

PSYCHOPATHOLOGY

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How is it conceivable that all our lauded technological progress - our very Civilization - is like the axe in the hand of the pathological criminal?

Albert Einstein

Just as civilization first converts the living to the dead psychologically and socially (including perceptually), and then physically—perceiving trees as dollar bills makes deforestation inevitable—so, too, civilization needs to be reversed in the same order, first psychologically and socially (including perceptually), and then physically. If we could help people to not see trees as dollar bills, we would not have to fight so hard to stop deforestation. We might not have to fight at all. The same is true of course of rapists and other abusers: if we could help them to see women as women and not as objects to be exploited, not nearly so many women would get raped. This is true of all who perceive themselves entitled, and to all forms of exploitation by all exploiters. If we can change their ways of perceiving, their behavior will change.

But there are two problems with this. The first is that we don't have time. Spotted owls and marbled murrelets are being extirpated right now, and we don't have the time to change the way Charles Hurwitz perceives the world. Even if we did, we'd then have to change the way his replacement perceives the world, as Hurwitz would very soon be sacked for no longer maximizing profits. While I know that changing hearts and minds is

desperately important, and while I know that this is especially true for the young (which is why I wrote a book on education¹⁷⁹), I also know that if we wait on this, much of the world will be dead before these children are adults (presuming that somehow we are powerful, persuasive, and pervasive enough to overcome the effects of child abuse, industrial education, advertising, etc. on all of these children, if we were powerful and pervasive enough to bring about this change right now, why wouldn't we just go ahead and bring down the dams ourselves?).

The second problem is that even if we did have the time, not everyone could be converted. Remember the monkeys made permanently insane by their isolated upbringing. Remember the recidivism for abusers. What's worse is that the psychopaths who run this culture are socially rewarded for making antisocial, indeed psychopathic decisions. Charles Hurwitz is rewarded very well for destroying the redwood forests of northern California. Within the context of this culture he would be a fool to change his behavior. Of course this is true for every abuser.

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I just used the term psychopath to describe Charles Hurwitz and others who guide this culture. I don't use this term spuriously.¹⁸⁰ A psychopath can be defined as one who willfully does damage without remorse: "Such individuals are impulsive, insensitive to other's needs, and unable to anticipate the consequences of their behavior, to follow long-term goals, or to tolerate frustration. The psychopathic individual is characterized by absence of the guilt feelings and anxiety that normally accompany an antisocial act."¹⁸¹

Dr. Robert Hare, who has long studied psychopaths, makes clear that “among the most devastating features of psychopathy are a callous disregard for the rights of others and a propensity for predatory and violent behaviors. Without remorse, psychopaths charm and exploit others for their own gain. They lack empathy and a sense of responsibility, and they manipulate, lie and con others with no regard for anyone’s feelings.”¹⁸² Hare also states, “Too many people hold the idea that psychopaths are essentially killers or convicts. The general public hasn’t been educated to see beyond the social stereotype to understand that psychopaths can be entrepreneurs, politicians, CEOs and other successful individuals who may never see the inside of a prison.”¹⁸³

You can take your pick between these definitions. Both work for Hurwitz, both work for corporations and those who run them, and both work for the culture at large.

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Speaking of psychopaths, today *The New York Times* ran an article entitled “Bad news (and good) on Arctic warming.” The article begins, “The first thorough assessment of a decades-long Arctic warming trend shows the region is undergoing profound changes, including sharp retreats of glaciers and sea ice, thawing of permafrost, and shifts in ocean and atmospheric conditions that are likely to harm native communities, wildlife and economic activities, while offering some benefits.”

Benefits? Here they are: “The potential benefits of the changes include projected growth in marine fish stocks and improved prospects for agriculture and timber harvests in some regions, as well as expanded access to Arctic waters.”¹⁸⁴ There, sea-bed deposits

of oil and gas that have until now been cloaked in thick shifting crusts of sea ice could soon be exploitable, and ice-free trade routes over Siberia could significantly cut shipping distances between Europe and Asia in the summer.”¹⁸⁵

To speak of “benefits” such as these at the expense of the natural world is insane: it is to be out of touch with physical reality.

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Global warming may be far worse than any of us fear. I can do no better in describing this than John Atcheson, in the *Baltimore Sun*: “There are enormous quantities of naturally occurring greenhouse gases trapped in ice-like structures in the cold northern muds and at the bottom of the seas. These ices, called clathrates, contain 3,000 times as much methane as is in the atmosphere. Methane is more than 20 times as strong a greenhouse gas as carbon dioxide.

“Now here’s the scary part. A temperature increase of merely a few degrees would cause these gases to volatilize and ‘burp’ into the atmosphere, which would further raise temperatures, which would release yet more methane, heating the Earth and seas further, and so on. There’s 400 gigatons of methane locked in the frozen arctic tundra—enough to start this chain reaction—and the kind of warming the Arctic Council [a group of world-class climatologists convened to discuss the state-of-the-art understanding of global warming] predicts is sufficient to melt the clathrates and release these greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

“Once triggered, this cycle could result in a runaway global warming the likes of

which even the most pessimistic doomsayers aren't talking about.

“An apocalyptic fantasy concocted by hysterical environmentalists?”

“Unfortunately, no. Strong geologic evidence suggests something similar has happened at least twice before.

“The most recent of these catastrophes occurred 251 million years ago, at the end of the Permian period, when a series of methane burps came close to wiping out all life on Earth. More than 94 percent of the marine species present in the fossil record disappeared suddenly as oxygen levels plummeted and life teetered on the verge of extinction. Over the ensuing 500,000 years, a few species struggled to gain a foothold in the hostile environment. It took 20 million years to 30 million years for even rudimentary coral reefs to re-establish themselves and for forests to regrow. In some areas, it took more than 100 million years for ecosystems to reach their former healthy diversity.”¹⁸⁶

Remind me again the benefits of global warming.

Remind me again why we do not use any and all means necessary—and I mean any and all means necessary—to stop this from happening.

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How many times do we need to say it: Global warming may be far worse than any of us fear. Another article: “Researchers have found a new and potentially devastating danger from the huge volumes of carbon dioxide (CO₂) produced by industry and transport, already threatening the planet with climate change.

“Now, they warn, it is also rapidly turning the world's oceans to acid as it is

dissolved in sea water, and putting an enormous array of marine life at risk. Ocean acidification [as dissolved carbon dioxide reacts with water to form carbonic acid] may wipe out much of the microscopic plankton at the base of the marine food web, and have a knock-on fatal effect up through shellfish to major human food species such as cod. It is already having a serious impact on organisms such as coral, and putting a question mark against the future of coral reefs.”¹⁸⁷

Remind me one more time of the benefits of global warming.

Remind me again why we do not use any and all means necessary—and I mean any and all means necessary—to stop this from happening.

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Psychopathology in action.

Scientists have realized that birds are intelligent. According to a *New York Times* article: “Today, in the journal *Nature Neuroscience Review*, an international group of avian experts is issuing what amounts to a manifesto. Nearly everything written in anatomy textbooks about the brains of birds is wrong, they say.¹⁸⁸ The avian brain is as complex, flexible and inventive as any mammalian brain, they argue, and it is time to adopt a more accurate nomenclature that reflects a new understanding of the anatomies of bird and mammal brains.”

So far so good. Of course we don’t need scientists to tell us birds are intelligent: birds do a fine job of that, if only we pay attention.

This realization that birds are intelligent is part of a revolution, according to Dr. Peter Marler. Once again, so far so good. But his revolution is not the same as mine. Here

is his: “I think that birds are going to replace the white rat as the favored subject for studying functional neuroanatomy.”¹⁸⁹

Let’s be clear: after all these years scientists realize what they should have known all along, which is that birds are actually sentient, intelligent, complex creatures, and their first inclination is to torture them.

This is the essence of psychopathology. This is the essence of civilization.

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Just as earlier I went through the characteristics of abusers and showed they were applicable to this culture as a whole, I’d like to do the same, only far more briefly, for characteristics of psychopaths. The characteristics come from the ICD-10 Classification of Mental and Behavioral Disorders, World Health Organization, Geneva, 1992, section F60.2 on Dissocial (Antisocial) Personality Disorder:

- A: Callous unconcern for the feelings of others
- B: Gross and persistent attitude of irresponsibility and disregard for social norms, rules, and obligations
- C: Incapacity to maintain enduring relationships, though having no difficulty in establishing them
- D: Very low tolerance to frustration and a low threshold for discharge of aggression, including violence
- E: Incapacity to experience guilt and to profit from experience, particularly

punishment

F: Marked proneness to blame others, or to offer plausible rationalizations, for the behaviour that has brought the patient into conflict with society¹⁹⁰

I'm sure you can see how these apply to the culture at large, and to those who run it. But let's quickly go through them.

Callous unconcern for the feelings of others. What measure would you like? Have the civilized ever cared for the feelings of the indigenous whose land they've stolen? How about the half-million Iraqi children whose deaths Madame Albright said were a price those in power were willing to pay?

How many times have we heard that emotion must be removed from all scientific study? How many times have we been told that emotions must never interfere with the decisions having to do with cold hard cash?

Not only are the feelings of those to be destroyed by this culture given, at best, token attention, in most cases they're "scientifically" denied. Do chickens in slaughterhouses have feelings? How about pigs? How about monkeys in vivisection labs? How about trees? How about rivers? How about stones? This culture not only has "callous unconcern" for the feelings of these others, but denies the feelings even exist.

Next, gross and persistent attitude of irresponsibility and disregard for social norms, rules, and obligations. Obviously the civilized are persistently irresponsible: I don't believe it's possible to be more irresponsible than to kill the planet. So far as the latter part of this characteristic, because the society we're talking about is the entity suffering from this disorder, we cannot use its norms, rules, and obligations as the

standard by which we judge. That would be akin to asking whether Ted Bundy was acting according to his own norms, rules, and obligations when he raped and killed women. And what are the norms, rules, and obligations of this culture? Norms: The rape of women, the abuse of children, the destruction of the landbases. Rules: Laws made by the powerful, for the powerful, to maintain their power. Obligations: To amass as much power as possible, to never deviate from premise four of this book; to always—*always*—protect abusers and abusive social structures.

But let's move to a larger scale, and talk about the norms, rules, and obligations of living sustainably on this planet, such as the fundamental predator-prey relationship,¹⁹¹ giving at least as much to your landbase as you take, and living in long-term infrahuman and interspecies cooperative arrangements. I have read scores of accounts of the indigenous saying they do not understand the civilized, because the civilized violate every rule of living. Recall the words of the Sauk Makataimeeshiekiakiak (Black Hawk),¹⁹² “An Indian who is as bad as the white men could not live in our nation; he would be put to death, and eat up by the wolves. The white men are bad schoolmasters; they carry false looks, and deal in false actions; they smile in the face of the poor Indian to cheat him; they shake them by the hand to gain their confidence, to make them drunk, to deceive them, to ruin our wives. We told them to let us alone, and keep away from us; but they followed on, and beset our paths, and they coiled among us, like the snake. They poisoned us by their touch. We were not safe. We lived in danger. We were becoming like them, hypocrites and liars, adulterers, lazy drones, all talkers, and no workers.”¹⁹³

Next, psychopaths have an incapacity to maintain enduring relationships, though no difficulty in establishing them. How long has this culture been on this continent? I live

on Tolowa land, and the Tolowa lived here at least twelve thousand years (if you believe science, or since the beginning of time if you believe Tolowa myths instead). They had enduring relationships with their human and nonhuman neighbors. We do not. It's hard to maintain enduring relationships with those you exploit.

Psychopaths have a very low tolerance to frustration and a low threshold for discharge of aggression, including violence. How many times has the United States invaded other countries? How many of the indigenous have been slaughtered by the civilized? What slight excuses are always made for this aggression?

The next characteristic is an incapacity to experience guilt and to profit from experience, particularly punishment. How much guilt does Charles Hurwitz experience over the destruction of ancient redwood forests? After deforesting the Middle East, The Mediterranean, Western Europe, Britain, Ireland, much of North and South America, Africa, Oceania, and Asia, and with damage from this deforestation increasing daily, can we honestly say that those who run this culture are learning from prior experience? And how much do those in this culture profit from the repeated experience of failure as technology after introduced technology is promised to be clean yet inevitable leads to widespread destruction? How much are they learning from the experience of changing the climate through burning coal, oil, and natural gas? Will that stop them from pursuing genetic engineering? How about nanotech? Will they learn from their pursuit of nukes? Pesticides? Dams? Of course not.

Finally, there's a marked proneness to blame others or to offer plausible rationalizations for the behavior that has brought the psychopath into conflict with society. How much responsibility has Hurwitz take for his violence? George W. Bush for his?

They typical rapist for his? Bush blames forest fires for his urge to deforest. Clinton and company blamed beetles. It's the same old psychopathic story. And I'm sick of it.

I've long used the simile that sharing our finite planet with the dominant culture is like being locked in a room with a psychopath.¹⁹⁴ There's no way out, and although the psychopath may choose other targets first, eventually it will be our turn. Eventually we'll have to fight. There's no way around it. And the sooner we fight back—the sooner we kill this psychopath—the more life will remain.