behavior or respond that there's nothing they can do, political psychopaths rely on the appeasement of their own citizens as well as the nations of the world. In the psychopath's worldview, where compromise is regarded as a sign of weakness, appeasement only makes his behavior more malignant. Psychopaths are masters at testing their limits. As they get away with increasingly brazen acts, they keep pushing the boundaries until it's too late to make a difference. The political psychopath is free to take the fourth, *confrontation* phase to the limit. Rivals do not just lose their positions; they are slandered, arrested, tortured, and murdered. Law enforcement and the courts pose no threat; they're in the Party's back pocket (remember phase three). The media is censored and controlled, and all material critical of the government is discredited by specially chosen "experts". Idealists who were useful in the early stages of the Party are discarded now that their support is no longer useful. Entire populations become scapegoats, which serves the functions of 1) suppressing criticism, 2) conditioning the public to accept violent "defense against our enemies", and 3) incentives for conformity and "toeing the party line".

As Babiak discovered about corporate psychopaths, "organizational chaos" not only attracts them to companies, but it provides them "cover". At such times, "an organization is at its weakest point and prone to manipulation" (Babiak, "From Darkness Into the Light: Psychopathy in Industrial and Organizational Psychology", in Herve and Yuille's *The Psychopath: Theory, Research, and Practice*, p. 420). Normal people tend to avoid such environments, but psychopaths thrive in them. Just as corporate psychopaths exploit organizational chaos, political psychopaths exploit social chaos. After all, group loyalties and hostilities provide the soil in which political conflict and aggression thrive. Long-held prejudices and stereotypes persist and become grist for the mill of ambitious politicians. The tensions, fears, frustrations, and aspirations of significant numbers within the population are easily manipulated by providing politically expedient outlets for aggression.

In the case Germany, with a population of Serbs, Croats, Hungarians, Czechs, Slavs, Jews, Catholics, and Protestants, conflicts were easy to exploit. The devastation of WWI and the chaos it engendered created a hole, which was to be filled by new social and political reforms. New ideas were adopted and adapted to serve the aggressive purposes of the Nazi revolutionary core. Evolution justified ethnic struggles based on pseudoscience, and economic laws implied "implacable class warfare". The Nazis began as rebels but gained the support of many Germans through their masterful manipulation of popular opinion. They eventually achieved power by *intensifying* social conflicts and maintained it by a reign of terror.

For the fanatics of a regime, these policies are personal vendettas, while psychopaths use them more calculatedly, as convenient devices to accrue power. Stereotypes are self-perpetuating mechanisms, and they suit the political psychopath well. Gilbert writes, "The exceptional case

which confirms the prejudice will have sensational repercussions, while the cases in which the reverse is true, or no racial lines are crossed, will pass comparatively unnoticed" (p. 290). This process is further facilitated by propaganda. Those members of the targeted group who react defensively are seen as proof of the stereotype, and those who try to conform to the discriminating majority are seen as a [sinister fifth column](#) - "surely they cannot have good intentions!" Social discrimination actually fosters the development of group differences, which can then be identified as evidence for the stereotype. For example, slaves may have been kept uneducated, becoming evidence for their own "mental inferiority"; the intelligentsia killed and the people deemed "backwards" and "primitive". New realities are simply created and then taken as "evidence" for whatever those manipulating reality seek to promote. How convenient.

Hitler was a great success in this regard. His paranoia, aggression against his "enemies" and obsessive appeal to national ascendancy deeply resonated with and anchored in the minds of Germans, and his duplicity reached the level of national policy, hiding the Party's ulterior motives behind plausible cover stories and grandiose ideals. As Gilbert remarked, "Even a constitution presented no serious obstacle to dictatorship, since many of its provisions could be suspended in a 'national emergency' where the security of the nation was threatened; and such emergencies, as Napoleon knew only too well, could always be provided by propaganda" (p. 8).



Patsy Marinus van der Lubbe.

One such "emergency", which also made use of another technique often used by political psychopaths to create social chaos, and which was pivotal in the consolidation of Nazi power, was the Reichstag fire of February 27, 1933. Perhaps the most significant patsy in history (aside from Lee Harvey Oswald, of course), Dutch communist Marinus van der Lubbe was accused, tried, and executed for the crime. In fact, the latest German research has shown this was another "false-flag" operation on the part of the Nazis. According to testimony heard at Nuremberg, the fire was part of Goebbels' propaganda campaign and was carried out in collusion with Göring and the Berlin Storm Troops. A self-inflicted wound, the Nazis staged the fire so that they could then use it as "evidence" of a communist plot against the government. The "state of emergency" caused by this "Communist threat" necessitated extreme measures. Soon

after, the Enabling Act was passed, which essentially gave Hitler unlimited powers.

Totalitarianism was implemented first by outlawing the Communist and Social Democratic Parties, and by the end of the year, all the rest. Finally, Himmler was given extraordinary police powers to suppress all "dangers to public security," in accordance with a new law providing the death penalty for such undefined offenses. (Gilbert, p. 72)

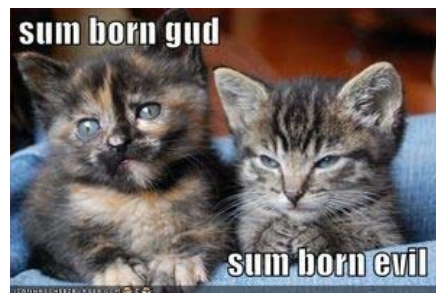
Those who knew too much about the Reichstag fire, among others whose loyalty was in question, were rounded up and killed on June 30, 1934. Executions were still illegal at the time, but Hitler justified them as essential for the protection and safety of the Reich. Hitler now determined the law in Germany.

The parallels between the Machiavellian, manipulative natures of both the psychopath and modern "power politics" are so obvious that it is difficult not to recall Cleckley's "conspiracy of silence" about the topic of psychopathy as a whole. While alternative writers on the Internet are consistently

making the connections, the topic has yet to reach the mainstream in any serious form. Gilbert's study has been forgotten by mainstream psychologists, and Lobaczewski's has been completely ignored. In fact, American Psychiatric Association members (e.g., CIA contractor James Elmer Mitchell and his colleague Bruce Jessen) even helped [develop and participate](#) in the CIA's "advanced interrogation" of "enemy combatants" in Guantanamo bay and CIA black sites. Rather than coming to understand the realities of torture in order to stop it, American psychologists are actively engaging in it, using the same tortured logic used by Hitler and Goebbels seventy years ago. If there's one sure sign that a government is psychopathic, that's its use and justification of torture, and the spineless denials and redefinitions to excuse its utter barbarity.

If we trace the roots of psychopathic thinking in more detail, we come back to phase-three psychopathic techniques of "divide and rule" and disinformation. The formula is fairly straightforward. The psychopath determines that he needs someone to perform a certain action. So, he sets up a situation causing the person to react in the desired manner. In this way he manages conflicts that neutralize threats and promote his own self-image. On the mass scale these manufactured realities reach dangerous heights of criminality. Ambitious politicians use their influence among secret police, military, and intelligence to perpetrate attacks on their own civilian populations, which are then blamed on a created "enemy". Public reaction follows the predicted vector and the politicians offer the "solution" (prepared in advance) of war against the enemy. This cynical and twisted reality is *not* an isolated phenomenon. It is standard operating procedure among major political/intelligence elites.

By applying Babiak's five-phase model, we can identify several cycles within cycles in the creation and maintenance of dictatorship: the *individual, national, and international*. In the first, an individual psychopath like Göring achieves entry and influence within a political movement. In the second, a political group manipulated by psychopaths takes control of a country. In the third, they expand their influence, invading and taking over other countries in the hopes of securing world domination. This grand cycle of world government - to which Hitler and the Nazis aspired and yet were unable to accomplish - was and is the desire of all great empires. Its necessity is clear. If the dictatorship contains itself within its own borders, it risks losing its power to outside forces, whether from invasion or the influence of outsiders on its own populations, thus stirring anti-government movements within its own borders. Dictatorships must constantly expand their influence in order to stave off the "dangerous" ideas of more liberal governments. That is not to say that they will ever be successful, just that it is the nature of those involved to ever grasp for more, lest they lose it all. In fact, while such governments can stabilize their power for decades (e.g., the Soviet empire) or even centuries (e.g., the Roman empire), so far the rule has been that they all suffer defeat, whether from within or without.



The smallest cycle can occur any number of times and during any and all phases of larger cycles. For example, psychopaths may play their political game before or after a Party has gained power. The constant jockeying for power within the system of government is an essential feature, as seen in the various "purges", convenient "suicides", and "disappearings" that have always characterized corrupt empires. While such governments strike most of humanity as harsh and oppressive, the free license provided by a police state is ideal for the political psychopath. From Gilbert:

He obtains gratification from manipulating the environment for the feeling of power it affords, to act the aggressive hero for the sheer pleasure of acting. He is too egocentric to

love or hate very deeply, though the outward show of such emotions may be part of the role he plays. His violation of the social mores is not a neurotic obsession but an incidental aspect of this aggressive role-playing. In situations of social conflict, he identifies with the group that provides the best outlet of aggression for aggression's sake ... Craving applause for his showmanship, he [may play] the role of aggressive champion of human rights, if the stage [is] set for such a role. (p. 284)

I've already mentioned several of the essential features of pathocracy identified by Gilbert: social unrest, brute force against enemies within and without, a favorable constellation of leadership groups with mutual interests, and crucial events facilitating the consolidation of dictatorial power. Psychopathic leaders also require authoritarian followers, and an authoritarian social framework:

The hierarchical social structure ... provides the rewards of obedience and parasitism, security of status, outlets for aggression in situations of sibling rivalry and dominance of subordinates. (Gilbert, p. 268)

In an authoritarian society, people submit to the protection of leadership, accepting their decisions and forfeiting their own ability to make their own choices. "My leaders make the choices so I don't have to." When this system is taken away - as a result of radical social change often initiated by war or revolution - the citizens' toleration for insecurity lessens and they readily accept appeals to the old, conservative ways. The world has seen this process in action in the "global war on terror". The attempt by Western governments to "export democracy" inevitably results in a regression to conservative, authoritarian regimes. The Taliban has regained its influence in Afghanistan after the United States and its allies invaded in 2001, ostensibly to "bring freedom" to the Afghans. Similarly, Iraq is now a democracy in name only and is plagued with corruption, occupation, and daily military atrocities. Again, the "conspiracy of silence" makes its presence known. The scum and effluent rises to the top. Eventually, however, it gets to the point where every almost-normal individual can smell its stench and putrescence. The Egyptians have recently caught a whiff. Hopefully the rest of the world will catch on soon.



Mass demonstration at Tahrir Square in Egypt.



Harrison Koehli



Ponerology 101: Snakes in Suits

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Wed, 05 May 2010 10:17 UTC

The criminal psychopath has been observed and studied for almost a century. But except for a short mention by Cleckley, the idea of a successful psychopath - ordinary by almost all external standards - has remained shrouded in that pervasive "conspiracy of silence". As this series progresses, it will become clear why this is the case and what exactly are the ramifications of such a dangerous gap in knowledge and awareness. So far the only in-depth presentation of the problem of successful psychopaths has been Paul Babiak's and Robert Hare's book [*Snakes in Suits*](#), published in 2006. The book is essential reading, and has the potential to save your life, literally. The information it contains is universal and can be applied to interactions on any social level.



Babiak, as an industrial and organizational psychologist, encountered his first corporate psychopath in 1992. By studying operators like "Dave" in the corporate environment, Babiak not only brought into focus the methods by which psychopaths infiltrate and ascend the corporate ladder of success, he shattered previous illusions about what was and wasn't possible for psychopaths to accomplish. Many in the industry thought psychopaths wouldn't be able to succeed in business. They thought that psychopaths' bullying and narcissistic behaviors would be off-putting to potential hirers, and that their abuse and manipulations would inevitably lead to failure within the company. In fact, the so-called "experts" couldn't have been more wrong. They seemed to have neglected the uncanny ability of psychopaths to present *an image of extreme normality, and even excellence*, to their victims. And that is what we are to them: victims, potential "marks", suckers.

Against the prevailing beliefs and hubristic assumptions, Babiak found that psychopaths were *readily accepted* into the management ranks of prominent companies, and were even experiencing career success.¹ Their extreme narcissism was apparently mistaken as a "positive leadership trait", and the murky morality and internal chaos typical of the mergers, acquisitions, and takeover environment seemed perfect for their type. Not only would they do well under the pressure - not having the ability to feel fear or stress - the potential personal rewards were too great to refuse, for the business *and* the psychopath. As Babiak put it, "the lack of specific knowledge about what constitutes psychopathic manipulation and deceit among businesspeople was the corporate con's key to success."² Ironically, the very traits sought by corporations and other powerful entities are often the ones that *do* bring about their inevitable demise (witness the fall of Bernie Madoff, Enron, Nazism). And they are the traits we have been conditioned to see as ideal. For example, through the "rose-colored glasses" of those who do not know better, conning and manipulative become "persuasive" and "influential"; coldhearted behavior and lack of remorse become "action oriented" and the "ability to make hard decisions"; fearless and impulsive become "courageous" and "high-energy"; lack of emotions becomes "strong" and "controls emotions".³

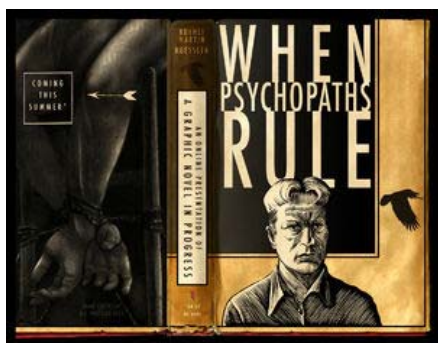
In short, when we call a psychopath "persuasive and courageous" we should actually be charging a commission for doing the psychopath's PR for him, because that is all it is. It's like selling bleach and calling it holy water! On paper these qualities may look promising, but as coworkers, and especially as bosses, psychopaths are domineering, intimidating, frightening, and dangerous.

Quick to take credit for others' work and to hire and fire employees on a whim, they tolerate only praise, are extremely short-sighted, and genuinely lack the insight that makes a good leader. One psychopath, described by Babiak, was "unwilling and perhaps unable to acknowledge that any of her decisions could have any negative consequences for the business."⁴ Even when leading superficially "normal" lives, psychopaths still cause problems in ways that fly under the radar of the law - economically, psychologically, emotionally.

How do they do it? By analyzing corporate cons, Babiak discovered the basic methods psychopaths use to operate in a hierarchical, corporate environment. But no matter in what environment the psychopath finds himself - a romantic relationship, a corporate strategy, a planned heist, an election campaign, a political coup ... the list of possibilities is endless - he uses the same, three-phase "Assessment - Manipulation - Abandonment" routine on his victims. In the first phase, the psychopath assesses the value of his "ally" and potential patsy - what he or she can do to further the psychopath's aims. Psychopaths are experts at identifying and pushing others' "buttons", their "likes and dislikes, motives, needs, weak spots, and vulnerabilities."⁵ Others' strengths are utilized and weaknesses exploited. Next, the psychopath uses messages carefully crafted for the specific target, utilizing information gathered in the Assessment Phase. He then adapts his manipulation to accommodate any new feedback from the target in order to maintain full control. As Babiak and Hare write:

They often make use of the fact that for many people the content of the message is less important than the way it is delivered. A confident, aggressive delivery style - often larded with jargon, clichés, and flowery phrases - makes up for the lack of substance and sincerity in their interactions with others ... they are masters of impression management; their insight into the psyche of others combined with a superficial - but convincing - verbal fluency allows them to change their personas skillfully as it suits the situation and their game plan. They are known for their ability to don many masks, change "who they are" depending upon the person with whom they are interacting, and make themselves appear likable to their intended victim.⁶

Sounds an awful lot like the work done by intelligence agencies, doesn't it?



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Psychopaths also use a variety of manipulation techniques, for example, *gaslighting*. When told a lie often enough, and with seemingly absolute certainty, normal people tend to doubt their own perceptions. "Amazingly, more often than not, victims will eventually come to doubt their *own* knowledge of the truth and change *their* own views to believe what the psychopath tells them rather than what they know to be true."⁷ In this phase, the psychopath ruthlessly exploits his victims, using them to acquire money, position, control, and power. When a person has ceased to be useful, they are discarded in the final, Abandonment Phase. Loyal to none, this often has

devastating effects on those who were deceived by the psychopath's façade of lies and "good intentions". Whether a spouse who has been drained emotionally, an old woman whose bank account has been emptied, or a "friend" whose connections have finally paid off, the psychopath inevitably throws them out and moves on to the next target.

Within the corporate world, Babiak identified a more elaborate *five-phase* variation of this dynamic.

First, psychopaths use their charm and gift of gab to feign leadership qualities, thus gaining *entry* into the company. Once hired, they identify possible targets and rivals among coworkers - from talented but naïve peers whose work can be stolen to secretaries who control access to important executives - in the *assessment* phase. Babiak describes the four groups of people that psychopaths employ in their games. *Pawns* are ordinary coworkers who have "informal power and influence", and who are deftly manipulated by psychopaths into wanting - or needing - to support and please them. *Patrons* are high-level individuals with formal power. By developing rapport with patrons, psychopaths secure protection from the attacks of lower-level workers who see through the mask. *Patsies* are pawns who have lost their usefulness and have thus been discarded. Lastly, *organizational police* are individuals like auditors, security, and human resources staff who are more experienced in detecting manipulation in the work place.⁸

In the third, *manipulation* phase, psychopaths create and maintain their "psychopathic fiction", setting up positive disinformation about themselves and negative disinformation about others using the network of pawns, patrons and "useful idiots" that they create. By creating conflict among the other employees, they divert attention away from themselves, preferring to operate behind the scenes and above the storms that they create and manage. In the *confrontation* phase, psychopaths discard rivals and pawns (now patsies), frequently using techniques of character assassination, framing, and other tactics using so-called "facts" that deviate significantly from the truth. They get away with this by relying on the highly placed patrons with whom they are now cozy. And in the final, *ascension* phase, they ultimately unseat their patrons, taking for themselves the positions and prestige of those who once supported them.⁹ In the psychopath's game, people exist solely to be manipulated, and he pursues his aims at any cost, even if that means backstabbing everyone who supported him in his ascent.

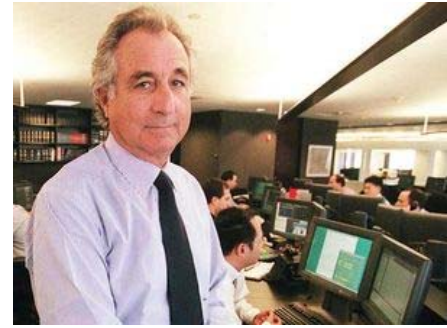
Interest in corporate psychopaths has risen significantly in the last decade, largely due to the publicity of corporate frauds and scandals like Enron in 2001 and Madoff in 2009. Oddly, given the number of political scandals and their striking similarities to their corporate cousins, the idea that psychopaths infiltrate governments - with disastrous results - has yet to receive the attention it deserves. In fact, the political massacres that are occurring today - the dark aspects of human history that both fascinate and repel us - and the corruption that inevitably leads to them, have their roots in the presence of psychopaths in positions of power and influence.

Psychopaths can be found in prison for all sorts of violent and predatory crimes against individuals, including white-collar crime. University programs, academic societies, conferences, professional textbooks and manuals, all exist to get a handle on the problem and aid in prevention of these sorts of crimes. *But what about their role in crimes against humanity?* I haven't been able to find one academic paper examining the role of psychopathy in politics, whether in so-called democratic systems or overt dictatorships. Just as researchers at first doubted the ability of psychopaths to succeed in business, and the problem remained unexamined, the problem of psychopathy in politics remains steadfastly ignored. Political scientists refuse to look at psychopathy, and psychopathy experts refuse to look at politics. The results of such blindness are evident in history - and the *present* - for anyone to see. Genocides, dictatorships, state-sanctioned torture, "war without end", political assassinations, death squads, corruption, blackmail, spying on civilians, "state secrets", illegal "espionage", and on and on.

The situation is odd, considering the fact that experts have made it increasingly clear that psychopaths can occupy prominent positions in all professions: law, business, medicine, psychology, academia, military, entertainment, law enforcement, even - and perhaps especially - *politics*. As Babiak and Hare explain it, "Many [psychopaths] do manage to graduate from college

or obtain professional credentials, but in most cases it is less through hard work and dedication than through cheating, getting others to do their work, and generally 'working the system.'"¹⁰

The Madoff case offers a great many implications concerning not only the Wall Street in general, but the political scene as well. Interestingly, the list of his victims lacks any US banking names or other serious institutional investors, who normally require the type of information that Madoff's firm kept off limits. In fact, the business was suspected as a fraud for nearly a decade, with evidence of misconduct from as far back as the 70s. And yet serious investigations were held off until his sons turned him in. Many knew for years, but remained silent, allowing Madoff to continue the scheme that would ruin thousands. Conveniently, Madoff's niece was married to a senior compliance official at the Securities and Exchange Commission in 2005 and Madoff himself bragged about his close relationships with SEC regulators. Madoff's firm had close ties to Washington's lawmakers and regulators, with Madoff sitting on the board of the Securities Industry Association, and Madoff's brother sitting on the board of the Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association (SIFMA). In Creswell's and Thomas's piece for the *New York Times*, a close associate of Madoff's relates that "He once mentioned to me that he spent one-third of his time in Washington in the early 1990s, late 1980s."



Bernard Madoff

Not only was Madoff's fund a perfect money laundry for potential co-conspirators, he was protected by his close ties to the "organizational police" of the SEC and his domineering control over his employees. "Nobody left because they could never get another job that paid as well as this one. Some people, after his arrest, speculated that it was kind of like hush money; nobody asked any questions because the Madoffs were nice, protective, generous." ([The Daily Beast](#)) According to Babiak and Hare, "The level and intensity of psychopathic intimidation often keeps those who have been abused from coming forward."¹¹ By controlling underlings and wooing regulators, Madoff protected himself from exposure. It was only after his arrogance got the better of him that it all fell apart.

But Madoff is only a symptom of a systemic problem that affects humanity from the level of interpersonal relationships to heights of political control. The "garden-variety psychopath" maneuvers for control and power in a relatively limited sphere of influence: from his immediate family to the wider group of coworkers and chance victims. Criminally versatile psychopaths move from victim to victim, acquiring a tally of women emotionally and physically destroyed; elderly people bilked of their life savings; charities robbed of their donations; children tortured and mutilated. The corporate psychopath not only affects everyone in the company's staff; his misdeeds have the potential to ruin the lives of *thousands*. But the *political psychopath*, in a position of the utmost prestige, power, and influence, has the potential to rule - and *ruin* - empires. His influence reaches level of society and his decisions have the potential to affect billions.

Notes

1. Babiak (2007, 413).
2. Babiak & Hare (2006, xiii).
3. Babiak (2007, 419).
4. Babiak & Hare (2006, 12).

5. Babiak & Hare (2006, 37).
6. Babiak & Hare (2006, 38).
7. Babiak & Hare (2006, 51).
8. Babiak (2007, 417).
9. Babiak (2007, 418 - 20).
10. Babiak & Hare (2006, 47).
11. Babiak & Hare (2006, 52).

Comment: Go to [Part 4](#) in the Ponerology 101 series



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Harrison Koehli hails from Edmonton, Alberta. A graduate of studies in music performance, Harrison is also an editor for [Red Pill Press](#) and has been interviewed on several North American radio shows in recognition of his contributions to advancing the study of ponerology. In addition to music and books, Harrison enjoys tobacco and bacon (often at the same time) and dislikes cell phones, vegetables, and fascists.

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💡 Ponerology 101: The Dangers of Pit Bulls and Climate Control

Harrison Koehli
Sott.net
Fri, 12 Nov 2010 18:45 UTC



I hope you are all getting the point of this series so far: psychopaths are a big problem in our world! But it's not that simple. Take an analogy. Timmy is sick. He caught a bug at school the other week and is down for the count. Thankfully for his parents, they're somewhat eccentrically obsessed with health and cleanliness and had immediately placed Timmy in a microbiologically sterile bubble in their guest bedroom, before proceeding to decontaminate the entire house and its occupants. The pathogen that threatens the health of those he might come in contact with is successfully locked in. (Unfortunately for Timmy, so is he!) However, Timmy's parents didn't factor Sunshine, the family's pet pit-bull, into their anti-infection equation.

So, one afternoon, while Timmy is reminiscing about his former life outside the bubble, along comes Sunshine who pokes a hole in the bubble's protective layer with his favorite stick. The highly contagious, airborne infection is now free to surf the air waves of 21st century climate control, and through a series of highly improbable events, Timmy's sister, parents, dog and goldfish all come down with the nasty bug. The infection then spreads throughout the neighborhood, city, and eventually, the world, as local businessmen who don't mind an aggressive pat down from the TSA and exposing their genitals to puerile airport security personnel via Peeping-Tom-Technology, travel to very serious and important business meetings. So, what's the point of this? Simply put, psychopaths need a number of things to have their effect in lieu of the direct interaction of personal relationships. Among a psychopath's best tools to spread his malevolence are fanatic bulldogs and the cold theories of human nature that determine the intellectual climate of a society. It's through these intermediaries that our bodies and minds are systematically infected - ponerized.

In this article I'll focus on the latter of these tools. For now, all that needs to be said of the fanatics is that the tenacity of true believers (whether paranoid or just lacking important functionality of the prefrontal lobes) is what keeps pathological social systems in action. Just think of Internet trolls with religion and guns, seeing a Communist or terrorist behind every even slightly 'liberal' blogger, and you'll get the picture. As for the second type of psycho-puppet, they're a bit trickier to spot. Often intelligent, and highly influential in society, the pervasiveness of their theories in modern Western culture offers them some degree of camouflage. But when those theories are put to the test, they don't fare too well. Unfortunately for us, very few actually question them, and they're the cause of many of the world's biggest problems.

In his book, *Born to be Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life* (New York: Norton, 2009), professor of psychology at the University of California, Dacher Keltner lists some depressing figures. In the last fifteen years, levels of trust among Americans have dropped 15%; feelings of social anomie, loneliness, and unhappy marriages are on the rise; people have fewer close friends,

babies have less physical contact with their parents, and American children's well-being ranks twentieth in a list of 21 nations. Keltner traces this overall decline in social well-being to what he calls the *Homo economicus* ideology of human nature. He writes:

This ideology has influential advocates from Sigmund Freud to evolutionary theorists. The strongest proponents of this view are found in the halls of economics departments. Their characterization of human nature [is] known widely as rational choice theory ... First and foremost, *Homo economicus* is selfish. Every action of *Homo economicus* is designed to maximize self-interest, in the form of experienced pleasure, advances in material wealth, or, in evolutionist thought, the propagation of genes. ... Competition is a natural and normative state of affairs. ... Cooperation and kindness are, by implication, cultural conventions or deceptive acts masking deeper self-interest. ... The conclusion: These generous acts are evolutionary "misfires" or "strategic errors" ... (pp. 8 - 9)

Keltner mentions just a few such theorizers: the already-mentioned Freud, Ayn Rand, Machiavelli ("in general [mankind] are fickle, hypocritical, and greedy of gain"), and George C. Williams (Natural selection "can honestly be described as a process for maximizing short-sighted selfishness"). To this list we may add Karl Marx (for whom material conditions shape consciousness) and Thomas Hobbes (1588 - 1679), who thought that so long as there were no strong authority to keep them in line, humans were naturally "in that condition which is called war; and such a war as is of every man against every man" (quoted in Steven Pinker's *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature* (New York: Penguin, 2002), p. 7). In other words, human nature is so wretched (i.e. self-serving, distrustful, malicious) that a strong authority (i.e. church or state) is needed to keep society from descending into social chaos. Of course, nothing could be further from the truth. As Keltner describes it, such a view of human nature offers only *part* of the picture. Without the very real qualities of equality, compassion, cooperation, gratitude, love, laughter and nurture, our families and societies would fall apart. These emotions and values are what bring, and keep, people together, and coincidentally (or not), they are the very qualities lacking in psychopaths.

In fact, some big clues to this can be found in Adam Curtis' 2007 documentary [*The Trap: What Happened to Our Dream of Freedom*](#). In it, Curtis shows the influence of "simplistic model[s] of human beings as self-seeking, almost robotic, creatures" on modern *economics* and *politics* (are we seeing a pattern here?). One such model is the "Game Theory" of mathematician and Nobel Prize winner in Economics John Nash, whose life was whitewashed in the Hollywood film *A Beautiful Mind*. Importantly, Nash was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia, although in my opinion "schizoid psychopathy" is a better fit. His arrogant, cold-hearted, and disturbed mind is dealt with at length in Sylvia Nasar's biography of the same name. Nash's view of human nature influenced the development of his "game" scenarios, which in turn greatly influenced official Cold War policies.

According to Nash, human beings are selfish and distrustful by nature, and the only way to create social stability is through the cultivation of suspicion and self-interest. In one of his games, players must choose to trust or betray their gaming partner in order to either lose or gain benefits. Trust only works if both sides choose to do so. If your opponent "screws you", however, you lose more than you would if you screwed him as well. The choice with the greatest payoff is thus to betray your partner, who in turn betrays you. According to Nash, as well as other economic theorists like Friedrich von Hayek and James M. Buchanan, this is how humans actually operate: motivated entirely by self-interest and constantly calculating and anticipating the malicious intentions of all others. Thus, *Homo economicus*. Life is one big game of screwing others over, and coming out on

top.

That's great in theory, I suppose. However, in practice, the only individuals who consistently played the games in such a manner were psychopaths and economists! When the games were played by the experimenters' secretaries, they always chose the mutually beneficial trust scenario, that is, the normal, human response. And while these theories of economic and political "freedom" were embraced by politicians such as Margaret Thatcher and continue to determine economic and government policies in Western societies, as Curtis concludes, when they are put into practice they actually lead to "corruption, rigidity, inequality." See how far Timmy's bug can spread?

As can be seen by the names mentioned above (Machiavelli, Hobbes, Marx, etc.), the view of humanity as nothing but selfish imps has long held sway. Religious traditions have taught their believers to view themselves as "special" and set apart from the rest of humanity, which is seen as wretched, brutish, amoral, and Godless. (In other words, *Homo economicus*-lite; only the *others* are evil.) It is so universal that it seems to be a rule among religious sects, whether in the Talmudic view of *goyim*, the Christian view of the "un-saved", or the Muslim view of the *kafir*. So, too, in political theories. As the game theory tests showed in *The Trap*, normal people tend trust one another. It is what Hare called our "intra-species predator" - psychopaths - who are themselves distrustful by nature, and who then inspire distrust in others; it is they who are selfish, and inspire selfishness in others; and it is they who *wish to be* the ones controlling the 'rabble of humanity'.

And when we take a hard look at the laws and cultural norms that these pseudo-people promote (and which we take for granted), we see that they're most often based on this imaginary, invented, simplified view of human nature. It's everywhere we look. In his book *Lie Detectors: A Social History*, Kerry Segrave documents some of the absurd methods of lie detection used in our history. For example, from ancient India and Iran to Europe of the Middle Ages, methods such as the "red-hot iron ordeal", where the accused is found guilty if he suffers burns from a red-hot piece of metal, have been used as methods for lie detection. Obviously both the guilty and innocent will be burned, but authorities defended their techniques with any number of cockamamie explanations. In the present day, torture techniques whose true nature is softened by euphemisms such as "advanced interrogation techniques" are used to break down the accused to the point where they will confess to anything, as was the case with alleged 9/11 "mastermind" Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, who was waterboarded [183 times in a single month](#). Mohammed confessed to a litany of crimes, which included targeting a bank founded [four years after his arrest](#). The applications aren't always so extreme, however. In court, jurors easily doubt the testimony of a seemingly 'mentally-imbalanced' (i.e. emotional) person, especially when it is his or her word against a cool-headed, well-respected psychopath who lies with ease and absolute certitude. The injustice of the situation, and the unbelievable chutzpah displayed by the psychopath, is enough to drive an innocent party into an emotional fit, ruining their credibility.

We've largely inherited our legal system from the Romans. While the Greeks were more concerned with literature, mythology, and strictly philosophical philosophizing (among other more questionable activities), the Romans took a more utilitarian approach. With large populations to control and a deficit in understanding of human nature (what is it with half-wits ruling vast portions of the globe, anyways?!), the administrative and political practicalities of empire outweighed the Greek ideals of sober reflection and discovery. Their legal system became a 'one-size-fits-all' enterprise conceived for the "statistically average" (and equally non-existent) human. Not even the Jesus peoples' notion of the "kingdom of God" - which caused quite a stir among the plebes in the first century after Jesus, basing itself on natural human relationships of respect, love, and understanding - managed to temper the Roman mentality when Christianity was assimilated into

the empire's political machinery in the fourth century. In short, we inherited this Roman tendency to submit human nature to The Law and not vice versa.

For millennia these culturally ingrained blind spots have hindered our ability to comprehend human and social reality in all its complexity, making us individually and collectively vulnerable to psychopathic influences. The reason for this is that the roots of human evil are found within the very human variety and complexity that is *denied* by commonly promoted beliefs about humanity. By our ignorance of their existence, they remain hidden in plain sight. In fact, humans are *not* all the same. Psychopaths have very little in common with the rest of humanity, and it is they who exploit the gap between our unrealistic beliefs and the actual truth of the matter, as in the legal cases mentioned above.

The funny thing about these theories is that they end up revealing more about the nature of those making the theories than about humanity in general. Łobaczewski provides the key to this puzzle. According to him, schizoid individuals (think Robert DeNiro's character Travis Bickle in *Taxi Driver*, or Rorschach in *Watchmen*) as a rule have such a misanthropic view of human nature. Because of their own shallow emotions and unstable personalities, they have trouble seeing in others the qualities that they themselves lack, like true empathy, altruism, and cooperation. Instead, they tend to create baroque and icy theories with no basis in reality. They project their own limitations into self-evident, 'universal' values, and when their books are mass-produced, and their ideas spread throughout the public, academia, economics, and politics, that spells trouble.

For example, in addition to the unfortunate influence of Freud on psychiatry, the behaviorists have largely dominated the field of psychology. Taking empiricism to its limits, they concluded that because mental processes could not be directly studied in the laboratory, the mind could not be said to exist at all - all there is is behavior! As anyone with a mind knows, this is patently absurd. Visualization, imagination, and higher emotions are just a few of the essential human qualities denied by behaviorism. Rather, the behaviorists attempted to extrapolate human qualities from the observation of animals - their reflexes, formed habits, and learning processes. While much was learned in the process, it led to a vicious circle within psychology. By denying truly human qualities and abilities, they ended up with grossly lobotomized theories of human nature. As John B. Watson infamously said:

Give me a dozen healthy infants, well-formed, and my own specified world to bring them up in and I'll guarantee to take any one at random and train him to become any type of specialist I might select - doctor, lawyer, artist, merchant-chief, and yes, even beggar-man and thief, regardless of his talents, penchants, tendencies, abilities, vocations, and race of his ancestors. (quoted in Pinker, p. 19)

As was the case with Nash and Hobbes, these theories tell us more about the minds of the theorists themselves than about humanity as a whole. Taken as a group, behaviorists can actually tell us something about the true variety within human nature. Because psychology is the only discipline where both the subject and object of study are the same, it's easy for subjective errors and faulty core assumptions to slip into the reasoning process. Studying the core assumptions about human nature present in the writings of influential scientific, economic, and religious thinkers is a powerful aid in beefing up our sense of smell. We might just catch a whiff of a truly pathological mindset. But such a keen sense can be a dangerous thing. Psychology, after all, is the first science to be outlawed and Stalinized in a society governed by pathocracy, because of its potential to identify the true nature, causes, processes, and weaknesses of the system.

Psychopaths rely on the tacit acceptance of such theories by the masses of humanity. Think about it. In our daily lives, such ideas are mere "Sunday beliefs" - we may accept them in economics class, or the psychology lab, but when we get home to our families, social instinct is what drives us. We still hug and kiss our children before bed, worry about their futures, make sacrifices for their well-being. We *want* them to be happy, and we do what we can to make it a reality.

What does it matter that some strange, obscure economists hold such absurd beliefs? Oh, yeah... Inequality, social anomie, depression, poverty, economic shock treatment, computerized warfare, poisonous pharmaceuticals, Frankenfood, pollution, corporate enslavement, and on and on and on. The fact is, even if we may tend to live our lives with some modicum of humanity, societal beliefs affect us all. Schizoid misanthropy affects us all. But besides these very tangible effects, besides the fact that their ideals are spread and implemented by our leaders, belief systems *limit* the range of concepts with which our minds can 'play'. They're like blinders on a carriage-horse. When we leave out what is human, and forbid anything ponerological, we'll be lucky if the carriage doesn't smash to pieces when it is run off the cliff of time and history.

So, no, I'm not recommending we all start living in bubbles (analogies, mine at least, can only go so far). But just as our health depends on the functioning of our immune system, our psychological and societal well-being depends on the degree of our knowledge about ponerology. If the "trap" set by the theories mentioned above is the fact that they are speculative and divorced of any relation to human and social reality, the obvious solution is to come to a solid understanding of human nature - the human individual in all its scope and variety. So take off your blinders, give someone you love a hug, and let's get down to exposing the individuals who have flushed our world down the drainpipe.

Comment: Go to [Part 8](#) in the Ponerology 101 series



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Ponerology 101: The Political Psychopath

Harrison Koehli
Sott.net
Sun, 13 Jun 2010 22:25 UTC

Before their research into corporate psychopathy, Paul Babiak and his colleagues raised several questions in need of answers. They are equally relevant to the study of political psychopathy and can be rephrased as follows:

- How could a psychopath outshine other candidates and achieve success in politics?
- Why would a psychopath want to enter politics?
- How long could a psychopath successfully operate in such an environment?



**Political
psychopath,
Benjamin Netanyahu**

Jim Kouri, who served on the National Drug Task Force, has trained police and security officers throughout the United States, and is currently the fifth vice-president of the National Association of Chiefs of Police, answers the first question in an editorial for examiner.com.

Quite simply, most [psychopathic] serial killers and many professional politicians must mimic what they believe are appropriate responses to situations they face such as sadness, empathy, sympathy, and other human responses to outside stimuli. ... If violent offenders are psychopathic, they are able to assault, rape, and murder without concern for legal, moral, or social consequences. This allows them to do what they want, whenever they want. Ironically, these same traits exist in men and women who are drawn to high-profile and powerful positions in society including political officeholders.

Politics is a dog-eat-dog world. Not only must politicians be relatively thick-skinned to handle attacks on their character, they must be capable of dishing it out in return. Psychopaths lie with ease; they do not have any moral scruples when it comes to character assassination, empty promises, shameless self-promotion, cutthroat tactics, and using any means to justify the end. These qualities give them the leading edge over their more honest (and often naive) competition.

Politics is little different than any other con-job. In a Ponzi scheme, for example, the con artist targets members of an identifiable group, whether religious, racial or age-based. Regardless of whether or not the scammer is a member of the target group he pretends to represent the group. While political psychopaths are instrumental in the rise of totalitarian political groups, they play an equally important role in apparently Democratic governments. Their use of a party mask (no pun intended!) is so common that it can easily be called their primary *modus operandi*.

But why would a psychopath enter politics in the first place? Simply ask the question, "Who is the most powerful person in the world?" and many will answer: 'the President'. Psychopaths seek positions of power and influence, and politics offers publicity, prestige, and other perks. It also provides positions of ultimate authority over military, industry, and entire populations. In a world where psychopaths are understandably viewed as morally repulsive, often finding themselves at home in the criminal world, politics offers an opportunity to create a new world, to be free from the ridiculous (in their minds) moral and legal rules of society.

Scanning recent headlines, we regularly see examples of the corruption and fraud typical of white-collar psychopaths:

In what could turn out to be the greatest fraud in US history, American authorities have started to investigate the alleged role of senior military officers in the misuse of \$125bn (£88bn) in a US-directed effort to reconstruct Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein. The exact sum missing may never be clear, but a report by the US Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR) suggests it may exceed \$50bn, making it an even bigger theft than Bernard Madoff's notorious Ponzi scheme. ([Patrick Cockburn](#), "A 'fraud' bigger than Madoff", *The Independent*, February 16, 2009)

Defense Department Cannot Account For 25% Of Funds - \$2.3 Trillion

On Sept. 10, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld ... said money wasted by the military poses a serious threat. ... "According to some estimates we cannot track \$2.3 trillion in transactions," Rumsfeld admitted. ... Rumsfeld promised change but the next day - Sept. 11-- the world changed and in the rush to fund the war on terrorism, the war on waste seems to have been forgotten. (["The War on Waste"](#), CBS, January 29, 2002)

Israeli police have recommended charging the country's hard-line foreign minister, Avigdor Lieberman, with several counts of corruption as part of a bribery investigation, in a move that could lead to his resignation and a significant government reshuffle. Lieberman, head of a popular far-right party, is suspected of bribery, fraud, breach of trust, money laundering and obstruction of justice in a case dating back over nine years. If charged and convicted on all counts he faces up to 31 years in jail. ([Rory McCarthy](#), "Israeli police recommend corruption charges against Avigdor Lieberman", *The Guardian*, August 2, 2009)



Rod Blagojevich with President Obama.

In 2008, Illinois governor Rod Blagojevich came under similar media scrutiny, with several commentators speculating as to his mental health. Blagojevich was impeached for attempting to auction off newly elected President Obama's vacant Senate seat. However, even before his impeachment, the signs were obvious. In his profile of the governor for February 2008 issue of [Chicago Magazine](#), David Bernstein portrayed Blagojevich as narcissistic, arrogant, vindictive, charismatic, irresponsible, impulsive, untrustworthy, and with presidential aspirations (how typical!).

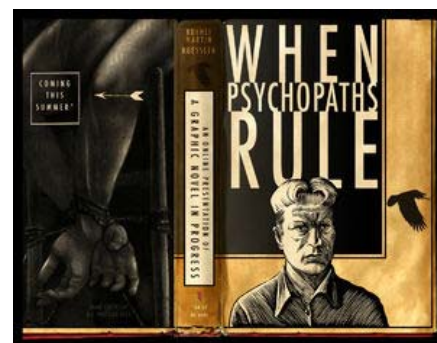
After interviewing more than 20 associates of Blagojevich ("from current and former members of the governor's administration and his campaign staff to state lawmakers, Democratic benefactors and operatives, academics, pundits, and political prognosticators"), Bernstein noted that several "resorted to colorful, four-letter language when describing the governor. The list of printable insults included "greedy," "dumb," "paranoid," and "phony." They described dramatic displays of temper over items as trivial as office stationary, "alleged illegal hiring and political kickback scandals", his unapologetic lateness for meetings and even funerals, and a litany of political failures and embarrassments. As Bernstein puts it, for the man who once bragged of his "testicular virility" in standing up for himself against the offender in the stationary incident, "all the withering criticism, negative newspaper headlines, and next-to-

nothing approval ratings should feel like a kick to the groin. But if he's fazed, he doesn't show it. **In public, he looks easygoing, unshaken, even self-assured. He still cracks jokes and smiles that big, toothy grin.**"

Cool under pressure, Blagojevich obviously saved his temper for more profitable situations:

"He can't control himself," says Miller. "I've heard people say that on his own staff." A Democratic insider adds, "Rod sometimes just goes out of his way to have a fight, just because he can. It's as though he relishes them." ... Last summer, the downstate newspaper the Peoria Journal Star declared that the governor was "going bonkers." Privately, a few people who know the governor describe him as a "sociopath," and they insist they're not using hyperbole. State representative Joe Lyons, a fellow Democrat from Chicago, told reporters that Blagojevich was a "madman" and "insane." "He shows absolutely no remorse," says Jack Franks, the Democratic state representative. "I don't think he gives a damn about anybody else's feelings. He tries to demonize people who disagree with him; he's got delusions of grandeur."

Called a "liar" and likened to a "used-car salesman" by lawmakers after one incident, "in an unprecedented move, they demanded that Blagojevich put any promises on paper in so-called memorandums of understanding." In fact, he spent much of his time in office "fending off accusations of ethical irregularities within his administration." But despite the rumors, innuendos, and outright accusations, "Blagojevich has claimed - sometimes indignantly - that he has done nothing wrong. He blames the scandals on "a few bad apples who violated the rules" and who deceived him." In short, Blagojevich shows all the hallmarks of a political psychopath, albeit a fairly obvious one. And he surely isn't the only one. Just as the 'best' psychopaths are those who evade detection, living lifetimes of successful crime, the best political psychopaths operate in such a manner as to hold on as long as possible.



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Robert Hare, in his 1970 book *Psychopath: Theory and Research*, as well as James Blair, Derek Mitchell, and Karina Blair in their 2005 book [*The Psychopath: Emotion and the Brain*](#), observe that negative environmental conditions such as low socioeconomic status, abuse, and poor parenting, along with low IQ, are often associated with high psychopathy scores, particularly among those who engage in persistent, violent criminal behavior. These psychopathic offenders are often considered the worst of the worst in courts and prisons. However, these factors seem only to affect the *expression* of psychopathy. As Dr. Hare says in filmmaker Ian Walker's excellent documentary, [*I, Psychopath*](#), on the diagnosed psychopath and self-styled narcissism guru, Sam Vaknin, while psychopaths often tell of some traumatic childhood that made them the way they are, **psychopaths come from all backgrounds, good or bad**. Speaking of successful psychopaths like Vaknin, he says, "If you're very bright, know how to dress well; you have, say, the gift of the gab; you're raised in an affluent family background; [then] you don't go in the bank and rob it, you get in the bank and become a director..."

In fact, Vaknin makes a perfect case study for the type of psychopath that is most dangerous to political institutions, and thus entire nations. Best known as an Internet guru for "malignant self-love", Vaknin was arrested in Israel in 1995 for major securities fraud. The documentary

follows Walker, Vaknin, and Lidija (Vaknin's wife) as they visit several European institutions to test if Vaknin is indeed a psychopath. Vaknin ends up scoring 18 (out of 24) on the PCL-SV



Diagnosed psychopath, Sam Vaknin.

(Screening Version), developed by Dr. Hare, **a score higher than the majority of offenders in US correctional facilities, and the cutoff point for psychopathy**. However, according Walker, Vaknin, like many of the so-called successful psychopaths now being studied by Hare, Babiak, and others, is not an "archetypal, textbook" psychopath. Contrary to the criminal populations, Vaknin is never physically violent. He has also been married to the same woman for ten years, while most psychopaths are seemingly incapable of such 'commitment', engaging in a string of short-term relationships. (His emotional treatment of her is another

matter, however.) Most interestingly, he is remarkably *self-aware*, and his insights agree with what the experts have to say. For example, in total seriousness, Vaknin had the following exchange with Walker:

Vaknin: "I like to present a facade of the self-effacing, modest person. It gives people the impression that, underneath it all, I'm human."

Walker: "But you are human, aren't you?"

Vaknin: "I firmly believe that you want to believe that, yes. ... [The psychopath] regards people as instruments of gratification and as disposable things to be used. ... The vast majority of psychopaths, like an iceberg, are underwater, and like an iceberg, they are inert. They do nothing. They're just there. They torment their spouse by being unempathic, but they don't beat her or kill her. They bully coworkers, but they don't burn the office. They are not dramatic. **They are pernicious**. Most psychopaths are subtle. They are more like poison than a knife, and they are more like slow-working poison than cyanide."

After subjecting Walker to a series of degrading insults (a regular occurrence during filming), and with Walker still visibly in shock, Vaknin coolly, and with disturbingly sadistic insight, described the process to him:

"Your body was flooded instantly with adrenalin and its relatives like norepinephrine ... Now when these moments pervade the bloodstream, your brain reacts. It shuts down certain centers and activates others. This is called the stress reaction, or stress syndrome, actually. Then when the abuse recedes, the adrenalin levels begin to drop. As they drop, the entire system goes into mayhem. So what bullies usually do, they start and stop, start and stop. That achieves the maximal stress syndrome, and this is the great secret of bullying. Never overdo it. Small doses. The victim will do the rest. - Although you are shaking much less [now] ... I must do something about that."

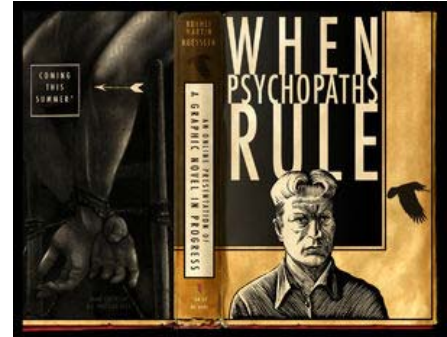
This type of self-aware psychopath is perhaps the most dangerous to humanity. When his instinctive drive for domination of others is coupled with the means to attain to positions of power, he is not only free of the restraints of conscience by nature, but finds himself largely above (or indeed the architect) of the laws that are meant to protect normal human beings from the deviant impulses so clearly defined by the psychopathic mind. As a president, politician, military or corporate chief, a vast number of people are literally at his mercy.

Ponerology 101: The Psychopath's Mask of Sanity

Harrison Koehli
Sott.net
Wed, 17 Mar 2010 13:03 UTC

A Wall Street Psychopath?

In 1960 Bernie Madoff founded his Wall Street firm, Bernard L. Madoff Investment Securities LLC. As chairman of its Board of Directors until his arrest in December of 2008, Madoff saw his firm (and himself) rise to prominence on Wall Street, developing the technology that became NASDAQ, the first and largest electronic stock exchange in America, in the process. A multimillionaire with over \$800-million in shared assets with his wife and high school sweetheart, Ruth Alpern, Madoff was well-regarded as a financial mastermind and prolific philanthropist. He exuded an aura of wealth, confidence, and connections, and many trusted him as a pillar of the community. Sounds like a great guy, huh?



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His humanitarian image was supported by his work for various nonprofit groups like the American Jewish Congress and Yeshiva University in New York, the various commissions and boards on which he sat, and the millions he donated to educational, political, cultural, and medical causes. As his firm's website made clear at the time (it has now been removed): "Clients know that Bernard Madoff has a personal interest in maintaining the unblemished record of value, fair-dealing, and high ethical standards that has always been the firm's hallmark." It's funny how things change with a little perspective and a pattern emerges only in retrospect. It wasn't until December of 2008 that the public became aware that this "personal interest" was anything but one of integrity, and that image stopped being taken for reality.

In a discussion with *Condé Nast Portfolio* Editor in Chief Joanne Lipman, Holocaust survivor, Nobel laureate and Madoff victim Elie Wiesel said: "I remember that it was a myth that he created around him... that everything was so special, so unique, that it had to be secret. It was like a mystical mythology that nobody could understand... He gave the impression that maybe 100 people belonged to the club. Now we know thousands of them were cheated by him."¹

In what has been described as the largest investor fraud ever committed by single person, Madoff defrauded thousands of investors out of just under \$65-billion in an elaborate Ponzi scheme, paying returns to investors from money paid by other investors, not actual profits. By moving funds in such a way, Madoff created an image of money that rivaled his own as a man of good character. The illusion of consistent, high returns, lured thousands into a deal too good to be true, offered by a man too good to be true. According to the media portrayal of events, Madoff described the investment fund as "one big lie" to his sons, who promptly informed the authorities. Madoff was arrested the next day and his assets were frozen (as were those of his wife and sons later on). In the aftermath, Madoff had succeeded in ruining the lives of thousands, driving some victims to suicide. He ended up pleading guilty to eleven counts of fraud, money laundering, and perjury, among others. Although Madoff ran his companies with an iron fist and claimed he was solely responsible for defrauding clients, investigators were unsatisfied that one person alone could hide fraud on such a massive scale for so long. Subsequent investigations have so far placed six

former associates under criminal investigation,² while multiple lawsuits are underway against Ruth Madoff and her sons.³

So how did he pull it off? Jerry Reisman, a prominent New York lawyer, described Madoff as "utterly charming. He was a master at meeting people and creating this aura. People looked at him as a superhero."⁴ Even when he was scrambling to secure funds to keep up his dead-end fraud, associates noticed no signs of stress. In a 2007 roundtable conversation, viewable on Youtube⁵, Madoff makes some telling comments. Speaking about modern exchange firms, Madoff coolly says, "By and large, in today's regulatory environment, it's virtually impossible to violate rules. This is something that the public really doesn't understand... **It's impossible for a violation to go undetected. Certainly not for a considerable amount of time.**" This coming from a man who had been doing just that for years and possibly decades! No wonder, given his propensity for deceit, that Madoff and his firm were extremely secretive, finding ways of keeping their illegal activities hidden, for example, refusing to provide clients online access to their accounts and ordering employees - against regulations - to delete email after it had been printed on paper, as reported by Lucinda Franks in her piece for The Daily Beast.⁶

Contrary to his illustrious public persona, in an article by Mark Seal for *Vanity Fair*, various family friends and insiders present an image of Madoff as a cold-hearted control freak who not only exploited strangers, but also those closest to him. He cultivated ostensibly close friendships with the late Norman F. Levy and philanthropist Carl J. Shapiro while robbing them blind in the process. Madoff spoke of Levy as his "mentor of 40 years" and always deferred to him. In return, Levy considered Madoff his "surrogate son, a member of his family." Carmen Dell'Orefice, Levy's then-girlfriend, remembers, "He always did so much for Norman's comfort in the smallest details." She described Madoff and his wife as quiet and inconspicuous and expressed the cognitive dissonance often experienced by victims of conmen like Madoff when the truth behind the image is finally revealed: "I am accepting that what I was experiencing was a projection of a person who wasn't there... If I didn't take all the pictures I took all those years, I would say 'Carmen, you're delusional.'" Levy's son Francis said his father believed in Madoff: **"If there's one honorable person," he said, "it's Bernie."** Joseph Kavanu, a former law school peer of Madoff's shared similar disbelief with Julie Creswell and Landon Thomas Jr. in their piece for the *New York Times*: "It doesn't make sense... I cannot take the Bernie I knew and turn him into the Bernie we're hearing about 24/7. It doesn't compute." In reality, there were two Madoffs: the carefully cultivated image of the successful businessman and philanthropist and the reality: a ruthless and remorseless criminal who operated behind a mask of sanity, success, and humanitarianism.

One source described to Seal how Madoff ruled his two sons through "tough love and fear. People were afraid of Bernie. He wielded his influence. They were afraid of his temper." Madoff also ruled his office with an iron fist, controlling the work environment down to the smallest detail. He was obsessed with order and control. A family friend related, "There was a lot of arrogance in that family. Bernie would talk to people who were as rich as he was, but he didn't want to be bothered with the little people." Another insider said, "He was imperial, above it all. If he didn't like the conversation, he would just get up and walk away. It was 'I'm Bernie Madoff and you're not.'" Another said, "Peter [Madoff's brother] is much more religious, more even-keeled. Bernie is more cocky, arrogant, a showman. Shrewd like a fox."

From the descriptions of those who knew and interacted with him, a picture emerges of Bernie Madoff as arrogant, superficially charming, glib, manipulative, deceitful, emotionally cold, domineering, and heartless, in short, all the hallmarks of a successful psychopath. Unsurprisingly, journalists and experts alike have suggested exactly that. J. Reid Meloy, forensic psychologist and

author of *The Psychopathic Mind*, Florida forensic psychologist Phil Heller, and former FBI agent Gregg McCrary, have all said so in print^{8&9}, and several prominent researchers including Adrian Raine suggested the same at the 2009 conference for the Society for the Scientific Study of Psychopathy in New Orleans. In what I'll show over the course of this series to be typical psychopathic fashion, Madoff fought his way to the top, wooed the regulators, and built his fortune by conning those he saw as worthless, even screwing over his so-called friends. However, as Meloy told Creswell and Thomas, "the Achilles' heel of the psychopath is his sense of impunity. That is, eventually, what will bring him down."

What Is Psychopathy?

Until the publication of Hervey Cleckley's landmark book *The Mask of Sanity* in 1941 (along with its subsequent editions), there wasn't much agreement on what exactly psychopathy is. The term had come to describe individuals whose *emotional* life and social behavior were abnormal, but whose intellectual capacities were undisturbed. In contrast to psychotics whose grip on reality is clearly disturbed, as in paranoid schizophrenia, psychopaths are completely sane. They have a firm grip on reality, can carry on a conversation, and often appear more normal than normal. But at the same time, while talking to you about the weather or the economy, they may be deciding the best way to con you out of your life savings or perhaps get you to a secluded location where they can rape or murder you.

However, while psychopaths may be intellectually aware that their actions grossly violate the limits of normal human behavior, they lack the emotional engagement with others that normally acts as an inhibitor of *anti*-social acts, like calculated aggression, intentional intimidation, pathological lying and emotional manipulation. In the course of his (or her, as probably one in four psychopaths is female) development, the psychopath's inability to feel and thus identify with the emotions of others blocks the development of a "moral sense" that allows normal individuals to *care* for others and treat them like thinking and feeling beings. **Psychopaths just don't care.** To them people are things, objects. When they're no longer useful they can be discarded or destroyed without a second thought.

The jarring disconnect between the absolutely normal (if not *more* than normal) face with which the psychopath greets the world, and the utterly unfathomable irrationality and inhumanity of his actions has led to their being called "wolves in sheep's clothing" and "snakes in suits". Cleckley coined the phrase "mask of sanity" to illustrate the disparity between the image of normality and the psychopath's essential *abnormality*. While the label has come to be almost strictly associated with serial killers, rapists and arch-villains, Cleckley was quick to point out that the vast majority of psychopaths are not violent, and "only a small proportion of typical psychopaths are likely to be found in penal institutions, since the typical patient ... is not likely to commit major crimes that result in long prison terms."¹⁰ Their actions are antisocial in that they violate the almost universally agreed upon "rules" of social behavior. Of course, this often takes the form of crime, but many psychopaths operate successfully within the boundaries of the law, wreaking havoc interpersonally or monetarily.

After years of frequently encountering psychopaths in clinical practice and witnessing the immense suffering they inflict upon those who happen to fall within their sphere of influence, Cleckley identified several universal traits. On the one hand psychopaths are superficially charming and of good intelligence. They lack any delusions or other signs of irrational thinking and are free of nervousness and anxiety. In other words, they present an image of good "mental health" that can disarm even the most experienced judge of human character. However, a close analysis

of their life history and interactions with others reveals some striking deficits beneath the mask. Psychopaths are also notoriously insincere, liberally inserting lies and innuendo into their talkative stream that usually go unnoticed. They are usually impulsive, acting on whims, and seeming to live entirely in the present, unhindered by concerns for past failures and future consequences. As such they often show remarkably poor judgment and an inability to learn from punishments or the threat of future ones (psychopathic criminals have the highest recidivism rates). They are unreliable, often moving from job to job and city to city, finding new victims and living parasitically off of others' kindness and naiveté. They also have a pathological sense of entitlement. The center of their own universe, they are incapable of love, lack any sense of remorse or shame, and show a general poverty of any deep emotional life. This is the core feature, shared equally by all psychopaths: the inability to feel empathy.

While Cleckley did much to bring light on the issue, in the preface to the fifth and final edition of his book he described **"an almost universal conspiracy of evasion"** of the topic of psychopathy among North American researchers and clinicians. While institutions exist to deal with illness and crime, **when it comes to psychopathy "no measure is taken at all ... nothing exists specifically designed to meet a major and obvious pathologic situation."**¹¹

Psychopathy arguably accounts for a grossly disproportionate amount of damage to society. Cleckley was convinced that the first step to deal with this immense problem was to "focus general interest" and "promote awareness of its tremendous importance."¹² Thankfully, significant contributions have been made in recent years towards such a goal by writers like Robert Hare and Paul Babiak, clinicians Martha Stout and Sandra Brown, and popular media portrayals such as the documentaries, *The Corporation* and *I, Psychopath*. Unfortunately, even with these efforts, public knowledge about psychopathy still falls far short of ideal, the "conspiracy of evasion" persists, and the problem rages on. For a disorder affecting more people than schizophrenia,¹³ and causing exponentially more harm to society, the fact that psychopathy is not a generally understood concept is alarming.

Robert D. Hare, Professor Emeritus of psychology at the University of British Columbia, wrote a book in 1970 summarizing the research available at the time. Since then, he has been at the forefront of psychopathy research, developing the first valid measure of criminal psychopathy, the *Psychopathy Checklist* (PCL-R), and writing two bestsellers on the subject: *Without Conscience* in 1993 and *Snakes in Suits* (co-authored with Paul Babiak) in 2006. Working with criminal populations, Hare further refined Cleckley's list of psychopathic traits for the PCL-R, settling on twenty characteristics of a prototypical psychopath.

Whereas Cleckley described his psychopathic patients as "carr[ying] disaster lightly in each hand" and "not deeply vicious",¹⁴ Hare's *Without Conscience* presents a much more malevolent look into the mind of the criminal psychopath. As he puts it: "Psychopaths have what it takes to defraud and bilk others: They are fast-talking, charming, self-assured, at ease in social situations, cool under pressure, unfazed by the possibility of being found out, and totally ruthless. ... Psychopaths are generally well satisfied with themselves and with their inner landscape, bleak as it may seem to outside observers."¹⁵ **They see empathy, remorse, and a sense of responsibility - all the qualities usually considered as the epitome of goodness and humanity - as signs of weakness to be exploited;** laws and social rules as inconvenient restrictions on their freedom; and antisocial behavior as deliberate "nonconformity", a refusal to "program" by society's artificial standards. Love, kindness, guilt, and altruism strike the psychopath as comical and childish naiveties for "bleeding hearts", and psychopathic serial murderer Ted Bundy even called guilt "an illusion... a kind of social-control mechanism."¹⁶ While they may convincingly profess to love in the most romantic and meaningful verbosity to their partners, these displays are soon replaced with

domination and exploitation, as Sandra Brown shows in her 2009 book *Women Who Love Psychopaths*.

Psychopaths see normal life as dull and boring, a dog-eat-dog world in which potential enemies (i.e. you and me) are to be manipulated, and aggression used as a tool to establish their superiority and take what is rightfully theirs - to satisfy their grandiose sense of entitlement. Naturally, in a universe of one, Hare observes, "Obligations and commitments mean nothing to psychopaths. ... They do not honor formal or implied commitments to people, organizations, or principles."¹⁷ They may very well ask, "What's so bad about being articulate, self-confident, living a fast-paced life on the edge and in the now, and looking out for number one?" And in our decaying society, many would not disagree. But what the psychopath sees as a carefree life of excitement and entitlement usually amounts to little more than the pursuit of immediate moments of pleasure and feelings of power, whether fleeting or more long-lasting.

With Hare's work, the psychopathic "mask" of sanity and normality acquires a sinister and Machiavellian tone. That's because psychopaths are conscious of being different. They see normal people as inferiors - "others" - to be used and discarded when they are no longer needed. But like a predator among its prey, psychopaths must disguise themselves to evade detection. If they made their motives known, others would be horrified. So, from an early age they learn to fit in by copying normal human reactions and behaviors. They learn when it is appropriate to cry, show grief, guilt, concern, and love. They learn all the facial expressions, common phrases, and social cues for these emotions they do not feel. And as such, **they deceive others with false displays of sadness, grief, guilt, concern, and love, and they manipulate our reactions to get what they want.** That's how a psychopath is able to con you out of money by playing on your sense of pity and compassion. Normal people, unaware of the differences between psychopaths and themselves, assume that these displays of emotion are evidence of *actual* emotion, and so the psychopath succeeds in going unnoticed, like a wolf in sheep's clothing. "[T]he truly talented ones have raised their ability to charm people to that of an art, priding themselves on their ability to present a fictional self to others that is convincing, taken at face value, and difficult to penetrate."¹⁸

This "practice" at appearing human is expertly portrayed in Mary Astor's novel *The Incredible Charlie Carewe*, which Cleckley recommended "should be read not only by every psychiatrist but also by every physician" because of its remarkably accurate portrayal of a psychopath.¹⁹ This "act" is a matter of survival for a psychopath, lest their "inhumanity" be discovered. After all, most people do not react positively to a child or adult who potentially can, as Hare put it, "torture and mutilate [a human being] with about the same sense of concern that we feel when we carve a turkey."²⁰

Psychopaths also keep up their "psychopathic fiction" by being charming conversationalists. They expertly tell "unlikely but convincing" stories about themselves, easily blending truth with lies. Not only can they lie effortlessly, they are completely unfazed when caught in a lie. They simply rework their story, to the befuddlement of those who know the truth. They may feign remorse, but are equally skilled at rationalizing their behavior, often portraying *themselves* as the victims (and blaming the real victims). One female psychopath complained that no one cared about how she felt, having lost both her children. In fact, *she* was the one who had murdered them. In cases like this, the mask slips ever so slightly, as when the less intelligent psychopath attempts to use emotional concepts he cannot understand. One inmate told Hare, "Yeah, sure, I feel remorse [for the crime]." However, he didn't "feel bad inside about it."²¹

Even their violent outbursts of "rage" are carefully controlled displays. One relatively self-aware psychopath revealed, "There are emotions - a whole spectrum of them - that I know only through

words, through reading and in my immature imagination. I can imagine I feel these emotions (know, therefore, what they are), but I do not."²² Another, confused when asked how he *felt*, was asked about the *physical* sensations of emotion and responded, "Of course! I'm not a robot. I really get pumped up when I have sex or when I get into a fight."²³ Capable of only the most primal body-based feelings, the psychopath has no intense emotions to be in control of; any display of such is an act with the intent to manipulate.

As to the causes of this disturbing disorder, researchers are now confident that, contrary to the once common belief that psychopathy must be caused by childhood trauma, there is a substantial genetic and biological basis for psychopathy. In his 2007 update on the last twenty years of psychopathy research, Robert Hare comments: "I might note that the early results from behavioral genetics research are consistent with the evolutionary psychology view that psychopathy is less a result of a neurobiological defect than a heritable, adaptive life-strategy."²⁴ Or, as he put it in *Without Conscience*:

I think [childhood experiences] play an important role in shaping what nature has provided [i.e. "a profound inability to experience empathy and the complete range of emotions"]. Social factors and parenting practices influence the way the disorder develops and is expressed in behavior. Thus, an individual with a mix of psychopathic personality traits who grows up in a stable family and has access to positive social and educational resources might become a con artist or white-collar criminal, or **perhaps a somewhat shady entrepreneur, politician, or professional**. Another individual, with much the same personality traits but from a deprived and disturbed background, might become a drifter, mercenary, or violent criminal. ... One implication of this view for the criminal justice system is that the quality of family life has much less influence on the antisocial behaviors of psychopaths than it does on the behavior of most people.²⁵

In line with this understanding, psychopathy can be detected at an early age. By the age of 10 or 12, most psychopaths exhibit serious behavioral problems like persistent lying, cheating, theft, fire setting, truancy, class disruption, substance abuse, vandalism, violence, bullying, running away, precocious sexuality, cruelty to animals. One psychopath smiled when he reminisced to Hare about tying puppies to a rail to use their heads for baseball-batting practice.²⁶ However, the exact causes (and possible steps to prevent it in infancy and early childhood) are still unknown.

Children predisposed to psychopathy who do not show obvious signs later in life probably become successful at avoiding detection because of such factors as increased intelligence and abilities to better plan and control their behavior. While the vast majority of research has been conducted on prison populations, because of the relative ease of research opportunities, the concept of the *successful* psychopath (whether that means he is not criminal or simply doesn't get caught) is a relatively recent topic of interest for specialists and is not yet clearly defined or publicly understood, just as the term "psychopath" was in the early twentieth century.

It is these psychopaths - the ones who avoid detection - who become successful and ruthless politicians and government insiders, as was the case with Hermann Göring and Lavrentiy Beria (who will be discussed in future columns) and is probably the case with contemporary politicians like Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, American ex-Vice President Dick Cheney, and Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. These men achieve the heights of power, and they are dangerous.

Notes

1. A transcript of the talk is available [here](#)

2. "Ex-Madoff Operations Director Arrested by FBI", [Reuters](#), February 25, 2010
3. "Participants in the Madoff investment scandal," [Wikipedia](#), accessed March 17, 2010
4. Tim Shipman, "Bernard Madoff: how did he get away with it for so long?", [telegraph.co.uk](#), December 20, 2008
5. YouTube [video](#)
6. Lucinda Franks, "Madoff Employee Breaks Silence", [The Daily Beast](#), March 19, 2009
7. Mark Seal, "Madoff's World", [Vanity Fair](#), April 2009
8. Julie Creswell and Landon Thomas Jr., "The Talented Mr. Madoff", [New York Times](#), January 24, 2009
9. Katy Brace, "Psychologist calls Madoff a psychopath", [wptv.com](#), January 29, 2009
10. Cleckley, H. 1988 [1941], *The Mask of Sanity* (Augusta, Georgia: Emily S. Cleckley), 19, PDF available [here](#)
11. Ibid, viii
12. Ibid, ix
13. Goldner et al. (2002) put the prevalence of schizophrenia at 0.55% of the general population, and while accurate studies of psychopathy in the general population have yet to be done, recently a few limited studies show that the low limit for psychopathy is 0.6% (Coid et al., 2009). Some estimates go many times higher than that figure, factoring in *successful* psychopaths.
14. Cleckley, 33
15. Hare, R. D. 1999 [1995], *Without Conscience: The Disturbing World of Psychopaths Among Us* (New York: Guilford Press), 121, 195
16. Ibid, 41
17. Ibid, 63
18. Babiak, P. & Hare, R. D. 2006, *Snakes In Suits: When Psychopaths Go To Work* (New York: ReganBooks), 50
19. Cleckley, 326
20. Hare, 45
21. Ibid, 41
22. Ibid, 52-3
23. Ibid, 54
24. Hare, R. D. 2007, 'Forty Years Aren't Enough: Recollections, Prognostications, and Random Musings,' In Herve, H., and Yuille, J. C. (eds) *The Psychopath: Theory, Research, and Practice*, pp. 3 - 28 (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates), 14. **However, recent studies have shown distinct differences in the brain functioning of psychopaths when compared to normal individuals.** See Oakley, B. 2007, *Evil Genes: Why Rome Fell, Hitler Rose, Enron Failed, and My Sister Stole My Mother's Boyfriend* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books).
25. Hare (1999), 173 - 4
26. Ibid, 66 - 7

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Ponerology 101: The Truth Behind the War on Terror

Harrison Koehli
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Human relationships are plagued by fear. This cycle all too often begins in our first relationship with our parents. Too self-absorbed to recognize what their child truly requires of them, many parents betray their own child's weakness and dependency on his caregivers - his emotional need for comfort, security, trust, and the loving acceptance of those closest to him. Having missed out on these important periods of growth, this boy, now a parent himself, may come to feel threatened by the emotional needs of his own child, becoming dependent on his own children and spouse to provide what he never had. The vicious cycle spirals on, and in turn, his own children learn to stifle their needs, deny their own feelings, and live as hollow reflections of the needs of their father. When a child must meet the emotional needs of a parent, and not the other way around, the parent-child relationship is inverted. [Stephanie Donaldson-Pressman and Robert Pressman](#) call this the 'narcissistic family dynamic', and the problems it causes are directly relevant to the vast geopolitical problems the world currently faces.



**Fearful children -
fearful adults. Grist
for the psychopath's
mill.**

Such children, like their parents, seek some source of comfort, some sense of security, but not knowing where to look and what to look out for, they often find it in all the wrong places: their own children, their lovers, their work, some religious or political cause. As much as they may deny it, they are motivated by the very fears they experienced as children - afraid of being alone, not belonging, uncertain, unloved, confused, abandoned. They find shelter from the pain in some literal or symbolic arms of embrace, yet it is incomplete in some way, like the 'security' of a sinking ship or of a castle built on foundations of sand. Not wanting to let go, and face that pain again, they shore up their defenses - a rallying of troops to give 'the people', their own fragmented personalities, a sense of security. But such a cover-up is built upon and dependent on lies, things half-seen through the lens of denied and distorted emotion. We may be denying that we are in a relationship with a psychopath, someone who, despite the abuse and mental torture they subject us to, offers us some sense of comfort and stability in life. Or we may deny our own betrayal of our loved ones' emotional needs: the child we criticize and deform according to our own twisted ideals or the lover we demand to be someone they are not.

I find it fascinating how these dynamics of a single human soul mirror so well the delusions of the many. Just as we rally our mental forces to hold onto that equilibrium we desperately fear losing, we rally our military forces to protect us from enemies that do not exist, covering up problems at home that dwarf those projected 'out there'. How does this come to be? So far in this series, I've described [psychopaths](#) - individuals devoid of conscience, incapable of remorse, and hungry for power - and their infiltration of [corporations](#) and [politics](#) - two seats of power in the modern era.

Manipulating mass emotion, particularly fear, is their *modus operandi*. It's commonly said that politicians exploit fear, but what is missing from this truism is an understanding of exactly what motivates them to do so, why they're so good at it, and the extent to which they go about doing so. Psychopaths understand human behavior, often better than we understand ourselves. In the last article I quoted a diagnosed psychopath, [Sam Vaknin](#), describing how he used emotional abuse

and insults to break down his victims. It was just one example of the special psychological knowledge possessed by psychopaths, refined after a lifetime of observing and interacting with 'others' whose foreign emotional reactions strike them as so comical and ridiculous. When this special knowledge is translated onto the global stage, you get geopolitics and all the propaganda and lies that accompany it.

Yes, psychopaths crave power and will do anything they can to hold on to it, but even that does not get to the heart of the matter. If a psychopath is not born into a position of influence and power, where he has license to do whatever he feels compelled to do without recourse, he feels like a slave in a system he cannot quite understand. He is hindered by incomprehensible laws, arbitrary social customs and interpersonal rules that make no sense to him. He is not free to be himself. To a psychopath, true freedom is simply license to use, abuse, and torture other people - physically, emotionally and financially. Any hindrance on that bloated sense of entitlement is a nuisance he dreams of removing by instituting a social system of his own creation. **This is the true definition of 'totalitarianism', 'fascism', or a 'new world order' - a system of government where the psychopath is not arrested for beating his wife, killing his enemies, making emotional wrecks of his family and close acquaintances, stalking those who know his true nature and threaten to reveal it to more of those 'others' who so persecute him.** In our world, the 'war on terror' is the means to this end. New terms like 'homegrown radicalization' and 'extraordinary rendition' are created, while familiar terms are appropriated and special meanings for those 'in the know' are instilled alongside the ordinary meanings understood by the common people.

In an [interview](#) in 1989 entitled "Recollections of 23 Years of Service to the US", Pentagon insider Col. Fletcher Prouty described how the days of traditional warfare were over. The new wars would be economic, and the new enemy would be terrorism. This is exactly what has happened (see Naomi Klein's [The Shock Doctrine](#)). But, as many have come to know, there is much more to the 'War on Terror' than meets the eye. The long history of COINTELPRO-type operations in the US, whereby groups deemed to be potential 'dissidents' are infiltrated and co-opted in a direction favorable to the [National Security State](#), along with [ECHELON](#) surveillance of anyone deemed a potential 'threat' by the political psychopaths in power, makes it absolutely certain that any potential 'terrorist' group in the US has long since been identified, observed, and infiltrated by US intelligence and law enforcement. In fact, this has been the case the world over.

In the aftermath of WWII, and with the advent of a new 'Cold War', various stay-behind operations were formed in the countries of Europe (see Daniele Ganser's [NATO's Secret Armies](#)). These groups formed the basis of national resistance movements against the threat of Communist takeover. Unbeknownst to many involved, they were sponsored largely by NATO and the CIA. When it became clear that the threat of Communist invasion was minimal (these movements were active in such countries as Italy, France, Belgium, and West Germany), the focus shifted from external threats to potential internal threats - local Communists and the 'threat' they posed to the then-current power structures. The CIA funded and supported various extremist right-wing groups in this cause. Neo-Nazi groups and other extremist groups were infiltrated and controlled by the CIA and the secret services of the various European countries.

What was the result? A series of terror attacks struck the civilian populations of these countries. Left-wing groups and individuals were blamed by the governments, who then entrenched their power with the support of terrified populations when they turned to them for 'support' and 'security'. However, the attacks were actually carried out by the very groups that had been infiltrated and controlled by the governments - groups who were then protected by these governments, like in the

Milan bombing of 1969 which killed sixteen, or the Tuscany railroad bombings in the early '70s. Similarly, as former BBC Middle East correspondent Alan Hart observes (see his [Zionism: The Real Enemy of the Jews](#)), Israel and its intelligence service, Mossad, has long-since infiltrated every Arab government and 'terrorist' organization. In fact, Mossad had agents tailing several of the alleged 9/11 hijackers in the months prior to the attacks (see Justin Raimondo's [The Terror Enigma](#)). Not to mention the fact that Osama Bin Laden had been a CIA asset until [the day before 9/11](#), as had many of his fellow [Mujaheddin](#) in their fight against the Soviets.

When you put these facts together, they paint a striking picture. Western intelligence agencies have long had inside access to various 'terrorist' groups and used them in a self-described 'strategy of tension'. And yet the US and its allies are currently fighting an endless war against these nebulous groups that are in fact CIA assets. Why? As Hermann Goering said to his captors at Nuremberg, "It is always a simple matter to drag the people along [to war] ... Voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. **All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the peacemakers for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in any country.**" More truthfully, attack them, tell them they have been attacked by 'communists' or 'terrorists', then denounce the 'liberals', 'bleeding hearts', and 'peace-lovers' as 'terrorist sympathizers'.

If we look closely at any 'terrorist attack' in the last 10 years - even the foiled attempts - we see a long list of connected [intelligence assets](#), [FBI agents](#) acting as 'Al Qaeda recruiters', [informants](#), and [patsies](#) manipulated for the cause. In recent years, [Russia](#), [Britain](#), [Israel](#), and the United States have all been caught red-handed attempting such deceptions. Put simply, political psychopaths are in control of the governments of our world. Goaded on by a disdain for human morality, a drive for power and influence, and a desire to create a world where they are the ones calling the shots, they have created an enemy to strike fear into the hearts of humanity and to exploit the fear that is already present. **Terrorism does not exist; at least not in the way governments and the media present it. Terrorist groups have long been infiltrated, created, or otherwise controlled by these political psychopaths. In essence, these men and women have murdered their own civilians and blamed a fictitious enemy in order to gain popular support for a cause that will never be won.** The 'War on Terror' is an endless one, because these people do not and cannot see an end to their power. And while we denounce the 'evil terrorists' and the 'homegrown radicalization' of our own citizens, the political psychopaths merely see us as suckers, mindless actors in a play of their own creation. They are like the con man who says, "Well if they were so stupid as to believe me, they deserved it!"

If anything is to change, and if we are ever to end this ridiculous 'war' against an abstract noun, two things are needed. First, we need to take steps towards removing political psychopaths from office, making it impossible for psychopaths to achieve any position of political, corporate, or economic power. Giving psychopaths power and influence and expecting them to be adequate leaders is like expecting a blind man to drive a bus. Psychopaths are color blind when it comes to issues having to do with the well being of humanity. Second, we must come to grips with our true history, and what is really behind the spin of the current 'war on terror'. We are arresting, torturing, and murdering innocent people along with patsies whose controllers get away with everything because they operate behind the scenes. Without ponerology, things will only get worse.

Comment: Go to [Part 6](#) in the Ponerology 101 series



