

# FREE-MAN'S PERSPECTIVE

How Life, Liberty & Sanity Can Win

Issue #25

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## The Mystery of Iniquity: Cultured Sociopathy



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There are few things more shocking to us than someone who kills their own child. (And rightly so.) We hear the occasional story of a truly deranged person committing such an atrocity from time to time, but we would never dream that a normal person could do so. Such an act would seem inexplicable. At several points in history, however, this *was* acceptable conduct.

Furthermore, these people were “normal” in the eyes of most others. They were not considered monstrous.

I don't like focusing on what is bad in the world, and I certainly don't

like to shock my readers, but in this issue of FMP, I'm going to examine actions like these and explain how they happen.

As it turns out, by finding the root cause of these evils, we also uncover the root of many smaller evils, such as:

- People who hold to their political and religious beliefs, even when they damage their own children.
- Men who feel fine about mis-treating and devaluing women.
- People who feel fine abusing people with different skin types.
- People who hate those with different religions.
- People who treat immigrants as low and dirty things.

## THE TRUTH ABOUT EVIL

When thinking about evil, people nearly always think of obvious, nasty villains: powerful, vicious monsters. They do this because it is oddly comforting.

This may sound strange at first, but *monsters absolve us*.

In actual fact, it is not monsters who do most of the evil on Earth. It is the average people... people who find it easy and comforting to blame monsters, rather than people like themselves.

Here is a quote from the *Babylon 5* series that explains this concept quite well:

*Nobody takes power; they're given power by the rest of us, because we're stupid, or afraid, or both. The Germans in 1939, the Russians in 1917... they handed over power to people they thought could settle scores... get the trains running on time... restore their prestige. They did it because it was what they wanted. Afterwards, like children who have eaten too much candy after dinner, they denied that it was their fault. "No, it was them!" It's always 'them'.*

The vast majority of evil on Earth is performed by average people who get carried along in the mystery of iniquity... in what I am calling *cultured sociopathy*.

The philosopher and writer, Hannah Arendt, after the Nazi Nuremberg trials, the trial of Adolph Eichmann, and a great deal of study on totalitarianism, wrote of *the banality of evil*. (Something "banal" is common to the point of being boring.) This was her conclusion:

*The sad truth is that most evil is done by people who never make up their minds to be good or evil.*

There was another author, whose name I do not recall, who did a detailed study of the Stasi (the East German secret police) after they disbanded in 1989. He summarized his work with this statement:

*If only I had met, on this search, a single person who was clearly evil. But they were all just weak, shaped by circumstances, self-deceiving, human, all too human. Yet the sum of their actions was a great evil.*

All the big, famous evils on Earth – the holocausts of World War I (the wholesale slaughter of Armenians) and World War II (the wholesale slaughter of Jews), the intentional starving of Ukrainians under Stalin, the unparalleled mass deaths under Mao, and so on – have involved millions of obedient participants. They could not have happened otherwise.

Left to themselves, Hitler, Stalin and Mao would have killed a relatively small number of people, but with their acquiescent and obedient masses, they killed approximately 100 million. (So many that direct counting is impossible and historical population figures have to be used.)

This is what happens in real life; most actual evil is not done willfully, but by people who abandon their wills in an effort to avoid feeling.

As we go through this issue, I will explain how it happens and what can be done about the problem. In short, I want to examine and uncover the mystery of iniquity: how normal people can do horrible things and feel okay about it.

We will see that a single, utterly common mechanism is at play in more or less all of the world's horrific acts, from people mistreating their children to cooperating in holocausts. The big evils function in the same way as most of the smaller evils.

Even more troubling is the fact that this mechanism has been cultured into humanity over millennia – it is not particularly natural to us.

But, I am getting ahead of myself. Let's establish our first point with one of the ugliest examples and get it out of the way:

## INFANTICIDE

The quotation below is from a group of manuscripts discovered at an ancient rubbish dump near Oxyrhynchus Egypt in 1896. The precise date of this passage is uncertain, but it is definitely Roman. In it, a man working far from home writes back to his wife. Notice how normal all of this is, aside from the shocking eight words in the middle. He begins by letting his wife know of his affairs, tells her not to worry and that he will send money as soon as he can. He then concludes by confirming his enduring love, saying “how can I forget you?”

*Know that we are still even now in Alexandria. Do not worry if they all come back and I stay in Alexandria. I urge and beg you, be concerned about the child and if I receive my wages soon, I will send them to you. If by chance you give birth, if it is a boy, let it be, if it is a girl, throw it out. You said to Aphrodisias, “Do not forget me.” How can I forget you? So, I urge you not to worry.*

How can this normal man say, “if it is a girl, throw it out”? It doesn't seem possible. Just as it doesn't seem possible for a torturer to go home, kiss his children, and tuck them into bed. Yet, these things do happen, and the people who do them are accepted by their friends and neighbors.

## THE CORE PROBLEM

The real mind-warp in this case is that the man loves his female wife, but wants to kill his equally female daughter, simply *because* she is female.

This train of thought is massively self-contradictory, but it was calmly accepted by an otherwise normal man. It was also accepted by his otherwise normal friends, family and neighbors.

This disconnect – this gash opened in the mind of the man – is where the mystery of iniquity resides. And, again, this disconnect is created the same way and operates the same way, whether for the horrifying case of infanticide or the far more common cases of devaluing, hating and abusing 'the other.'

The great psychologist, Boris Sidis, described this “gash in the mind” as a *disaggregation of*

*consciousness*. In other words, the gash is an area in which reasoning is pulled away from its connection to the rest of the brain, leaving the mind to act robotically, amorally and without a will of its own.

Sidis says that when willful consciousness is pulled away, the *subwaking self* acts alone, and that this subwaking self is servile, cowardly, and devoid of morality.

Such descriptions of unthinking human actions (Sidis calls them *somnambulent*, or sleep-walking) match my observations, and I suppose that they match yours as well.

## NATURAL MORALITY

As usual, to properly understand what is wrong, it is useful to first understand what is right. And what is right regarding human morality is both simple and familiar to us.

Humans have, by nature, a built-in morality mechanism. (See my book [Entropy & Divinity](#), also on [Kindle](#), for a broader explanation.) It is the failure of this mechanism which leads to iniquity.

I am, by the way, using “iniquity” to mean just about the same thing as “injustice.”

What I am calling *natural morality* is easy to explain, and in fact has been explained many times in the past. The concept seldom sticks with people, however, because all the larger forces in this world function by a contrary mechanism. (Which I'll cover in a future issue of FMP.)

While our world is currently filled with popular slogans that define *good* as “selflessness,” that definition is false and the truth is just the opposite.

What we commonly call ethics, morality, or simply “what is right,” are all functions of self-reference, and must begin with self-centeredness if we expect them to work in the real world.

I know that this is contrary to what we have been taught, but it is true.

Natural morality functions via empathy, and has no other mode of operation. You can see this reliance on self-reference and empathy in our two classic statements of morality:

***Do to others as you would have them do to you.*** “As you would have them do to you” is a precise call to empathy, and it relies – *fully* – on what you like for yourself... on your self-interest.

***Love your neighbor as yourself.*** This formulation is utterly dependent on you first loving yourself, and only then extending it to others. This is clearly a statement of empathy.

More or less every serious thinker in history has arrived at this same formulation, and these are precisely the statements that must be driven out for the horrific acts of humanity to transpire. No mother could love her child as herself and yet kill it. No functionary could love his neighbor as himself and still carry away all of his neighbor's food.

Empathy must be destroyed – or at least turned off – for these things to happen.

This problem has been with us for all of recorded history. For example, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, when the Roman gladiatorial games (including humans being fed to wild, starved beasts) were proposed in Athens. Demonax, the Cynic philosopher, objected, saying:

*Men of Athens, before you pass this motion, do not forget to destroy the altar of Pity.*

Our minds are *structured* to decide by ourselves and for ourselves – using a mechanism of pure self-

interest. They use the best information and imagination available, with no obstructions, in order to produce the best possible decisions for themselves.

Empathy is the trick we use to extend this pure process to others, whom we assume to be like ourselves.

You can see the simplicity of this concept in a simple chart:

Self-interested decision	Extended to others
As you love yourself	Love your neighbor
As you'd have them do to you	Do to them

If our decision mechanism produces the purest possible decisions regarding ourselves, and if we then consider another person and *imagine that we are them...* and if we make decisions while in this state... then our decisions regarding others will be as pure as those we make regarding ourselves.

This process encompasses the core of morality. It is natural to us. Furthermore, no other method of achieving morality can compare to this one – the results are not even close.

So, morality, in order to be effective, must rest upon our ability to make the most self-interested decisions possible... and then use the empathy routine to apply our self-interest mechanism to others.

And, again, this is a process that has been recognized by the very best human minds, though all of our history, including these men:

- Thales
- Aristotle
- Moses
- Hillel
- Jesus
- Epictetus
- Confucius
- Buddha

And many others, of course.

## HOW CULTURED SOCIOPATHY WORKS

Let's begin with definitions to keep things clear:

1. A *sociopath* is a person who lacks empathy. When we normally discuss *sociopaths*, we refer to people who are permanently without empathy.
2. A *cultured sociopath* is someone who has empathy, but who has been conditioned to shut it down or bypass it in certain situations.

Now, let's use some examples to illustrate how cultured sociopathy develops and operates in real human lives:

### The Tuskegee Experiments

In FMP #5 we covered the Tuskegee experiments, in which a group of medical professionals knowingly made hundreds of men (along with some of their wives and children) suffer greatly,



*for decades*, for no purpose whatsoever. The key player in this evil drama was a Nurse Eunice Rivers, so we will examine her. The photo below is of Nurse Rivers, visiting one of the study participants (a sharecropper) in a cotton field. This photo is from the 1950s; right in the middle of the study.



Nurse Rivers allowed hundreds of men to suffer with untreated syphilis from 1943 to 1972, even though a cheap, instant cure was available. But do not think she was malicious: she was not. Instead, she was as the writer on the Stasi described: *weak, shaped by circumstances, self-deceiving*.

Nurse Rivers did not hate the men she shepherded through the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiments; she legitimately cared about them. All of the participants testified to this fact. They were glad to be part of “Nurse Rivers' Lodge.”

But at the same time, Nurse Rivers opened a hole in her mind by turning away from the obvious truth. She decided against awareness, against reality, and turned away from consciousness when heroism was required.

Rather than facing the cost of heroism and unwilling to face her own cowardice, she pulled back her higher, reasoning faculties and opened a gap in her mind, abandoning her will to others to avoid the bad feelings that would come from the function of empathy.

She continued in this state for roughly thirty years, feeling okay about her actions almost all the time.

Nurse Rivers, as Hannah Arendt wrote, *never made up her mind to be good or evil*. And that was the problem. Rather than making up her mind (which was simple given the nature of the facts, but scary because of the consequences), Nurse Rivers pulled away from her own consciousness and opened a gash in her mind. This allowed her to follow the suggestions of

others while feeling nothing.

Nurse Rivers was not a monster: She was a decent human being, not a sociopath... except when it came to the Syphilis Experiments: There, she behaved monstrously without feeling monstrous. She was a situational sociopath.

This sociopathy was cultured in Nurse Rivers, beginning in childhood (when, like all of us, she was confronted by overpowering fears), then by the people who ran the study, who had authority and whose judgment she bowed to, and by the larger culture that worshipped authority, institutions and conformity.

## **Politics**

Nearly all of us have noticed, at one time or another, that politics makes people mean. This is, in fact, cultured sociopathy, by which people judge members of the other party to be less human, and for whom their empathy does not function.

[A recent study](#) measured the empathy of American Republicans and Democrats for each other, without using political questions. I won't go through the details of how they did it, but it involved feeling sympathy for people who were thirsty at the same time you were thirsty, or cold at the same time you were cold.

You'd certainly think that a thirsty man would feel some level of sympathy for another thirsty man, and normally, that would almost always be true, but this study showed that political identification killed natural sympathy.

People in the study felt sympathy for others of their own party nearly always, but for members of the opposite party, their sympathy functioned less than 10% of the time.

In other words, a contrary political identification killed empathy more than 90% of the time.

It is problematic to force humans into groups. Once group cohesion is made more important than the wills of individuals, the consciousness of people held in groups is stretched or even ripped. They are not allowed to hold to their own minds, are bullied into obedience, and intimidated into acknowledging the rightness of the group.

In such situations, forcibly-grouped humans engage in harmful coping techniques such as creating oppositional sub-groups, fighting for dominance, shaming and cruelty. In other words, gashes are opened in their minds as they engage in group-think, place all blame on the other group, and yet feel fine about it all.

## **Hitler's order-followers**

I don't especially like using Hitler as an example, since that story is often presented in a cartoonish and inaccurate way. Also, because it sometimes casts aspersions on Germans who weren't even born at the time. But, this is one holocaust that was well documented, making it especially useful for instruction.

The obedient Germans of the Third Reich were excellent examples of cultured sociopaths. They were raised to be obedient, the real meaning of which is to disregard your own consciousness and to follow the consciousness of others. This was enforced upon them as children and continued – intelligently and willfully – over years. The mass killings did not occur until Hitler had been in power for some years and had prepared people for them.

At first, the gash in the minds of obedient Germans was opened through intimidation, being made to do things they thought were wrong, and being forced to publicly endorse things that they did not approve in their hearts. Then they found shelter and meaning in the Reich; they feared to be cast as its opponent; they turned off their consciousness to whatever was contrary to authority and its masses. (In fairness, there were some Germans who ran away, and others who held to their consciousness.)

Understand that these people were able to think they were upholding the law, being patriotic, and doing their righteous duty. Few of them actually saw the inside of the death camps, so the gashes in their minds weren't stretched beyond their tolerance.

To blank-out horrifying stories was within their ability, and they did so. They did not feel like monsters.

The important point is that most of these people were able – because of the disaggregation of their consciousness – to continue through the war without feeling overly much. Their higher consciousness was disconnected from their reactive brain in the necessary areas.

Look at the photo below, of German civilians being brought through the death camps after liberation: they are horrified. These are not the responses of true sociopaths. These are the responses of people who were sociopathic only in certain areas, and who have been forced to see the consequences of their willfully blind obedience.



#### HOW THIS HAS BEEN CULTURED INTO US

Sadly, all of us have been conditioned for subservience, which means that we have been affected by cultured sociopathy ourselves. This conditioning has been provided by the state and by those who were aligned with them. Some states were aided by religion and others were not, not only has every state



done this, but every state is *forced* to do this.

It is far too expensive to rule men by force alone – people eventually get angry and attack the thugs who demand their crops, after which the rest of the thugs demand more compensation. Or, the farmers learn how to hide their crops, and adapt faster than the thugs can find their hiding places.

The economics of ruling the unwilling don't work. And, just to be thorough, let me add that the idea of men voluntarily creating states is nothing more than a myth. Here are historian Will Durant's thoughts on this question:

*No student takes seriously the seventeenth-century notion that states arose out of a "social contract" among individuals or between the people and the ruler.*

Rulers, from the beginning, faced a serious problem: You cannot just cage intelligent humans like you can beasts: they adapt and make rulership very difficult.

If you wish to rule humans effectively, you must subvert their wills and get them to obey willingly. Only when people are trained to acquiesce, do the economics of rulership really work.

What that means is that a ruler *must* find ways to make people believe that their wills are flawed and that paying too much attention to their own consciousness is wrong. He must make them question and even condemn their own judgment. So, that is precisely what rulers have done.

I will pass over the details of rulership's war on will in this issue, but I documented the beginning of rulership in last month's issue, FMP #24.

Take a look back at your life, and at the world around you, and notice how often you've been expected to obey regardless of your own opinion. How many times have you been instructed that you have a duty to give your money to state agents, and that questioning taxes is grossly rude and dangerous?

We have been injured and conditioned against self-referential courage, as have our friends, families and everyone else, a hundred generations deep. We have been on the losing side of a war against will.

How often were we expected, in childhood, to deny our own judgment? For example:

- Most of us were forced to respect people that scared us. (Dominating teachers, abusive ministers, twisted family members, and so on.)
- We faced continual demands to do as others said, or be hurt if we do not. (Obedience to a large number of authorities, without reasons.)
- We were made to agree with falsehoods. For example, it is common for children to notice someone who is angry, but to be told "No, I'm not angry." Then, they are punished if they persist in holding to the obvious conclusion of their observations.

At the same time as all this, we could not very well accept ourselves as cowards and weaklings. So, we took our first steps into the disaggregation of consciousness.

As adults, such absurdities continue, and we are expected to endow them with patriotic or religious sacredness.

**Respecting people that scare us** continues as we mouth pleasant slogans about tax gatherers, regulators and the many hurtful people and systems that control key aspects of our lives. And even when we do complain about them, we – very tellingly – instinctively lower our voices.

**Obey or be hurt** continues as “the law,” which is changed slightly to become *do what is written or be hurt*. Obedience is presented as a sacred duty, even though we know that the creators of these writings are liars; or, at best, mere men like ourselves.

**Agreeing that the angry person is not angry** continues as we deny our own eyes and minds in the many ways we honor lies as valid... or at least restrain ourselves from naming them.

I could go on about the Stanford Prison Experiments, Zimbardo's experiments on obedience, and more, but the point would be the same: The root of horrific actions is a split between the higher and lower brain functions, a disaggregation of consciousness, a gash in the mind. Furthermore that this split is cultured – nurtured – in the minds of otherwise normal people, making them into sociopaths in those areas.

This is the real root of evil on Earth. The few natural monsters who exist would be quickly eliminated if they couldn't get normal people to do their bidding.

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## Fixing The Problem

Cultured sociopathy can be repaired. The easier of the cases is to help others recover from it. The harder case is to get over it ourselves. Let's start with the harder case.

### OUR OWN RECOVERY

As I say, this is a problem that has affected us all, though probably in small ways. It is doubtful that there is anyone living on Earth who has not been touched by this.

There are two preliminary steps in fixing our injuries:

**Accept the fact that this is not really our fault.**

Sure, Nurse Rivers was responsible for what she did, but her early steps into sociopathy occurred when she was a child, overpowered by forces much larger than herself. That part wasn't really her fault – it was bad luck.

Likewise, when we were children, we were forced into overpowering situations and suffered damage in the process. That stinks, but it was not due to an inherent flaw in ourselves. And, it can be repaired.

**We must notice when we act robotically, and reclaim full consciousness.**

Consciousness implies responsibility, and we have been trained to fear and/or avoid responsibility, as if we were insufficient to it.

This may have been true when we were children, but it needn't be true as adults. Even in those situations we lack the ability to address, we can acknowledge the right thing, and also accept that we are not infinite beings, and that some things are beyond our ability. That does not mean that we are bad, only that we are limited.

So, we must pay attention, and notice when we turn off consciousness – when we start sleep-walking through things. This does not mean that we must be permanently anxious or hyper-vigilant; it only means that we must notice these things, like we notice feeling sad.

Once we have these two pieces in place, the next step is simple: To act differently.

When you notice that you have in some way become unconscious, you will also probably see that you did it to avoid a hard choice. This is the time to make that choice. And, most importantly of all, you must *act* on the right choice. Thinking is not enough; mere talking is not enough; you must *act*.

We are physical beings, not disembodied spirits, and acting changes us. In many ways, acting is the only thing that can properly change us. Nothing can replace action.

By willfully acting in this way, you restore your consciousness and you heal yourself.

## HELPING OTHERS

Cultured sociopaths are not inherently bad people and they may, in fact, be very good people in unaffected areas of their lives.

The cure for cultured sociopaths is to work around the gashes in their minds. If we can find alternate paths from one side of the gap to the other, the gap will be traversed. Then, proper communication between the higher and lower functions of the mind will be restored. If the individual then chooses to remain with this healthy way of thinking, the gap will close itself over time.

This is done with analogies and metaphors... with parables. Rather than attacking the gap, parables create parallel paths around the gap.

I am fairly well convinced that this is precisely why Jesus insisted on speaking to people in parables, rather than making direct arguments: he was sure that they were not ready to digest what he had to say, but that they could be prepared for it by using parables, which would help to heal the gashes in their minds.

What we need to do, to help people with sociopathic patches in their minds, is to come at those areas in different directions, and to re-engage their empathy via an alternate path.

Here is an example of what I mean:

A few years ago I watched a gentleman speak to a crowd in which there were people who were disposed towards hating immigrants. They didn't know these immigrants and knew nothing of their lives, but they found a sort of importance and comfort in blaming immigrants for their troubles. In other words, they were becoming cultured sociopaths in this area.

Rather than citing statistics, the speaker told a story. He said:

*I'm from Texas. We have long stretches of road that have occasional stoplights, but are more or less abandoned late at night. Now, if I had a sick child, and had to drive twenty miles to the all-night pharmacy... and my child's health depended on it... I wouldn't pay attention to those stoplights at two in the morning – my child's health is more important than laws.*

Everyone in the crowd nodded their agreement. Then he went on:

*It's the same with these immigrants. Their families are starving and they have to do something to save them. Just like me and the stoplights, they are going to ignore lines*

*on a map – their families are just as important to them as ours are to us. And just like us, they will ignore rules that would stop them from saving their families.*

I don't know how many people this affected, but I heard no more talk about immigrants at the conference. By presenting these people as fully human, with feelings for their families just like the rest of us, the speaker restored a path to empathy in his listeners.

It is also useful for cultured sociopaths to separate from the influences that created the gashes in their minds. In nearly all cases, it was relatives, friends and people in authority who not only opened the gash, but kept it open.

In the case we began with – the man proposing infanticide – someone questioning him would have been met with “many people do this! It is a long standing tradition! Are you questioning the elders?” The same basic argument would have been made by Nurse Rivers and by the thousands of obedient people, without whom Hitler, Stalin and Mao would have killed only a handful.

Analogies and parables are of primary importance, in that they bridge the gashes in people's minds, but it also matters that they are not dragged back to the same old brain washing that created it in the first place. Once the gap is bridged and empathy restored, people will tend toward separation by themselves, but separation is something to keep in mind.

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#### **NOTES:**

I'll be speaking at the Global Escape Hatch conference in Bocas del Torro, Panama, September 21-23. If you'd like to attend, you can get a \$400 discount by clicking [here](#) and entering the discount code ROSENBERG. It should be a great show in a beautiful location.

I will also be speaking at the [Libertopia](#) show in October, in San Diego. Come if you can, it's a great show.

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See you next month, when I promise to write about good things. :)

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