GETTING TO THE HEART OF PSYCHOPATHY AND MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

by

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Hons. B.A., Wilfrid Laurier University, 1999

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Department of Philosophy)

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

October 2003

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Abstract

Psychopaths. Who are they? What are they? How do they differ from the rest of us “normals?” And, why do they differ from the rest of us “normals?” For most of us, the word “psychopath” conjures up images of notorious serial killers, like Charles Manson, Ted Bundy, Jeffrey Dahmer, or Hannibal Lecter. However, psychopaths are not necessarily just serial killers. Their crimes are often, and typically, petty offences, social misdeeds, or “crimes of the heart.” They can be found in every community and in every profession. For the most part, they are identified in the psychological literature in terms of having an emotional deficit. Their characteristic feature, along these lines, is a lack of empathy, which is an imperative source of moral motivation.

As such, philosophers generally discuss psychopaths in the context of notions associated with freedom and moral responsibility. The main question that is typically examined by philosophers, in this context, is whether or not psychopaths can legitimately be held morally responsible for their actions in light of their inherent lack of empathy. However, philosophers rarely make close contact with the psychological literature to examine the nature of the psychopath in developing their views.

In this project, I briefly examine and explicate the psychological literature that illuminates the nature and development of the psychopath – from both the nature and nurture perspectives. By doing so, I am able to lay a foundation upon which a critical comparison can be made - between the nature of the psychopath and the nature of the non-psychopath - in working towards determining the essential ingredients that constitute moral agency, subsequent attributions of moral responsibility, and, ultimately, whether or not psychopaths can legitimately be held morally responsible for their actions.
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For Shandi

— *my biggest distraction who never once felt like one.*
Acknowledgements

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank several remarkable individuals who have graced my life and who deserve considerable credit for the fruition of this project. I simply couldn't have, and wouldn't have, done it without them.

First, I'd like to thank Jack Leon for believing that I have what it takes to excel at whatever I put my mind to, specifically when my academic interests were in their primitive stages after my life-altering automobile accident in 1992. You believed in me when no one else did, when the evidence suggested that you shouldn't, and when I had trouble believing in myself. You helped me get started on the road of acquiring my Bachelor’s degree, my Master’s degree, and my Law degree.

A special thanks also to Mr. Paul Mann – the best personal injury litigator around. Your commitment to my claim not only enabled me to pursue my academic goals, but also inspired me to study the law where I hope to one day promote such constructive change in someone’s life, like you did to mine.

This project would not have been possible without the passion and inspiration of Dr. Robert Litke. You taught me – both inside and outside the classroom – about the meaning and value of the quest for self-awareness. By doing so, you've influenced and shaped my being towards a place where I can just be.

I also want to acknowledge another distinguished professor I had the good fortune to learn from. I am indebted for the many rewarding philosophical discussions and lessons I experienced with Dr. Rockney Jacobsen. Your support and interest and the development of my philosophical and career interests has proven indispensable to me.

I feel a strong sense of gratitude for the longstanding patience and guidance of my thesis supervisor Dr. Paul Russell. Thank you for understanding the challenges involved in the completion of this project, and for not losing faith in my ability and commitment to finish what I started.

Words cannot fully express the appreciation I have for being a member of my loving family. I know I can count on each and every one of you to do all you can for me - at anytime, in anyway.

To my Uncle John and Uncle George, who have always been willing and eager to take the time to show interest in my life. Thank you for this.

Mans.

My education and personal development would have been significantly limited and impeded without the input, forum and friendship that Kevin Smith offered me. Your willingness and eagerness to spend countless hours of probing and stimulating conversation with me over the years is, for me, equivalent to spending a lifetime thinking about truth within the confines of the Ivory Tower. The richness and depth you have added to my life is beyond measure.
To Scuderia Ferrari for inspiring me to passionately and relentlessly strive for perfection.

And last, but most certainly not least, to my loving partner Nadia. We met when this project was in its early stages, and from that point forward, for nearly three years, you watched me vacillate between being committed to seeing this work through completion, and neglecting it to the point of utter uncertainty as to whether or not I would ever see it through to the end. Despite my instability, however, your unwavering support and faith in my character and ability enabled me to emulate the virtuous qualities that you so naturally possess – the very same qualities that helped me conquer, what too often seemed like, an almost unachievable and momentous task. I love you dearly for this, and for much much much more.

Ultimately, thanks be to God for the past, for the future, and most importantly, for the Present.
INTRODUCTION

At 9:02 a.m. on April 19th, 1995, a huge explosion destroyed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 people and injuring several others. Two days later, authorities apprehended and charged Timothy McVeigh, a 27 year-old U.S. Army veteran, for committing this monstrous act. Almost three years later, McVeigh was convicted of conspiracy, using a weapon of mass destruction, and first-degree murder. He was then formally sentenced to death. On June 12, 2001, Timothy McVeigh was executed by means of lethal injection.

As the world anxiously tuned in to hear reactions to the execution, witnesses said, “Mr. McVeigh co-operated fully with the procedure but expressed no remorse for his actions.”\(^1\) He also apparently showed “no sign of discomfort, of suffering, or fear\(^2\)...his facial expressions were about as calm as they could be\(^3\)...[he] showed no emotion.”\(^4\) A brother of one of the bombing victims “was struck by the defiance he saw in Mr. McVeigh’s eyes...[noting that] he didn’t need to make a statement. He had a look of defiance, and if he could, he’d do it all over again.”\(^5\) Mirroring this impression, another individual felt that McVeigh “was dying as he lived: projecting unspoken malice with his eyes and face.”\(^6\) Furthermore, a Chicago radio reporter said she detected “almost a sense of pride as he nodded his head and laid his head down and seemed resigned to his fate.”\(^7\)

Many who perceived McVeigh as simply “falling asleep” as the chemicals took

\(^2\) Campbell A9.
\(^4\) Richard Willing, “Victims Mark Day of Tumult and More Tears,” USA Today 12 June 2001: 3A.
\(^5\) Campbell A9.
\(^6\) Willing 1A.
\(^7\) Campbell A9.
effect felt that the punishment should have been more harsh. A woman, whose 3 year-old nephew was one of the 19 children among the 168 people killed, felt that "the electric chair would have been better [because] it might have hurt just a little more."8

In light of such reactions, many survivors, along with those deeply concerned about this tragedy, felt cheated by the fact that McVeigh died without offering a final apology, or any other signs of remorse or suffering for shattering the lives of thousands of people. Thus, his execution left many unsatisfied.9 A 64 year-old man, whose daughter was killed in the blast, was quoted as saying "we were hoping we could see some kind of expression of sorrow [from McVeigh]. We didn't get anything."10

Accordingly, in some seemingly important ways, McVeigh's verbal and emotional silence in his final moments created more anxiety and hostility than his execution had hoped to resolve. One man, who lost his mother in the explosion, said, "I will never figure him out, and I long ago should have quit trying. It's enough to know he's gone, and we can go on...[but] I can't help thinking, by just laying there and staring up at us, was he having the last word?"11 Similar to this individual, many have undoubtedly sought to explain and understand the elusive reasons behind McVeigh's highly destructive and impenitent actions; however, I assume that the enduring hope of "figuring him out" also permeates the minds of Timothy McVeigh's parents – particularly since his father reportedly feels somewhat responsible for the anguish his son wrought upon the lives of so many people.12

The McVeigh case is a unique and rich example that highlights at least four important interrelated points associated with not only the psychopathic personality, but

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8 Willing 3A.
9 Cienski A12.
10 Kevin Johnson, "Witness Sees the End Come Quickly, Quietly," USA Today, 12 June 2001: 3A.
11 Willing 1A.
12 Willing 3A.
also typical reactions to socially reprehensible behaviours that such seemingly ruthless individuals characteristically demonstrate.\textsuperscript{13}

First, consider that McVeigh clearly exhibited two hallmark qualities of the psychopathic personality: (1) he committed an aggressive anti-social act\textsuperscript{14}, and (2) he was utterly unrepentant and unremorseful for doing so, thereby signifying a lack of empathy and conscience.\textsuperscript{15} Second, McVeigh's anomalous acts left many extremely hurt and confused which, in effect, instigated painstaking efforts to explain and understand why someone would do something like this. Questions such as, "What makes these people tick?", "Who are these people?", and "How can the rest of us protect ourselves from their destructive wrath?" will undoubtedly inspire explanations.

Third, since it is inherent in such a quest for understanding to attribute varying degrees of responsibility to those individuals most closely associated with committing such extreme anti-social acts, it is not surprising that Timothy McVeigh's father felt somewhat responsible for his son's ruthless actions. In this sense, McVeigh's father believes, to some extent, that those aspects of his son's character that contributed to this crime are, somehow, a direct result of the manner in which he contributed to the upbringing of his son. Accordingly, I believe it is important to examine the degree to which an individual's history, with respect to developmental experiences, contributes to factors associated

\textsuperscript{13} Note that my primary objective here is not to irrefutably diagnose Timothy McVeigh's psychological condition at the time he committed this crime or during his execution, or at any prior point in his life. Thus, I am neither asserting nor suggesting that McVeigh categorically was a "psychopath," or any other type of clinically disordered personality. Rather, my aim is to use this case as a springboard to highlight some reactions triggered by extreme socially reprehensible behaviours and, as I will show, by the psychopathic personality. Although it is important to acknowledge that, according to the clinical diagnostic criteria for psychopathy, Timothy McVeigh clearly demonstrated some psychopathic traits and behaviours within the context of this case. But I leave more detailed analyses of McVeigh's psychological makeup for qualified clinicians.

\textsuperscript{14} Note, as I will discuss later, that the term "aggressive" need not strictly refer to acts where human or non-human lives are taken, or where "physical" and/or "emotional" damage is intentionally inflicted upon living beings. "White collar" psychopaths, who also cause extensive damage to people's finances/businesses etc., also fall within this category.

\textsuperscript{15} McVeigh, according to documented reports previously cited, seems to have demonstrated a lack of empathy and conscience during his execution. Whether or not he categorically lacks a conscience is not an issue I will address.
with responsibility and control. And fourth, society-at-large deemed McVeigh as both casually and morally responsible for committing this act because it is presumably believed that he acted freely, intelligently, and rationally within his control. That is to say, he was not coerced or forced to commit this act, but did so “freely” under his own will. This, in effect, justified the imposition of some form of retribution and punishment upon him. As such, the widespread reactive attitudes, as displayed by the community, reflect the existence of a shared expectation that all people should basically practice a reasonable degree of good will, or regard, towards each other. Since Timothy McVeigh was deemed responsible for drastically violating this basic demand of the moral community, people therefore felt justified in explicitly expressing attitudes of indignation and condemnation towards him.

In order to further examine these four interrelated themes, I believe it is important to first clarify and understand the characteristics of the psychopathic personality; that is to say, who are these people, how did they become this way, and how can we identify them? By doing so, this will help us comprehend the obscure nature of the psychopathic personality and to distinguish it from other destructive individuals such as terrorists, religious fanatics, and those who become temporarily overcome by rage, thereby committing a “one time” cruelty, but are otherwise responsible and upstanding citizens most of the time under most circumstances. Along these lines, even though a particular act might be considered anti-social, destructive and/or psychopathic, the underlying reasons and motives that propel non-psychopathic individuals to committing

16 Interestingly, research has shown that “most violent crimes committed by non-psychopaths occurred during a domestic dispute or during a period of extreme emotion arousal, whereas this was seldom true of psychopaths. Most violence caused by psychopaths, in turn, is callous and cold-blooded or part of an aggressive, macho display, without the affective coloring that typically accompanies the violence of non-psychopaths. See page 395 of: Robert D. Hare, Stephen D. Hart, and Timothy J. Harpur, “Psychopathy and the DSM-IV Criteria for Anti-social Personality Disorder,” Journal of Abnormal Psychology 100.3 (1991):391-398.
anti-social acts differ from those of psychopaths. The Oklahoma City bombing, for example, perhaps more accurately reflects an act of a fanatical terrorist rather than an act of a psychopath. Making this "motivational" distinction is, as we will see, an important consideration when making attributions of moral responsibility. In effect, this will put us in a better position to understand how such distinctive and destructive characteristics develop in certain individuals, but not in others.

Fundamentally speaking, taking a closer look at psychopathy forces us to pose some basic questions regarding human nature and moral agency, questions such as: What is a human being? What are we born with? What do we acquire during the course of life? What is a moral agent? And, how does one become a moral agent? Although these complicated and demanding questions are highly relevant in an inquiry on this topic, a thorough examination of them lies outside the scope of this project. However, when considering psychopaths in reference to such questions, the main point to consider is that it is quite evident there is something missing, deficient, or crippled in their psyche, which is generally not the case with non-psychopathic individuals. As such, as Jeffrie Murphy proposes, "some criteria for the identification of psychopathy, independent of the wrongdoing itself, must be located before one can be in a position to assess the responsibility of the psychopath. But what are the criteria?"  

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"I'm the most cold-blooded sonofabitch you'll ever meet."
- Theodore Robert Bundy.

CHAPTER I: Understanding the Psychopath

Psychopath. The images that come to mind when hearing this word tend to be associated with the likes of Ted Bundy, Charles Manson, Paul Bernardo, Jeffrey Dahmer, and let us not forget the notorious Dr. Hannibal Lector. However, psychopaths are not just murderers. In addition to causing severe – perhaps even fatal – bodily damage, they also wreak havoc in emotional and financial ways. They comprise of roughly one to three percent of the population, and can be found amidst our communities, neighbourhoods, work places, and even homes. Their cunning ability to dazzle, disarm, and deceive others makes it very difficult to identify them – until, of course, it's too late. So, how can we protect ourselves from such human predators? For starters, we must first learn their characteristics so we can identify them more easily and more quickly before they have an opportunity to detrimentally affect our lives.

1.1: Terminology and Characteristics

1.1.1: Terminology

The term "psychopath" is derived from the Greek words psyche, which means "mind/soul", and pathos, which means "disease/ill/suffering." A psychopath, therefore, is one whose mind is suffering, ill or diseased in some way. Essentially, it means "mentally ill." However, this simple construal can cause some confusion, which might result in consequential misunderstandings.

Firstly, the term "psychopath" can become misconstrued largely because it has been popularized with fictional movie characters (e.g., Dr. Lector) who are either cool con-artists, members of organized crime, or cold-blooded killers - all of whom are indeed unbounded by the dictates, norms, and expectations of society. However,
although such dramatic and fascinating portrayals are loosely in keeping with contemporary psychiatric standards, they fail to acknowledge that psychopaths are a class of individuals found in every race, culture, society, and walk-of-life.\(^\text{18}\) These individuals appear normal on the surface until they perform some outrageous criminal, hurtful, or immoral act, after which they show virtually no regret or sorrow. So, they do not overtly look like "monsters" who are easily identified as extreme oddities amidst the masses; neither are they "weirdoes" who behave in a "crazy" or "insane" manner; and neither are they necessarily cold-blooded murderers who are only found within prison populations. In fact, most of the crimes psychopaths commit tend to be "crimes of the heart" and/or "casual cruelty", rather than cold-blooded murders as depicted by popular culture. Although some psychopaths are serial killers, most of those with this disorder live amongst us, go to work with us, and compose of a rather significant portion of our society. They are seemingly "normal" people who can occupy various respectable and common positions in society, such as doctors, lawyers, politicians, or businesspeople. For this reason, it is quite possible that most people will, at some point, come in contact with a psychopath and fail to recognize them as such.\(^\text{19}\)

Secondly, the public's fascination with psychopaths, as evident from the dramatic portrayals in the news media and entertainment industry, has caused the term "psychopath" to mistakenly become synonymous with the terms "psycho", "insane", or "crazy." Clinically speaking, these terms more accurately apply to mental disorders that are characterized by delusions, hallucinations, or severe distress. But the personality disorder of psychopathy is not characterized by such factors. Psychopaths are not, clinically speaking, "insane", "crazy" or "mentally ill." Their deficiency is unique in nature.

\(^{19}\) Hare xii.
as compared to those of other personality disorders. Their mentality is, as compared to schizophrenia for instance, within the general scope of reality and is not characterized by delusional or hallucinatory thinking. Moreover, they characteristically do not become severely distressed; anxiety is rarely a problem for psychopaths as it is, for example, for those with bipolar disorder. Recognizing such distinctions is crucial because attributions of moral responsibility are, as we will see in chapter three, largely based upon notions of rationality and control. Therefore, since psychopaths are free from delusional and hallucinatory thinking, and since they are basically “stress free”, there are seemingly few obstacles that prevent them from thinking clearly and efficiently. Thus, at face value, psychopaths seem to possess the kind of unimpeded rationality that, according to some, enables them to be deemed morally responsible for their antisocial behaviour.

Robert Hare, who is considered one of the leading experts in the study of psychopathy, states that “unlike psychotic individuals, psychopaths are rational and aware of what they are doing and why. Their behaviour is a result of choice, freely exercised. So, if a person with a diagnosis of schizophrenia breaks society’s rules - say by killing the next passerby in response to orders ‘received from a Martian in a spaceship’ – we deem that person not responsible ‘by reason of insanity.’ When a person diagnosed as a psychopath breaks the same rules, he or she is judged sane and is sent to prison.”20 As such, it seems to me that before one can deem psychopaths “sane”, “insane”, or “responsible”, a close examination of their deficiencies must be conducted in reference to what it means to understand morality, and to control one’s behaviour accordingly. And, in order to do this, it must first be determined exactly what the psychopath’s characteristics and deficiencies are, as well as how they relate to

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20 Hare 22.
issues having to do with responsibility and control.

1.1.2: Characteristics

Robert Hare descriptively states that "psychopaths are social predators who charm, manipulate, and ruthlessly plow their way through life, leaving a broad trail of broken hearts, shattered expectations, and empty wallets. Completely lacking in conscience and in feelings for others, they selfishly take what they want and do as they please, violating social norms and expectations without the slightest sense of guilt or regret." Accordingly, a diagnosis of psychopathy, according to Hare, is only made when an individual demonstrates solid evidence in accordance with the following defining characteristics: glib and superficial, egocentric and grandiose, lack of empathy, guilt, and remorse, deceitfulness and manipulative, shallow emotions, impulsive, poor behavioral controls, need for excitement, lack of responsibility, early behavioral problems and adult anti-social behaviours. Taken together, these factors create an image of a self-centered, callous, and remorseless person completely lacking in empathy, care, and the ability to form warm, meaningful emotional relationships with others in a society that deeply cherishes and strives to promote such values. Such a person precariously functions and interacts with others without the restraints of conscience. Although many individuals might often exhibit behaviours that reflect, for example, a need for excitement, or impulsivity, or a lack of responsibility, or even a lack of empathy or guilt, this does not mean such people are psychopaths. After all, we all act in hurtful ways towards others from time-to-time that we later regret and express our sorrow for. Rather, psychopathy is a longstanding syndrome that entails a cluster of

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21 Hare xi.
22 Hare 69-70.
23 Hare 2.
Amongst these symptoms, the concept of empathy is identified, and is most closely related with the other aspects of the clinical definition of psychopathy, such as egocentricity, lack of remorse, shallow emotions and deceitfulness.\(^\text{25}\) As such, a "lack of empathy," which reflects the title of Hare's book *Without Conscience*, is the key-defining feature that captures the essence of psychopathy and, in effect, firmly differentiates "them" from "us." Correspondingly, Hare poignantly asserts that:

> many of the characteristics displayed by psychopaths...are closely associated with a profound lack of empathy...They seem unable to "get into the skin" or to "walk in the shoes" of others, except in a purely intellectual sense. The feelings of other people are of no concern to psychopaths. In some respects they are like emotionless androids depicted in science fiction, unable to imagine what real humans experience...[they] show a stunning lack of concern for the devastating effects their actions have on others. Often they are completely forthright about the matter, calmly stating that they have no sense of guilt, are not sorry for the pain and destruction they have caused, and that there is no reason for them to be concerned...their hallmark is a stunning lack of conscience; their game is self-gratification at the other person's expense...[this theme] runs through the case histories of all psychopaths: a deeply disturbing inability to care about the pain and suffering experienced by others - in short, a complete lack of empathy, the prerequisite for love.\(^\text{26}\)

In light of Hare's description, the key notion I want to stress and examine, for my purposes, is their "inability to care" or "empathize", which is directly related to their distinctive lack of conscience. It is this particular characteristic that is intimately connected with their inability to feel guilt and remorse which, in turn, enables them to shamelessly inflict harm on others whenever it suits their purposes. Lacking the overall 

\(^{24}\) Hare 34.
\(^{25}\) The concept of "empathy" is examined in Chapter II.
\(^{26}\) Hare 44, 40-41, 1, & 6. Also note that Hare claims that this feature (i.e., lack of empathy) distinguishes psychopaths from non-psychopathic criminals because many criminals "are capable of feeling guilt, remorse, empathy, and strong emotions," (see page 69).
ability to empathize and, as a result, being unable to appreciate and consider the feelings of others to influence their own decisions, they view people solely as objects to be used for their personal gratification. Since psychopaths are purely self-interested, they do not have the usual anxieties, doubts and concerns about being humiliated, causing pain, sabotaging future plans and, in short, the myriad of possibilities that people of conscience are influenced by when deliberating a possible course of action.²⁷ This enables them to freely or effortlessly embark on a course of action that is narrowly intended to satisfy their personal needs and desires. The audible “inner voice” that polices, influences and restrains the behaviour of non-psychopaths is, in contrast, silent when psychopaths evaluate their next course of action within their social interactions. In short, psychopaths are basically unable to “walk in the shoes” of others because they do not empathize with others, thereby having no impetus to step foot in another’s shoe—even to “try it on for size.”

As such, being unable to “walk in the shoes of others” seems to be only one part of what constitutes empathy as it relates to the psychopath. What seems different about psychopaths is that they are peculiarly unaffected or emotionally detached from the intimate knowledge that can be gained by putting one’s self in another person’s shoes. So, although they may be able to very quickly gather a lot of very useful information about what makes another person tick during the briefest of interaction, this “personal” knowledge is strictly used to secure their own ends and interests, rather than to allow for the other person’s interests to influence the course of the relationship—both in the moment, and in the future—as it typically would in a normal relationship. Accordingly, what seems to be missing in psychopaths is the compelling nature of an appropriate affective response to the knowledge gained from putting themselves in

²⁷ Hare 78.
another person's shoes, in the way that this happens in the normal person.

To take this issue a step further, if the absolute incapacity for feeling empathy is the key ingredient in the makeup and development of psychopaths, what are the consequences for society if large numbers of individuals are functioning without this imperative capacity? It seems to me that the capacity to be functionally affected by the interests of others, to some relative extent in some situations, is a necessary component in the composition of the majority of people in society in order for a society to function as a cohesive whole. From a sociological perspective, this is arguably one of the major prerequisites of any social system. Thus, there must be some degree of empathy functioning at the macro level in society if there is hope for it, along with its individuals, to develop, prosper, and survive at a micro level. So, in this sense, it seems counter-productive, from the psychopaths' perspective, to shamelessly and relentlessly behave in a self-interested manner, paying absolutely no heed to the interests of others.

So, why do they do it? In other words, how did they become this way?

1.2: Etiology: Nature/Nurture

I believe it is difficult to assert with certainty all the factors that create psychopaths. Some theories stress "nature," that is, an inborn genetic predisposition to act in a purely self-interested manner, paying absolutely no heed to the interests of others. Other theories stress "nurture," that is, environmental factors in an individual's upbringing, and subsequent social relationships, that produce a purely egocentric 28

28 Of course, most of us have known, come across, or at least heard of individuals that are considered to be very, very selfish. But these people are not necessarily "psychopaths" in the clinical sense. Although very selfish individuals are heavily inclined to behave in a self-serving manner most of the time, such individuals are not, as it were, "unreachable." That is to say, there are - however rare - situations where such individuals can be prompted by guilt and/or empathy to suspend their own interests in favour of those of another. Psychopaths, on the other hand, are "unreachable" in the sense that there are absolutely no possible situations that can ever prompt them through guilt and/or empathy to suspend their own interests in favour of those of another. Along these lines, distinguishing "psychopaths" who are categorically selfish from "non-psychopathic" individuals who are relatively selfish can be achieved through clinical instruments (e.g., PCL-R).
personality. In an effort to acknowledge the value and relevance of both approaches, I will refrain from favouring and defending the value of one approach over the other and will, instead, examine some key factors that help explain the development of psychopathy from both the nature and nurture perspectives.

Since the word "nurture" gives the connotation of motherly love, bonding, and family life, I will focus my discussion on the relevance of those particular qualities when outlining the environmental, or "nurture" approach. Thus, I will primarily examine psychological notions derived from “attachment theory.” I will also provide an example to show how childhood development can be thwarted in many ways due to adverse early-caregiving conditions, and how such experiences can frustrate subsequent relations. And, from the biological perspective, I will outline research that establishes neurologically based abnormalities in psychopaths, along with an example to illustrate.

1.2.1: Environmental

The idea that symptoms of psychopathy can develop and be present from early childhood is, to many people, disturbing and inconceivable. Applying a pejorative term like “psychopath” to a child seems highly inappropriate. However, there are children, who from a very early age, exhibit a complete lack of compassion and empathy that is evident from the excitement and joy, rather than the guilt and remorse, they seem to experience when hurting another human being. Hervey Cleckley, in *The Mask of Sanity*, suggests that these dangerous children are beyond treatment and will inevitably grow up to become adult psychopaths. But, is it possible that a purely egocentric and destructive personality can be firmly and irreversibly established within a child at such a young age? And, if so, how would this occur?

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Consider the case of Danny, a young boy who was adopted from a Vietnamese orphanage by the Scott family at the age of five. Danny's new parents, like many other adoptive parents, thought they would be saving a disadvantaged and abandoned child by bringing him to an industrialized country, like America, and providing him with the most basic needs that he had been previously deprived of. The Scotts essentially believed that if they "gave him enough love he would be all right."

To their dismay, trouble with Danny began before the family had even left the airport upon his arrival from Vietnam. The Scotts were greeted by a wild and screaming child who threw his shoes at his new parents when he first met them. As time passed, the Scotts persistently tried to win Danny's trust and affection, but to no avail. As Danny grew older, he progressively became more and more destructive. The Scotts eventually, and shockingly, learned that Danny had been responsible for a series of horrifying acts perpetrated on the family and the neighbours. Danny had murdered three of the family cats. He tried to drown a twelve year-old girl. He vandalized a neighbour's home extensively. He set innumerable fires, one of which consumed a neighbour's garage. He would draw gory pictures of devils and demons, even while in church. He had stolen from, lied to, bullied and beat his siblings. And on one occasion, he threatened to kill his family by setting the house on fire; and on another occasion, he threatened to kill his siblings by stabbing them with a pair of scissors. When his parents confronted Danny with evidence that he was responsible for committing these horrific acts, he vehemently denied them, only to later admit to them to a therapist without any expression of regret. His father said "you could have put a loaded gun to his head and

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31 Magid and McKelvey 52.
he would have died lying...he had no remorse, none, not ever."\textsuperscript{32} And his former social worker said that "Danny could just as easily kill you as look at you."\textsuperscript{33}

From this example, it is clear that Danny exhibited many of the early tell-tale signs of psychopathy: apparent indifference to, or inability to understand, the feelings, expectations, or pain of others; an inability to give and receive affection; cruelty to others; marked control problems; vandalism and fire setting; repetitive, casual, and seemingly thoughtless lying; defiance of parents and rules; petty theft from children and parents; persistent aggression, bullying and fighting; and a pattern of hurting and/or killing animals.\textsuperscript{34}

Danny's case illustrates that the elements of psychopathy can first become evident at a very early age. As Robert Hare asserts, "psychopathy does not suddenly spring, unannounced, into existence in adulthood...clinical and anecdotal evidence indicates that most parents of children later diagnosed as psychopaths were painfully aware that something was seriously wrong even before the child started school."\textsuperscript{35}

These children are markedly different from others insofar as they are more difficult, willful, aggressive, and deceitful; they are less susceptible to influence and instruction, and most notably, they are extraordinarily difficult to "get close to" or to "relate with."\textsuperscript{36}

In light of these early symptoms, a therapist finally diagnosed Danny as suffering from a severe lack of attachment.\textsuperscript{37}

There is a strong general consensus, amongst both professionals and society-at-large, concerning the important effects upon the psychological development of young children's early social experiences, of the need for individual caregiving, and of the

\textsuperscript{32} Magid and McKelvey 55.  
\textsuperscript{33} Magid and McKelvey 51.  
\textsuperscript{34} Hare 158. Magid and McKelvey 55.  
\textsuperscript{35} Hare 157.  
\textsuperscript{36} Hare 157.  
\textsuperscript{37} Magid and McKelvey 55.
importance of constructive continuity in parent-child relationships. Also, there is little
dispute over both the ill effects of serious adversities in parenting, and over the
significant impact that the quality of family relationships has upon a child’s subsequent
experiences throughout his lifespan.\(^{38}\)

As an infant, Danny had been abandoned by his mother and, as a result, was
deprived from his birth of the most basic of needs – the consistent love of a primary
caregiver, or mother.\(^{39}\) Along with this basic need, the helpless human infant is also
unable to meet its other needs for food, clothing, and shelter. But in addition to the
meeting of these “physical” needs, an infant needs more. It needs a nurturing, caring,
compassionate caretaker who provides a source of consistent love. The authors of
*High Risk: Children Without a Conscience* acknowledge this by asserting that the infant-
caregiver bond “is the most critical thing that happens in infancy other than meeting the
baby’s physical needs. Too much emphasis cannot be placed on this point.”\(^{40}\)

For an infant, love and affection is communicated primarily through tactile
stimulation (e.g., movement, dressing, bathing, cuddling, stroking, massaging, and

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\(^{38}\) In an effort to produce sentences that read and flow better, I will use male pronouns, rather than
using “him/her”, “his/her”, etc., when referring to both males and females throughout the project.

\(^{39}\) For my purposes, I will employ the following working definition of “love”: “that which satisfies our
need to receive and bestow affection and nurturance; to give and be given assurance of value, respect,
acceptance, and appreciation; and to feel secure in our unity with, and belonging to a particular family, as
well as the human family.” From: Anthony Walsh, *The Science of Love* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books,

Also, it is important to note that the role of the “primary caregiver” need not exclusively be assumed by
the biological mother. Mary Ainsworth, who spent much of her life studying mother-infant attachment,
asserts that “it is an essential part of the growth plan of the human species - as well as that of many other
species - for an infant to become attached to a mother figure, this figure need not be the natural mother
but can be anyone who plays the role of principal caregiver.” From: Mary D. Ainsworth, “Infant-mother

In addition to this, Diana Baumrind, Professor of Psychology at UC Berkeley, states that “there is no
evidence of a biological need for an exclusive primary bond, and certainly not a bond to a particular
person because she happens to be the child's biological mother...[but]...a primary commitment cannot be
shared, although the care itself can and should be. Someone must, when no one else will, provide the
attention, stimulation, and continuous personal relationship without which a child is consigned to
psychosis or psychopathy...and fathers, men, can be principal caregivers, especially if they are socialized
to give appropriate nurturing behaviors.” From: Diane Baumrind, “New Directions in Socialization
caregiver” in this project is not meant to exclusively refer to the role of “mother” or “father”, or vice-versa.

\(^{40}\) Magid and McKelvey 59.
kissing). And, the deprivation of these somatosensory needs (i.e., a lack of touch) can very well be a basic cause of many physical and psychological disturbances. Tiffany Field, Professor of Pediatrics and Psychiatry from the University of Miami Medical School, conducted an extensive study of premature infants where an experimental group of infants were stroked and massaged by nurses and volunteers three times daily. Results indicated that massaged infants gained weight faster, became more active and alert, were more responsive to stimuli, and were discharged from the hospital sooner than non-massaged infants. Follow-up studies found that the massaged infants became larger and had fewer physical problems. They also did better in tests of mental and motor ability. Accordingly, such studies suggest that touch is a powerful expression of caring and affection, and its deprivation results in retarded physical and psychological development.

Having said this, the need for love (i.e., expressed predominantly through tactile stimulation) in the normal development of infants and children would not only appear to be obvious, but also neurologically critical during the sensitive period in which the neural pathways are being laid down. Because of this, there is growing momentum among anthropologists, endocrinologists, physiologists, psychiatrists, psychologists, neuropsychologists, and others, to recognize the role of the primary caregiver in "the critical task of humanizing the species...modern neurophysiology is [therefore]

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reaffirming Freud's belief in the centrality of the mother's role in making us human...[which shows that] love...is a biological and psychological necessity.\textsuperscript{43}

Drawing from work established by Sigmund Freud, several psychoanalytic therapists in the 1940's published reports emphasizing the importance of a child's relationship with a primary giver, and of the effects of early childhood experiences upon psychological development. The term "maternal deprivation" - being deprived of one's mother during the first five years of life - was applied to these early experiences. Leading the way, developmental psychologist John Bowlby first became interested in the influence of the early environment in children in the late 1930's, and published his first paper in 1940.\textsuperscript{44} In 1944 he published a classic paper reporting on 44 children, ages six to sixteen who were young thieves.\textsuperscript{45} The mothers of these children were described by social workers as "immoral, violent and nagging," "extremely anxious, fussing, critical," "drunken and cruel," "did not want the child," and "unstable and jealous," etc. Notably, one common objective factor was prolonged early separations of the child and mother, separations where the child had never developed a true attachment, and after separation, had no opportunity to develop a true attachment. And, a significant minority of these children turned out to have affectionless characters, which was a phenomenon Bowlby linked to their histories of maternal deprivation and separation.

In another study conducted for the World Health Organization in 1951, Bowlby examined children who were evacuated from London during the war, and found that the behaviors of these children had progressively deteriorated in the absence of their

\textsuperscript{43} Walsh 37.
The psychological disturbances of these children, who were subject to maternal depravation and separation, were many and varied. In addition to the thievery observed by Bowlby, these disturbances included: indifference, incorrigibility, hostility, lack of any feeling or empathy for others, affectionless and detached – all of which are characteristic of the psychopathic personality. As such, these early studies provided valuable support for the possibility that the roots of anti-social behaviour might lie in the early disruption of the bond between mother and infant. That is to say, maternal deprivation could seriously affect a child’s social and emotional development, thereby producing juvenile delinquency and anti-social behaviour. As a result, these early studies contained many of the ideas that were later to become central to the origin of “attachment theory.”

Attachment theory began with Bowlby’s attempt to understand the psychopathological effects of maternal deprivation by studying the normative course of the ontology of these early relationships. Essentially, his objective was that if the normative course of these early relationships could be better understood, it would then be easier to not only understand, but also possibly remedy the detrimental effects of its disruption. In order to achieve this objective, he realized that he needed to develop a new theory of motivation and behaviour control that was founded upon modern scientific standards, rather than outdated “psychic energy” models traditionally espoused by Freud. Accordingly, the theory that emerged was consistent with theories of biology, embryology, cognitive science, and general systems theory. It was, at the same time, specific enough to incorporate species and cultural differences, and general enough to incorporate species and cultural similarity. Attachment theory, therefore, came closer


In essence, attachment theory maintains that developing an attachment relationship with a caregiver in infancy is a normative phenomenon insofar as every infant will naturally strive to develop and maintain an affectionate bond with a caregiver, and will use that caregiver as a source of comfort and reassurance in the face of perceived challenges and threats from the environment.\footnote{Weinfield, N. S., Sroufe, L. A., Egeland, B., and Carlson, E. A. “The Nature of Individual Differences in Infant-Caregiver Attachment,” Handbook of Attachment: Theory, Research, and Clinical Applications, ed. Cassidy, J., and Shaver, P.R (New York: Guilford, 1999) 68.} Thus, the fundamental purpose of the child-caregiver relationship is to serve as a source of security and trust for the infant. This basic purpose becomes evident through the organization of the infant's behaviour, with reference to the caregiver, in terms of how the infant uses the caregiver as a reliable base, or “safe haven” for exploring the surrounding environment in both familiar, and unfamiliar settings. Accordingly, this notion reflects one of the central tenets of attachment theory insofar as “infants need to develop a secure dependence on parents before launching out into unfamiliar situations.”\footnote{Bretherton, I. “The Origins of Attachment Theory: John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth,” Attachment Theory: Social, Developmental, and Clinical Perspectives, ed. Goldberg, S., Muir, R., and Kerr, J. (Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press, 1995) 48.}

This special attachment relationship is designed over the course of human evolution to promote proximity and contact with the primary caregiver in the service of survival. In this sense, attachment theory is fundamentally grounded upon biological bases of human behaviour. To help explain this further, Bowlby claims that genetic selection favours attachment behaviours because they increase the likelihood of child-mother proximity, which in turn increases the likelihood of protection and co-operation,
thereby providing a survival advantage. Facilitating an advantage to survival by developing an attachment to the primary caregiver is, therefore, inherently motivated by infants. In other words, infants are biologically predisposed to maintain a close proximity to the primary caregiver in order to ensure protection from predators so that basic needs such as feeding and social learning can safely occur. This phenomenon is referred to as the "biological function of attachment." In a basic Darwinian sense, the proclivity to seek proximity to the primary caregiver is a behavioral adaptation in the same way that a fox's white coat in the tundra is an adaptation. Children, then, necessarily develop a particular style of attachment whether or not their physiological needs are met. That is to say, since the drive to attach to the primary caregiver is a basic function of the drive to survive the threat of predators, it is not dependent upon, or associated with feeding or any other pleasurable provisions. Feeding and other pleasurable provisions can only hope to occur if the threat of extinction can be placated by the primary caregiver by offering the infant appropriate care and protection from perceived threats. Thus, infants will become attached and develop an "attachment behavioral system" - albeit in an insecure fashion - even with abusive and/or neglectful primary caregivers. Having said that, so long as there is someone there to interact with on a regular basis to serve as an attachment figure, regardless of blood-relatedness, the newborn human infant will form an attachment style. The drive to form attachments, and to develop an attachment style, is therefore strongly built into the human repertoire through evolution.

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51 Cassidy 5.
52 Weinfeld et al., 68.
There are four primary infant attachment style categories that also correspond to the adult scheme: (1) secure, (2) ambivalent (3) avoidant, and (4) disorganized. This classification system is based upon empirical observation of infant behaviour in the "Strange Situation" (i.e., a standardized laboratory procedure involving two distinct separations and reunions between the caregiver and one-year-old infants), and was validated by showing that infant behaviour in this procedure was an accurate indicator of the kind of caregiving infants experienced within the first year of life.

The most common and optimal scheme is the "secure" pattern. Infants categorized as secure clearly use their mothers as a secure base for exploration, and tend to do so freely within her presence, check on her whereabouts and reactions periodically, and restrict exploration in her absence. These infants show varying levels of distress in her absence that range from simple inhibition of play/exploration to extreme distress, but all secure infants tend to greet the mother positively upon her return, and return to exploration soon thereafter. The "ambivalent" category is indicative of infants who have difficulty separating from their mothers' to explore, and their play is often impoverished. They become extremely distressed by their mother's departure and, although they seek contact upon her return, they tend not to readily settle down or return to exploration. Infants categorized as "avoidant" appear to explore without interest in their mother's whereabouts, are minimally distressed by her departure, and appear to "snub" or ignore her when she returns. These three patterns (i.e., secure, ambivalent, and avoidant) originally served clinical research well, but researchers always had a small number of cases that were not conclusively classifiable to any of these three categories. As clinical samples progressively began to include maltreated

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children and infants of psychiatrically diagnosed caregivers, it became evident that there were patterns of attachment that could not be integrated into the existing system, so a "disorganized" category was introduced to represent infants who did not have an organized attachment strategy. During trials in the Strange Situation, these infants engaged in odd behaviours, such as being unable to approach the caregiver directly when they were severely distressed, which resulted from the infant feeling extremely confused and/or frightened by the caregiver.55

Accordingly, of these four attachment styles, a child will primarily develop one pattern through the bonding cycle as he adapts to experience with caregivers. And, the primary factor in determining the pattern of attachment assumed by the infant is parental sensitivity towards offering an appropriate and prompt response to the infant's distress signals. A mother who is promptly responsive, for example, rather than rejecting or neglectful, will assist the infant in feeling secure towards achieving his ends which, in turn, helps develop the infant's confidence in his own ability to be self-reliant, in control, and take responsibility over what happens to him. It is important to note that being consistently nurtured and responded to does not necessarily lead to the development of a "spoiled" or "self-indulgent" child. Rather, it leads to developing an empathetic child who learns that when another person is needy, it is appropriate to respond with assistance; and when another person is emotionally overwhelmed, it is appropriate to respond with comfort and reassurance.

Unlike secure infants, infants who experience chronic unavailability and/or rejection from the primary caregiver, which are characteristic of the "insecure" patterns (i.e., ambivalent, avoidant, and disorganized), are liable to develop accumulating frustration and dysregulation, which is of course inherent in being treated insensitively.

55 Goldberg 5.
Because of potential unavailability of the caregivers, these infants learn to live in constant threat of being left vulnerable, alone, and neglected. They simply lack confidence in receiving an appropriate and fulfilling response from their primary caregivers. And, when this lack of confidence, together with the expectation of being hurt, neglected or disappointed, is carried forward to new relationships in the future, the insecure individual is inclined to behave in a distrustful, angry and/or aggressive manner. As such, the infant's conditioned susceptibility towards feelings of anger and/or aggression is evidence of a relative lack of the ability to empathize or emotionally identify with others later in life. Accordingly, herein lies the conditioned roots of antisocial and psychopathic behaviour that essentially stems from the early disruption of the bond between mother and infant, which is most common with children classified with an "avoidant" or "disorganized" attachment style.

The formation of an attachment strategy progressively stabilizes over time by means of repeated interactions between infant and caregiver. And, most importantly, the dynamics of this special affectionate relationship plays a highly influential role in subsequent relations because it essentially "sets the stage" for future social interactions. A relationship with loving caregivers is an important mediation between the child and the outside world. Bowlby asserts that "there is a strong relationship between an individual's experiences with his parents and his later capacity to make affectionate bonds." The early attachment relationship is therefore of special importance because the attachment strategy learned by an infant has considerable implications for facilitating interpersonal closeness and emotional development and regulation. Attachment strategies can therefore be viewed as unconscious plans, guided by an internal working model of relationships, which in turn guide an individual's cognition and

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behaviour with others.\footnote{An “Internal Working Model” (IWM) of attachment exists throughout the lifespan, and remains relatively stable over time. An IWM basically refers to a set of conscious and/or unconscious rules for the organization of information relevant to attachment, and for obtaining and limiting access to that information (i.e., to information regarding attachment related experiences, feelings, ideations).} This occurs from the guidance that an individual’s internal working model provides insofar as what to expect about another person’s emotional availability. And, barring any significant changes in the environment, or in the individual, the key qualities of the infant-parent affectionate bond will be, for the most part, replicated in subsequent relationships. So, for example, secure infants will be most likely inclined to form supportive, nurturing, and close relations; whereas insecure infants will form relations where the giving and/or receiving of care is relatively truncated.\footnote{Berlin, L.J., and Cassidy, J. “Relations among Relationships: Contributions from Attachment Theory and Research,” Handbook of Attachment: Theory, Research, and Clinical Applications, ed. Cassidy, J., and Shaver, P.R. (New York: Guilford, 1999) 689.} These implications are particularly relevant for comprehending the social origins of many psychiatric disorders, including psychopathy. Essentially, at this point, it is becoming increasingly apparent that infants who have a history of relatively insensitive and neglectful caregiving (i.e., ambivalent, avoidant, and disorganized) are more likely to exhibit conduct problems in early childhood and, as a result, are more likely to form less satisfying and, in an extreme case like psychopathy, highly insensitive and destructive social relations.

Conduct problems in early childhood have received considerable attention from attachment researchers. Research has shown that avoidant children are more likely than other children to victimize their play partners, and to show hostile and aggressive behaviour towards both their parents and peers.\footnote{Weinfield et al., 79.} Generally speaking, avoidant and disorganized infants are at the greatest risk for childhood aggression and conduct problems. Insecure attachment, and the avoidant and disorganized patterns in particular, have been linked to criminality via the absence of appropriate consideration...
of the needs and feelings of others. Basically, this occurs in future social relationships because if one was treated sensitively as a child, one is more likely to treat others sensitively and empathetically as an adult; and if one was treated insensitively as a child, one is more likely to treat others insensitively and aggressively as an adult. Here we see the ways in which empathy, which can be considered the counterpart of aggression, becomes developmentally inhibited because of insensitive, unresponsive, neglectful and/or abusive early caregiving. In essence, feelings of aggression reflect a sense of alienation from others, whereas feeling empathy reflects connectedness; and experiencing feelings of aggression reflects a breakdown or warping of dyadic emotional regulation, whereas feeling empathy reflects a sense of heightened emotional synchronicity. In its most extreme manifestation, this skewed dynamic is most evident in psychopathy and anti-social personality disorder. An individual's attachment history, therefore, strongly influences and contributes to the development of empathy insofar as the ability to be sensitive to another's emotional cues is conditioned from the manner in which one was treated as a child by the primary caregiver.

In support of the above, anthropologist Ashley Montague writes: "Show me a murderer, a hardened criminal, a juvenile delinquent, a psychopath, or a 'cold fish' and in almost every case I will show you a tragedy that has resulted from not being properly loved during childhood." Similarly, Walsh estimates that the ten percent of habitual criminals that are psychopaths come from loveless homes that are characterized by


61 APD is very much similar to psychopathy, but with a focus on social factors. Accordingly, APD is also characterized by deceitfulness, impulsivity, irresponsibility, irritability, lack of remorse, and a consistent disregard for the rights and feelings of others and for the basic laws of society.

62 Ashley Montague, A Scientist Looks at Love (Phi Beta Kappan, 1970) 46.
neglect, rejection, and abuse. Since these individuals have not experienced love during infancy from primary caregivers, they have difficulty feeling love for others. These individuals have essentially alienated themselves from their own hurt and feelings of rejection and, as a result, they protect themselves from negative feelings with a diminished capacity to feel sympathy and empathy for others and are, as a result, able to engage in cruelty toward others without feeling the typical repercussions of remorse. This inability to empathize with others effectively prevents psychopaths from emotionally “connecting” with others and from forming mutually satisfying, trust-based, long-term, co-operative relationships. As such, I believe that psychopathy will be better understood when we can more accurately describe and measure those subtle emotional interactions between infants and caregivers during the early years of life, and compare them with measurable deficiencies in the capacities for trust, empathy and affection later in life.

The review of attachment theory outlined above, that helps explain the environmental origins of psychopathy, along with the origins of the capacities for trust, empathy and affection, seem to invariably point to the same place - the very earliest months and years of human experience. As Selma Fraiberg points out, “These are the diseases that are produced in the early years by the absence of human ties or the destruction of human ties. In the absence of human ties those mental qualities that we call human will fail to develop or will be grafted upon a personality that cannot nourish them, so that at best they will be imitations of virtues, personality facades.”

As such, I believe that the most meaningful measure of success in child rearing is contributing to the development of a personality with highly developed capacities for

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63 Walsh 141.
64 Selma H. Fraiberg, The Magic Years (New York: Charles Scriber’s Sons, 1959) 300.
trust, empathy and affection. Perhaps this is why Timothy McVeigh's father feels somewhat responsible for his son's horrific actions in Oklahoma City; that is to say, Mr. McVeigh perhaps felt as though he failed to instill these qualities into the young Timothy McVeigh. It seems to me that the prevailing admiration of child rearing practices that produce in a child, for example, the highest possible IQ, or a character that evokes all-embracing approval from others, or a highly skilled athlete, should be suspect. Such approaches to child rearing should be suspect because they often substitute for practices that produce an adult with well-developed capacities for those qualities essential to harmonious human existence. Focusing attention towards developing a securely attached child at an early age helps children to develop emotionally and intellectually, cope with frustration productively, become self-reliant and self-valuing, develop empathic relationships, care for the interests of others, and, as I will argue in later chapters, take responsibility for their actions. Like the essential nutrients for the body (e.g., dairy, meat, fruits and vegetables), there are basic emotional nutrients that must be made available to children at an early age in a balanced manner. Empathy, self-worth, consideration for others, trustworthiness, honesty, resilience, hope, and intelligence are essential to building a virtuous character for effective impulse control, anger management, conflict resolution, and socially responsible behaviour. Without these assets and skills, children cannot establish mutually-fulfilling relationships with other individuals and community systems, which in turn puts the entire social structure at risk simply because the failure to develop certain qualities at an early age tends to produce children who lack empathy and, as a result, are at risk for developing a psychopathic personality. And, as Robert Hare points out, "if intervention is to have any
chance of succeeding, it will have to occur in early childhood. By adolescence, the chances of changing the behavioral patterns of the budding psychopath are slim.\textsuperscript{65}

In considering the forces that produce psychopaths, I have shown that, at one end of the spectrum, theories regarding the social origins of psychopathy have captured the attention and reverence of many prominent researchers in the general field of childhood developmental psychology and, more specifically, researchers studying attachment theory. Based on my discussion of attachment theory, I believe that parents who fail to offer sensitive and responsive caregiving to infants significantly increase the risk of contributing to the onset of psychopathic tendencies in their children. It is quite apparent that highly stressful early environments, and certain attachment styles play a critical role in personality development, including psychopathy. However, I personally do not believe that the origins of psychopathy are strictly a product of “the failure to bond” (i.e., early childhood maltreatment, rejection, deprivation, neglect, or abuse). Although, I have little doubt that high-quality caregiving that delivers sensitivity and affection would significantly reduce the risks for the onset of criminal, psychopathic, and/or other socially deviant behaviours throughout a lifespan. But, there is still the other side of the story to consider, that is, the “nature” perspective. Since in many cases psychopaths seem to be off-track right from the start, it is well worth examining the ways in which genetic factors play a role in contributing to the development of psychopathy. Interestingly, this perspective (i.e., the biological contributing factors) is the one that Robert Hare advocates as playing a more significant role in the development of psychopathy than social factors. He states:

\begin{quote}
I can find no convincing evidence that psychopathy is the direct result of early social or environmental factors...the neglect and abuse of children can cause horrendous
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{65} Hare 160.
psychological damage...but these factors do not make them into psychopaths...although psychopathy is not primarily the result of poor parenting or adverse childhood experiences, I think they play an important role in shaping what nature has provided...while some assert that psychopathy is the result of attachment difficulties in infancy, I turn the argument around: In some children the very failure to bond is a symptom of psychopathy. It is likely that these children lack capacity to bond readily, and that their lack of attachment is largely the result, not the cause, of psychopathy.\(^6\)

In light of Hare's assertion, it is important to note that my objective here is not to solve the "chicken-and-egg" problem of which came first with regards to the rudimentary origins of psychopathy, that is, whether it be nature or nurture. Rather, I am interested in examining and illuminating key elements from within both forces to later show that the roots of psychopathy transpire at such an early stage in life that those inflicted with the disorder seem irreversibly destined to continuously behave in a strictly selfish and merciless manner amidst the majority of others who, instead, are able to interact with a relative degree of selflessness and conscience and, as a result, are able to coexist in relative harmony. Along these lines, I consider psychopaths to be victims of neurobiologically determined behavioral abnormalities, along with being victims of adverse parenting conditions, which, in turn, creates a fixed gulf between them and the rest of society. Therefore, although psychopathy is not exclusively the result of poor parenting or adverse childhood experiences, I believe social factors play a vital role in shaping what nature has provided. Notwithstanding this, whatever the interrelationships and relative weights of psychological, social, and genetic factors are, psychopaths seem to possess notable abnormalities in all of these areas.

\(^6\) Hare 170,172 -173.
1.2.2: Genetic

To introduce the growing body of evidence for the neurological bases of psychopathy, I urge you to think about sleeping comfortably in bed one night when you suddenly hear someone breaking into your home. How would you feel? Or, think about while you're climbing into bed one night, you see a huge black spider walking towards you on your sheets. How would that make you feel? Undoubtedly, most people would feel intense fear. In fact, for most of us, simply reading the above sentences might cause some subtle changes in our heart rate, skin conductance levels, and facial expressions. However, research has shown that psychopaths react differently than most people to the presentation of such emotional stimuli.

Christopher Patrick assigned 54 prisoners to low- and high-psychopathy groups based on a psychopathy checklist. Participants were shown a series of “fear imagery” sentences, like those above, and had their skin, cardiac, and facial responses recorded. Results indicated that participants categorized in the “high-psychopathy group” had significantly smaller heart-rate and skin-conductance responses than those in the “low-psychopathy group”, indicating that the normal process in which such fear-provoking thoughts and sentences prompt certain emotions is defective in psychopaths. Although the facial responses of psychopaths were less intense than non-psychopaths, the difference was not significant. Interestingly, however, researchers noted that even though the experiment demonstrated that psychopaths reacted differently to the fear-imagery sentences than non-psychopaths, psychopaths actually claimed to have had the same responses as non-psychopaths – which suggests that non-affective memory

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operations are intact with psychopaths. Not surprisingly, this notion is consistent with the “mask of sanity” psychopaths present to the world.

In an extension of the study outlined above, Patrick and colleagues compared the “startle” response of psychopaths and non-psychopaths.68 Researchers showed psychopathic prisoners pleasant, neutral, and unpleasant slides, and a loud burst of noise was unexpectedly sounded through the participants’ headphones. With most individuals, researchers predicted that a “protective startle reflex,” which is evoked by an abrupt and intense stimulus, increases considerably during exposure to aversive or fearful stimuli, and the startle response is normally inhibited when viewing a pleasant slide. The study indicated that non-psychopathic prisoners did indeed react more strongly to the noise while viewing unpleasant slides, and less strongly while viewing pleasant slides. This, however, was not the case for psychopaths. Rather than showing a heightened startle reaction during exposure to aversive slides, psychopaths showed an inhibited reaction, relative to neutral slides. This demonstrates that psychopaths are deficient in their capacity for a defensive response mobilization, which reflects the essence of fear, and that psychopaths’ abnormal responses to unpleasant stimuli is indicative of their characteristic “emotional detachment.”

Patrick’s studies lend support to a longitudinal study conducted by Adrian Raine and colleagues.69 One hundred and one 15-year-old male children had their resting heart-rate, skin conductance, and EEGs measured, and nine years later, when these participants reached twenty-four years of age, researchers located those who had been convicted of crimes within the last nine years, and found that these participants had a

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significantly lower resting heart rate, skin conductance activity, and a slower frequency in EEG measures. Importantly, researchers also concluded that these differences were not related to demographic, academic, or social factors.

Such studies essentially show that cardiovascular, electrodermal, cortical, and facial response systems are all underaroused in people categorized as psychopaths when exposed to fearful stimuli. In addition to this, these three studies, along with similar models, offer convincing support for a common thesis that is closely associated with the key elements of psychopathy: psychopaths generally lack the capacity to feel negative reinforcement, affect, and/or pain - all of which typically, and as I will show in the next chapter, motivate altruistic behaviour in most people. The inability to be motivated by pain, fear, guilt, and/or negative reinforcement is, of course, the underlying cause of their anti-social patterns of behaviour, which closely relates to their characteristic lack of empathy. This is, in part, evident by their abnormal responses to the presentation of emotional stimuli.

It seems to me that research like those discussed above on the neurological basis of psychopathy is directed at defining the disorder, or somehow indirectly connected with psychopathy. But the question remains, what is it about psychopaths' neurophysiology that causes them to react abnormally to the presentation of emotional stimuli? In other words, what are the biological causes, rather than the ostensible indicators of psychopathy? How do their brains organically differ from ours?

Antonio Damasio, a neurologist who has been investigating the neurological basis of psychopathy for over a decade, and author of *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain*, conducted research similar to those outlined above, but
with individuals afflicted with frontal lobe damage. Damasio exposed three groups of participants to a series of neutral and disturbing images and measured their physiological reactions to them. Of the three groups involved, the group of normal individuals, along with the group with brain damage that did not affect the frontal lobes, generated abundant skin conductance responses to the disturbing images, but not to the neutral images. Conversely, however, although the group with brain damage that affected the frontal lobes recognized that certain images were disturbing, they generated no skin conductance responses whatsoever. These results, as demonstrated by participants with frontal lobe damage, parallel the lack of affect in psychopaths, which shows that the frontal lobe is directly associated with the regulation of emotional arousal.

To help illustrate the link between the frontal lobe and key factors related to psychopathy, I shall outline the case of “Elliot.” Elliot was inflicted with a benign tumor in the frontal lobe area of his brain. The tumor was successfully removed, thereby saving Elliot’s life, but residual frontal lobe tissue damage remained after the surgery. Elliot’s physical prognosis was promising, but the same could not be said for important aspects of his psychological health.

Prior to the onset of the tumor, Elliot was a good husband, father, and a valued employee with a business firm. He had attained an enviable personal, professional, and social status that made him a role model for his younger siblings and colleagues. However, Elliot’s life progressively unraveled as he developed headaches, and was soon thereafter diagnosed with a brain tumor. He began to lose his sense of responsibility and, as a result, both his professional and social life began to deteriorate.

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71 Damasio 34.
Once surgery was performed to remove the tumor, Elliot underwent radical and chronic changes in personality during his recovery period. Eventually, Elliot was fired from not only the business firm he worked at prior to surgery, but also the other positions he held thereafter. He got divorced, and then remarried, and then divorced again. In light of all this, those close to him could not understand how a person with Elliot's background could make such flawed business and personal decisions. In an effort to understand why, many psychological tests were performed, all of which confirmed that Elliot's intelligence, memory, attention span, reasoning ability, motor ability, and language capability were unscathed. Nevertheless, it was clear that Elliot was unable to reason and decide in ways that were conducive to the maintenance and betterment of himself and his family; he was therefore no longer capable of succeeding as an independent social being.\footnote{Damasio 38.} So, what was the problem?

Researchers realized that they “had been overly concerned with the state of Elliot's intelligence and the instruments of his rationality, and had not paid much attention to his emotions...[because]...at first glance, there was nothing out of the ordinary about Elliot's emotions.”\footnote{Damasio 44.} However, upon a deeper analysis, it became evident that “something was missing.” Most notably, Elliot displayed an extraordinary sense of emotional detachment while he effortlessly recounted the massive tragedy of his life. He constantly appeared calm, relaxed and in control, exerting no restraint whatsoever upon any “hidden” feelings, nor exhibiting any inner turmoil. He showed no sadness, impatience, tension, frustration or joy, and on the odd occasion when he would show anger, he would quickly regain his cool composure. And, Elliot was well aware of these changes insofar as he realized how certain issues and situations
provoked an emotional response from him before the tumor, and now these same issues no longer provoked any emotional response from him. Basically, Elliot seemed to feel "neutral" about most things most of the time. Damasio succinctly summarized Elliot's predicament as "to know but not to feel." \(^{74}\)

Accordingly, the possibility that Elliot's reduced emotional capacity might be playing a role in his decision-making failures was examined. Thus, "it was important to establish whether Elliot still knew the rules and principles of behaviour that he neglected to use day after day." \(^{75}\) Had he lost this knowledge? Or, had he retained it, but was unable to conjure it up and employ it? Researchers sought the answers to these questions by administering a series of problems, ethical dilemmas, and financial questions. Surprisingly, Elliot's performance on these tasks were average, and in some cases, above average. But how could this be? That is, how could his test performance sharply contrast the defective decision-making processes he exhibited in real life?

Researchers concluded that there are several important and relevant differences between the conditions and demands of the laboratory tasks presented to Elliot, and the conditions and demands of real life. Performance on those tests did not require Elliot to make a choice amongst options. All that was required was to generate options, and report the consequences of those options if chosen and acted upon. And, since Elliot had retained the faculties of his memory, he was still able to generate many viable options, along with the consequences of implementing those options. The only difference now was that upon being forced to make a choice in real life, in the face of many viable options, Elliot simply wouldn't know what to do. Since the ongoing, open-ended, uncertain nature of making real life decisions calls for a commitment motivated

\(^{74}\) Damasio 45.  
\(^{75}\) Damasio 46.
from a given set of values, Elliot's decision-making processes were impaired because the potency of his value system had been drastically reduced because his emotions had been starkly appeased. So, the defect in Elliot's faulty decision-making process was not attributable to a lack of social knowledge or prudence, or to a deficiency in accessing such knowledge, or to an impairment in reasoning, or to a defective attention span or memory. Instead, researchers concluded that "the defect appeared to set in the late stages in reasoning, close to or at the point at which choice making or response selection must occur...Elliot was unable to choose effectively, or he might not choose at all, or he might choose badly." As indicated earlier, the emotionless, or "cold-blooded" nature of Elliot's reasoning processes effectively prevented him from assigning different values to different options in order for him to meaningfully commit to deciding in favour of one option over another.

In relation to psychopathy and anti-social behavior, the key point I want to illuminate, in light of the case of Elliot, is the crucial role that, under certain circumstances, a reduction in emotion (i.e., emotional detachment) may indicate a vital source of irrational and anti-social behaviour. Along these lines, the presence of emotion in the reasoning process is not necessarily an impediment to rationality. In fact, when confronted with decisions associated with the social world, the presence of emotional considerations in one's rationality is, in my view, absolutely warranted and desirable – particularly when it comes to feeling empathy towards others.

As Damasio's research demonstrates, the source of such behaviour is linked to brain abnormalities in the frontal lobe. This finding provides evidence for a neurological mechanism that regulates affect and, more specifically, regulates conscious

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76 Damasio 50.
77 This notion, (i.e., an emotional prerequisite for full rationality) is examined in Chapter Two.
experiences of fear, pain and anxiety – which relates to feeling and being motivated by
guilt and empathy. Deficits in this neurological mechanism, therefore, helps explain
emotional deficiencies in not only patients with frontal lobe damage, but also
psychopaths.

The link between prefrontal cortex deficiencies and anti-social behaviour is also
evident through a more recent case study by Damasio and colleagues. This study
reveals that lesions in the prefrontal cortex lead to dramatic personality changes and
impairment of social and moral behaviour, similar to that seen in psychopaths. Unlike
Elliot, who became inflicted with a brain tumor during adulthood, the two young adults in
the present case suffered prefrontal cortex lesions during infancy. Similar to Elliot
though, both individuals “appeared” to have fully recovered from the lesions, but both
exhibited a range of amoral and anti-social behaviours. One subject, a 23-year-old
male engaged in poorly planned petty thievery, lied frequently, physically assaulted
others, and was sexually promiscuous. He conceived an illegitimate child in whom he
showed no interest, and he showed no guilt or remorse for any of his self-serving
behaviour. Likewise, the second subject, a 20-year-old female, stole from her family
and other children, lied frequently, physically and verbally assaulted others, and was
also sexually promiscuous. She too conceived an illegitimate child, and completely
lacked empathy towards the child. Reportedly, she never expressed guilt or remorse for
any of her behaviour, and she refrained from taking responsibility by blaming her social
difficulties on others.

78 Anderson, S.W., Bechara, A., Damasio, H., Tranel, D., and Damasio, A.R. "Impairment of Social
and Moral Behavior Related to Early Damage in Human Prefrontal Cortex," Nature Neuroscience 2.11
Researchers noted that the behaviour problems exhibited by these two individuals could not be explained by environmental factors because they both came from loving, stable, middle-class families with devoted parents. Additionally, both individuals had well-adjusted siblings who exhibited no such difficulties. Of course, these two personalities show symptoms of psychopathy by means of their lack of empathy, remorse and anti-social behaviour. However, researchers noted that the patients' behavior differed from that of the typical profile of psychopathy insofar as the patients' patterns of aggression seemed impulsive rather than goal-directed. Nevertheless, it is clear that both individuals had defective social and moral reasoning, thereby suggesting that the acquisition of complex social conventions and moral rules had been impaired because of the damage incurred within the prefrontal cortex during infancy.

In an effort to determine which hemisphere of the brain is associated with psychopaths' abnormal processing of emotional stimuli, researchers Rodney Day and Stephen Wong tested twenty psychopathic and twenty non-psychopathic inmates. Participants were simultaneously shown two words – one with a negative connotation, and one with a neutral connotation – in each trial. For half the trials, the negative word was shown in the participants' left visual field and the neutral word in the right visual field. For the other half of the trials, the order was reversed. Researchers predicted that since the left hemisphere specializes in verbal-analytic processing, and the right hemisphere specializes in emotional processing, non-psychopaths should show faster processing responses when words with a negative connotation are presented to the left visual field (right hemisphere). And, psychopaths, in turn, should not show a significant

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79 Anderson et al.
difference in visual field advantage. The results confirmed the predictions. So, psychopaths, who are emotionally shallow, unempathetic, etc., relied less on right hemisphere emotional decoding strategies than did non-psychopaths.

In relation to these findings, if we return to the case of Elliot discussed earlier, magnetic resonance imaging tests (MRI) interestingly revealed that the damage incurred on Elliot's frontal cortex was far more extensive in the right hemisphere than in the left.\textsuperscript{81} And, as we may recall, Elliot showed many symptoms of psychopathy primarily associated with emotional detachment, a restriction of emotional arousal, and an inability to make good decisions because of the greater damage inflicted to the right side of his frontal cortex.

As my literature review suggests, there is noteworthy evidence to implicate frontal lobe abnormalities as an important factor causing anti-social behaviour and psychopathy. Adrian Raine, whose research has offered a significant contribution to this topic, asserts "different clinical neuroscience paradigms are beginning to converge on the conclusion that there is a significant brain basis to [anti-social personalities] over and above contributions from the psychosocial environment, and that these neurobehavioral processes are relevant to understanding violence in everyday society...[but] it's important to make clear that biology is not destiny...some people who have prefrontal deficits do not become anti-social, and some anti-social individuals do not have prefrontal deficits."\textsuperscript{82} Accordingly I believe it is important to recognize that deficits in the prefrontal cortex, or a reliance on left hemisphere decoding strategies, in and of themselves, do not conclusively explain the source of psychopathic behaviour.

There are a number of regions in the brain that are involved in inhibiting anti-social

\textsuperscript{81} Damasio 39.
behaviour, and a disruption in any part of this “behaviour inhibition system” could lead to
the onset of psychopathic symptoms.

Using a sophisticated brain scanning technique called fMRI (functional magnetic
resonance imaging), researchers are learning more about other areas of the brain that
are associated with psychopathic traits. In a recent study, Robert Hare, Kent Kiehl and
colleagues performed fMRI scans on eight psychopathic criminals, eight non-
psychopathic criminals, and eight non-criminal controls, and examined activity in the
limbic system in response to negative words. The limbic system is the center of
emotion, and is also associated with memory and attention. Tests revealed that
psychopathic criminals, as compared to non-psychopathic criminals and non-criminals,
showed much less emotion-related activity in several areas of the limbic system in
processing negative words. And, it is important to note that psychopathic participants
did not have any obvious structural abnormalities in their brains. This is not inconsistent
with prior research insofar as it is well established that psychopaths process affective
material differently than non-psychopaths, and their use of alternative cognitive
strategies is, as indicated earlier, also linked with the frontal lobe area - a region
associated with decision making processes. This notion was supported by Kiehl et al.,
by virtue of the fact that psychopaths, who showed a relatively under-activation of limbic
system processes, showed a relatively over-activation of frontal lobe cortex processing
in response to the same stimuli.

As such, the studies outlined above, along with many more alike, suggest that
the limbic system, in corroboration with the frontal lobe area, seems to constitute a
basic psychological mechanism enabling human beings to consciously and willfully

83 Kiehl, K.A., Smith, A.M., Hare, R.D., Mendrek, A., Forster, B.B., Brink, J., and Liddle, P.F. "Limbic
Abnormalities in Affective Processing by Criminal Psychopaths as Revealed by Functional Magnetic
regulate their emotional responses. And, a defect of this circuitry can have disastrous psychological and social consequences, like those reflecting psychopathic qualities.\textsuperscript{84}

In summary, the studies I have discussed - both in the nature and nurture sections - reveal the important relevance of both environmental and genetic influences on the development of psychopathy. Accordingly, my objective is not to offer a conclusive answer to the question of whether psychopathy is strictly a product of "bad parenting" or "bad seeds" – namely because I believe the two perspectives are intricately interrelated, and it is indeed a difficult task to determine whether psychopaths are either "born" or "made." Nevertheless, whatever the interrelationships and relative weights of psychological and neurological factors in the etiology of psychopathy, it is clear that psychopaths possess some remarkable abnormalities in both realms. And, as indicated earlier, I believe that the genetic factors underlying psychopathy significantly contribute susceptibility to the influence of certain unfavorable environmental conditions (i.e., insecure attachment).

So, in light of the arguments and evidence provided above, my next inquiry lies with the following question: Can anything be done to change the course of development of psychopathy? That is, are certain individuals unfortunately and irreversibly destined to act in a completely self-serving and immoral manner for the course of their lives, paying no heed to the basic wishes and demands of the moral community-at-large to respect others in some minimal way? In short, can someone who is born and raised without a conscience ever develop a conscience at some later point in time? And if so, how might this occur?

1.3: Treatment: Can the Tide be Turned?

Few contexts are as informative for exploring the nature and limits of personality transformation as psychotherapy. In response to the question posed in the title of this section, the answer is simply "no", the tide cannot be turned. There is currently no effective psychotherapeutic treatment for psychopaths. This conclusion was established over twenty-five years ago when Robert Hare boldly stated that:

with a few exceptions, the traditional forms of psychotherapy, including psychoanalysis, group therapy, client-centred therapy, and psychodrama, have proved ineffective in the treatment of psychopathy. Nor have the biological therapies, including psychosurgery, electroshock therapy, and the use of various drugs, fared much better.\(^{85}\)

And, in early 1993, as it remains today, Hare re-affirmed that "the situation with regard to treatment remains essentially the same as it has always been."\(^{86}\) Accordingly, I therefore expect this section to be the shortest in my project, which is, interestingly, in keeping with Hare's expectation that most writers on the topic comment that the shortest chapter in any work on psychopathy is the one on treatment.\(^{87}\) Nevertheless, in order to aim towards developing a treatment that potentially might work, I believe it is important to critically examine and understand why none of the traditional methods of therapy have proven ineffective thus far. So, I will begin by briefly outlining the fundamental purpose of psychotherapy, and then I will show why psychotherapy proves ineffective with psychopaths.

1.3.1: Purpose and Practicality of Psychotherapy

The conviction underlying the most widely used and accepted formal psychological treatment approaches (e.g., psychodynamic, behavioral, cognitive-behavioral, humanistic-experiential, psychiatric, or group) is that people with

\(^{85}\) Hare 193.  
\(^{86}\) Hare 193.  
\(^{87}\) Hare 194.
psychological problems can change, that is to say, they can benefit from more adaptive and satisfying ways of perceiving, evaluating, coping, and behaving – but only if they are “willing” to. Despite the theoretical and practical differences between therapeutic models, all therapists strive to offer hope for the demoralized, and a new perspective on oneself and the world by means of establishing an empathetic, trusting and caring therapeutic relationship. Basically, as Freud claimed, being better able to work and love is the service that psychotherapists strive to offer.\textsuperscript{88} But in order for this service to be effective, prospective clients must first recognize that they indeed have a problem, and second, they must want to do something about it. Thus, the common fundamental goal of all formal methods of psychotherapy is to introduce and implement practical strategies that can open pathways towards achieving constructive change in a client who is admittedly dissatisfied, and willing to seek and employ new ideas that are conducive for change.

Accordingly, it becomes apparent why psychotherapy typically does not work with psychopaths. Essentially, the main problem is two-fold: (1) effective treatment, by nature, requires empathy, and psychopaths cannot empathize, and (2) since they are lacking the ability to empathize, they are unable to feel and appropriately acknowledge the stresses and vulnerabilities of other human beings, and they are unable to acquire knowledge from empathizing that serves to illuminate normal human stresses, shortcomings, and vulnerabilities that we all are subject to. Stated differently, empathizing with the pain of another serves to illuminate the frailty and fragility of our own human existence and, by doing so, it motivates us to appease pain in others. This helps to explain why psychopaths are not interested in appeasing pain and vulnerability

in others; rather, upon recognizing "weaknesses" in others, they are motivated to exploit them by manipulating them to serve their own needs through these "weaknesses." Thus, psychopaths do not believe or feel that they are the ones who have psychological or emotional weaknesses or problems, nor do they typically feel vulnerable, so there is no impetus for them to seek treatment that strives to "improve" their already competent, potent and powerful personalities. Understandably, it is much easier to initiate change in peoples' attitudes and behaviours when they recognize that there is indeed a problem, feelings of powerlessness, and dissatisfaction. In contrast, when people are satisfied, happy, and feeling "strong", it is very difficult to initiate motivation for change. In short, anxiety serves as an effective instigator for change; and since psychopaths do not generally feel anxious, they are not motivated to change.

Along these lines, part of the difficulty with psychopaths is that any problems they might recognize and possess, such as being caught and punished for certain transgressions, they typically blame others, the system, or fate. They basically blame anything and anyone but themselves. Because of this, psychopaths see little wrong with themselves, and are therefore generally satisfied with the state of their existence — regardless of how bleak and meaningless it might look to others.

As suggested earlier, in comparison to the lifestyles of many other people, psychopaths generally see themselves as superior beings who have an abundance of power over and above those who foolishly "care" about maintaining a "give-and-take" approach to their social interactions. Since they perceive the world as being strictly motivated by power, that is, in a "dog-eat-dog" kind of way, they feel entirely justified in manipulating, deceiving, and using others towards achieving their personal ends because they believe everyone else is basically doing the same in return. And, from the psychopath's point-of-view, those who seemingly do not assume the "cut-throat"
approach to life, or those who do but are relatively inept at it, are simply weak and therefore deserve to be outwitted and exploited. After all, for psychopaths, it’s all about survival of the fittest, and no one is to be trusted because everyone strictly and ultimately pursues their own interests in all situations.

In light of such attitudes, it is not surprising that psychopaths are not receptive to treatment that strives to facilitate, develop, and deepen feelings of empathy, trust and unity. They simply do not believe that these qualities are valuable and admirable, so they are not motivated to change towards actualizing them. Instead, psychopaths believe they possess strong and independent personalities that are not in need of modification towards social conformity. So, they are not inclined to voluntarily seek any sort of help or treatment. And in cases when they are forced into treatment by, for example, a court order or family, they simply go through the motions and, more importantly, they acquire new and valuable insights into human vulnerability that, in effect, makes them more proficient at manipulating and exploiting others. Psychotherapy therefore provides a forum for psychopaths to learn more about how other people think and feel, and this improves their ability to con and use others. In support of this notion, there is empirical evidence showing how therapy has a detrimental effect on psychopaths; that is to say, treatment does not make them better, but makes them worse by teaching them the interpersonal emotional processes practiced by common people.\textsuperscript{69} In fact, one psychopath was quoted as saying, “these programs are like a finishing school. They teach you how to put the squeeze on people.”\textsuperscript{90}


\textsuperscript{90} Hare 199.
Interestingly, as my literature review in the previous section illustrates, the psychopath’s inability to respond in a normal manner to fearful stimuli might also help explain why verbally oriented approaches to treatment and behaviour modification, which rely heavily on language-affect connections, are so notoriously ineffective with this population. Psychotherapy relies on use of language to invoke sympathetic feelings that facilitate constructive change towards becoming more trustful with one’s own vulnerable feelings, and with those of others.

Even with respect to changing the course of psychopathic patterns of behaviour in young people, the outlook is still bleak. Developing intervention programs for budding psychopaths typically has been focused towards changing the attitudes and behaviours of young people so that they more readily take responsibility for their actions, rather than resorting to blaming others. However, in order for this strategy to work, it is necessary for the young person to feel guilt with respect to the particular action and/or attitude that is being treated for change. Without guilt feelings, as I will show in the next chapter, it is difficult to initiate motivation for changing towards taking responsibility. And as I have shown earlier, children who have been victimized by neglectful and abusive early caregiving are generally lacking the capacity to feel guilt later in life. So, for these reasons, although some programs designed to promote pro-social behaviours and attitudes have shown some promise in the short-term, the effect seems to dissipate in the long-term when deep-seated patterns of behaviour re-emerge and prevail in due time.  

As such, it appears as though there is little hope for modifying the development and behaviour of psychopaths. First of all, it is basically impossible to teach them how to empathize and to feel remorse in a therapeutic context. And second of all, there is no

91 Hare 200.
effective biological treatment found to date. So, what should we do with them? Should we give up?

Previously, I asserted that there must be empathy functioning at the macro level in society if there is hope for it, along with its individuals, to develop, prosper, and survive. And, along these lines, it would be self-destructive, even from the psychopaths' point-of-view, to shamelessly, opportunistically, and perpetually behave in a self-interested manner. So, if it is maladaptive for both society and its individuals to strictly behave in a self-interested manner, what if attempts were made to convince psychopaths that conforming to society's standards and expectations was, in fact, within their interest – even though conforming might go against their nature? Would this work? At this point, it seems to me that this is society's only hope to reform psychopaths and to, in effect, minimize the harm they characteristically inflict. In keeping with this notion, Robert Hare asserts that rehabilitation programs for psychopaths will [have to] be less concerned with attempts to develop empathy or conscience than with intensive efforts to convince them that their current attitudes and behavior are not in their own self-interest, and that they alone must bear responsibility for their behavior. At the same time, we [must] attempt to show them how to use their strengths and abilities to satisfy their needs in ways society can tolerate.\(^\text{92}\)

If such an approach, which must be conducted under close supervision, does not work, then it is best to avoid becoming entangled with a psychopath in the first place. And for individuals who believe they might already be involved with someone of a remorseless nature, it is best to protect oneself by minimizing, or totally eliminating one's involvement because it is highly unlikely for such a person to change the nature of their destructive attitudes and behaviours. No matter what the cause of psychopathy is, the

\(^{92}\) Hare 204. *Italics mine.*
fact remains that these individuals are ticking time bombs who, either out of choice, biology, environmental factors, or a combination of all three, are not interested in interacting and attaching to others in a meaningful and common way.

Nevertheless, I believe attempts to solve the mystery of psychopathy by finding an effective treatment must continue. The more we can decrease the number of psychopaths in the general population, the better off society will be.
"I can't find the words to express the sorrow for what I have done."
- Kenneth Bianchi.

CHAPTER II: The Impenitent and Immoral Psychopath

Should we believe him? Was Kenneth Bianchi, otherwise known as "The Hillside Strangler", truly remorseful for brutally raping and strangling to death twelve young women within roughly eighteen months? And, why might he be declaring his supposed remorse during the trial proceedings? Bianchi, at first insisting on his innocence and his insanity, exhibited rising emotions during his trial as he listened to the litany of rape, torture, strangulation and murder to which he eventually confessed. Speaking to the court, he uttered the words quoted above with tears running down his face - presumably to elicit and obtain the court's sympathy during sentencing. However, Judge George, who presided over the trial, was by no means convinced by Bianchi's phony display of guilt-ridden emotion. Upon sentencing, he said to Bianchi, "you will...probably only get your thrills reliving over and over again the torturing and murdering of your victims, being incapable, as I believe you to be, of ever feeling any remorse."\(^{93}\) Reflecting the Judge's assessment, witnesses claimed that the confessed killer sat comfortably in another room, moments after being sentenced to life imprisonment without possibility for parole, relaxing and laughing.

What should we make of this? What is the moral significance of someone admittedly committing twelve unspeakable murders and failing to feel any remorse for doing so? In order to delve further into this general inquiry, I will first examine the

significance of the moral emotions before I examine what I believe to be the preconditions for moral reasoning, action, and responsibility.

2.1: The Moral Emotions

2.1.1: The Role of the Emotions in Morality

The moral emotions are those emotions I believe to be necessary and conducive for harmonious individual and social existence. Philosophers of the Enlightenment used the phrase “the moral sentiments” to denote the same. Among others, David Hume and Adam Smith wrote extensively about the moral sentiments and the vital role they played throughout individual and social life. More specifically, however, they emphasized the significance of moral emotions in guiding moral behaviour. In this sense, the likes of Hume and Smith believed that emotion and reason were not irreconcilable enemies in the process of moral judgment and action. Rather, they believed it was rational to be emotional, and that in order to have the capacity to become a fully rational agent, one required the capacity to experience the moral emotions. Thus, emotions are, necessarily, an intrinsic aspect of moral processes. David Hume, in A Treatise of Human Nature, boldly states that “all morality depends upon our sentiments.”

Expanding on this notion, in his book The Theory of Moral Sentiments, Adam Smith writes:

it is altogether absurd and unintelligible to suppose that the first perceptions of right and wrong can be derived from reason...these first perceptions, as well as all other experiments upon which any general rules are founded, cannot be the object of reason, but of immediate sense and feeling. It is by finding in a vast variety of instances that one tenor of conduct constantly please in a certain manner, and that another as constantly displeases the mind, that we form the general rules of morality.


This view, however, is, by no means, uncontested and uncontroversial. Immanuel Kant advocated a perspective that directly opposed the view put forth by David Hume. Kant believed that although emotions might inadvertently lead us to "doing the right thing," such emotionally inspired actions were not truly virtuous. The only way to achieve virtuous moral behaviour was, instead, to obey the moral law solely through reason and "objective" contemplation, and not through emotion and subjective inclination. The Kantian conception of emotional capacities, such as love and empathy, are ultimately just feelings, which have no place in reason and morality. Kant argued that in moral matters, the will is ideally influenced only by rational considerations, and not by subjective considerations, such as one's emotions.

For Kant, actions are deemed morally right in reference to their motives, that is to say, they must derive more from duty than from emotional inclination. In other words, the sole feature that gives an action moral worth is not the outcome achieved by the action, but the motive behind the action. The clearest examples of morally right actions are precisely those in which an agent's determination to act in accordance with duty overcomes self-interest. Thus, to act morally is always a struggle between duty and self-interested desire, which, in the end, duty should prevail.

To briefly illustrate this notion, suppose Jack goes out with some friends one night when he assures Jill he is staying home. In order for Jack's behaviour to be considered morally virtuous by Kant, what should Jack do the next day when Jill asks him what he did the previous night? For my purposes, Jack has at least three possible courses of action here. First, Jack can attempt to sustain his lie because what she doesn't know won't hurt her. Second, Jack can tell Jill the truth because he is scared that Jill will somehow find out when she eventually talks with Jack's friends - which
might make things even worse for him. And third, Jack can tell Jill the truth because he recognizes that "telling the truth" is simply the right thing to do - despite the fact that he really doesn't feel like telling the truth to Jill because he is scared of her reaction. From these three options, Kant would endorse the third because, in that case, even though Jack doesn't feel like telling Jill the truth because he is scared, he should nevertheless overcome those feelings and act in accordance to the moral principle that is objectively right (i.e., "always tell the truth"). Thus, although Jack's self-interest is motivating him to lie, he ought to adhere to his duty and tell Jill the truth. As for the other two options, the first scenario speaks for itself: Kant simply would not endorse lying. Kant also would not endorse the second scenario because even if Jack were to tell Jill the truth, he would be doing so because of fear and not for its own sake, which can, and should, be reached through reasonable contemplation.

As such, for Kant, the moral value of an action can only reside in a formal principle or "maxim" that is adhered to for its own sake. And, people should be committed to acting in accordance to formal principles because it is one's duty to do so. The categorical imperative is Kant's famous statement of this duty: "Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law." Morality, then, for Kant, consists of choosing only those actions that conform to the categorical imperative. Principles of morality are therefore abstractly conceived and must be capable of guiding people to the right action in application to every possible set of circumstances. So, the main feature of the moral law is its universalizability, that is, it can be applied at all times by all moral agents. A second important and related feature of the moral law, for Kant, is that moral knowledge is independent of experience. Kant maintained that since it is impossible to deduce how we ought to behave from observations of our actual behaviour, our knowledge of moral principles could not have
come from experience. Thus, it must come, a priori (i.e., through an analysis of ideas and derivations done through logic), from reason alone.

These notions, put forth by Kant, have their roots going back to Plato insofar as the emotions have been traditionally viewed as a hindrance to rational thought and conduct. Western thought has therefore, to a large extent, embraced a negative view of emotion that values and promotes the use of unadulterated reason in the process of moral decision-making and action. Accordingly, it is not uncommon to come across assertions such as "you're too emotional," or "be more reasonable," or "use your head and not your heart."

There certainly are, however, cases where it is sometimes better to be more reasonable than emotional because emotions can indeed cause people to do things they might later regret. Take for example a situation where a young man, who is minding his own business, is pushed and confronted by a hotheaded individual who is looking for trouble in a local pub. Of course, it would be better for all if he "used his head" and simply walked away, rather than succumbing to feelings of pride, provoking the bully in response, and escalating the situation. A more rational, rather than a more emotional approach might serve the outcome of this sort of situation better.

An interesting illustration of a purely rational character – completely devoid of emotion – is depicted in the popular television series "Star Trek."\(^{96}\) The character "Spock," played by Leonard Nimoy, was half human and half Vulcan, and was remarkably similar to humans in almost all respects, except for two: he had sharply pointed ears and, more importantly, he felt no emotions. The evolution of the Vulcan race was such that they were not encumbered by the passions and, accordingly, they

had developed superhuman rationality. In this sense, Spock has the capacity to personify the purely rational and emotionless robotic view of morality put forth by Kant. In fact, since it is a person's capacity for reason that makes a person moral for Kant, Spock represents the ideally moral character who is rationally capable of following the moral law to its utmost efficiency. However, he also represents the negative view of emotion that encourages society to continue thinking that moral actions inspired from emotion are not worthy.

Interestingly, Star Trek later introduced a character comparable to Spock, but "Data" was an Android rather than a Vulcan. Although Data was a robot, his qualities made him remarkably similar to humans. Inside Data's silicon brain was a specialized bit of software that was exclusively concerned with morality. In one episode, Data's "ethical subroutine" programming was disabled and he suddenly became inconsiderate and psychopathic.

I believe that the Vulcan, Android, and Kantian approach to morality is incorrect. Rather, I believe that embracing a positive account of the role of emotion in morality is an accurate approach to understanding the dynamics of moral reasoning, decision-making, pro/anti-social functioning and, ultimately, human nature.

As my previous chapter outlined, psychopaths are the epitome of inconsiderate; but, unlike Spock and Data, this is not because they lack an ethical subroutine, or a set of instructions by which they could possibly possess a moral capacity and thereby become considerate and non-psychopathic. Rather, I believe that the moral capacity that most of us have, and that psychopaths lack, is not based on a set of rules like instructions in a computer program, but on emotions like empathy and guilt.\textsuperscript{97} In this sense, unless the moral capacity of children (i.e., the capacity to feel empathy and guilt)

\textsuperscript{97} Evans 67.
are nurtured and developed, they are unlikely to feel motivated to follow any set of moral precepts when doing so conflicts with their self-interest.

As we have seen, psychopaths are only too proficient to follow rules - but only if doing so promotes their personal ends. Accordingly, without the capacity to feel the moral sentiments to guide moral reasoning and action, psychopaths “obey” moral guidelines, and seemingly care for the interests of others, only when their personal interests are ultimately being fulfilled - which is, in effect, not to care for the interests of others at all. In this case, there is no sacrifice or compromise of one's interests in exchange for the interests of another. If a certain act happens to correspond with a certain moral precept, it is only coincidental and not intentional. Thus, in my view, emotions such as guilt and empathy are vital in moral matters such as motivation, reasoning, action and responsibility.

2.1.2: The Significance of Guilt

Why is there such a thing as “guilt?” What practical purpose - if any - does it serve? Is guilt necessary for human existence and preservation? Is life better with guilt? Or would life be better without guilt? Surely, most of us have - at one time or another - wished that we did not have to experience uncomfortable feelings of guilt. In this sense, would we rather be more like psychopaths insofar as not having to be burdened with feeling guilty when we serve our own interests at the expense of those of another?

To begin examining the significant role of guilt in human life, I will offer some dictionary definitions. Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary defines “guilt” as: “the fact or state of having committed an offence, crime, violation, or wrong against moral or penal law; culpability...a feeling of responsibility or remorse for some offence,
crime, wrong, etc., whether real or imagined."\textsuperscript{98} Another source similarly defines "guilt" as "the state of one who has committed an offense especially consciously...feelings of culpability especially for imagined offenses or from a sense of inadequacy: self-reproach."\textsuperscript{99} As indicated by these definitions, guilt is an uncomfortable and painful experience. Most of us have certainly learned this on our own, and no dictionary is needed to call attention to the pain of guilt. However, knowledge of guilt as a painful, self-reproachful feeling is not the issue here. The issue lies in understanding the significance of guilt and acting accordingly.

Clearly, the unpleasantness of guilt causes people to largely associate it as a "negative" emotion, that is, one that feels "bad" thus, undesirable. People are therefore often striving to eliminate and avoid guilt, rather than sustaining, exploring or valuing it. The vast popularity of the modern-day self-help movement has helped perpetuate this notion insofar as rather than addressing the acts, thoughts or intentions which have brought about guilt feelings, guilt is considered a painful, destructive and unwanted experience from which people are ill-advisedly encouraged to minimize and avoid. The general theme of this message is "don't feel guilty." For example, in a section entitled "Lessons for Personal Transformation", self-help guru Gerald Jampolsky presents an aphorism for his readers to meditate upon, which states: "I am determined today that all my thoughts be free from fear, guilt or condemnation, whether of myself or others, by repeating: I can elect to change all my thoughts that hurt."\textsuperscript{100} Should this approach be unconditionally accepted? I think not.

To the contrary, I believe that guilt potentially serves a positive purpose. It is a healthy, productive, protective and positive feeling that motivates, trains and

\textsuperscript{98} "Guilt," Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language, 1989 ed.
\textsuperscript{100} Gerald G. Jampolsky, Love is Letting go of Fear (Berkeley, CA: Celestial Arts, 1979) 126.
encourages the correction of one’s misdeeds, and thus serves to prevent future
misdeeds. Similar to the pain of touching a hot stove that causes an immediate
withdraw reaction, guilt has the potential to initiate withdrawal from committing hurtful
actions. Just as we remember the painful consequences of harming ourselves by
touching a hot stove, we remember the guilt-inspired painful consequences of harming
not only others, but also ourselves. Thus, if we have wronged someone, and we feel
guilty for doing so, we become motivated to correct the wrongdoing - regardless of
whether or not we actually do make the correction. Guilt therefore serves to motivate us
to attempt to exonerate ourselves from the victim of our hurtful actions, and it motivates
us to act differently next time. Accordingly, guilt and remorse are fundamentally
necessary for us to learn and understand that a wrong has been committed and, as a
result, to feel motivated to seek reparation and promote self-improvement. In this
sense, if guilt feelings are masked, ignored or replaced with some other "positive"
feeling, the source of that guilt (i.e., the wrongdoing) fails to be acknowledged and
addressed.

Viewing guilt as a moral feeling does not necessarily create the state of
depression that the self-help movement discourages, and is striving to eliminate.
Rather, guilt creates the possibility for increased closeness with others because it
serves as not only a deterrent in hurting others, but also a catalyst to repair hurtful
wrongdoings. It is not a symptom to be avoided and remedied; rather, it is an inner
guide for maturity and a facilitator for constructive personal relationships. The healthy
development of children should, therefore, include encouragement to feel guilty when
they do harm to others, or when they violate certain pro-social standards of behaviour
because promoting such "negative" feelings can serve as a strong deterrent for future
harmful and/or anti-social activity. Along these lines, morality can be taught to children
by using guilt as a powerful inhibitor of insensitive and inconsiderate behaviour because guilt is a natural outcome of harming someone you feel empathy for. When a child, or an adult, clearly recognizes the pain inflicted on another, guilt serves as a guide and impetus for altruistic, considerate and morally acceptable behaviour. Guilt, therefore, is important for evaluating our present misdeeds and improving our future behavior.

In order to begin the development of a guilt system, people have to care about someone enough to deeply regret a real or imagined offence against that person. This is because emotions, and in this case guilt, are generated whenever there is a significant emotional discrepancy between our current personal state and that of our significant others, and it is only possible to recognize such a discrepancy if feelings of empathy are aroused. Accordingly, as outlined in the previous chapter, babies who develop a sense of attachment to their caregivers become motivated to sustain the flow of reciprocal care and consideration with not only their caregivers, but also others since the dynamic between caregiver and child sets the stage for the quality of sensitive interactions with others in the future. In this sense, gratitude and appreciation facilitates and maintains the primary bond, along with other bonds that follow, so that when the child senses disapproval from those with whom he is attached, feelings of guilt prompt the child to re-establish relationship equilibrium or enhancement. Guilt, therefore, motivates and helps people to stay close and connected. In a way, it is the cement that restrains the threat of insensitive behaviour which, in effect, serves to bind healthy human relationships together. Accordingly, I believe that guilt is indicative of healthy development and is bound to inevitably occur when children become attached to certain people.

So, the basic value of guilt in morality is that it serves as a kind of moral compass directing behaviour. In other words, guilt provides a barrier to many kinds of immoral
behaviour. The lack of guilt has, accordingly, proven to demonstrate some of the most horrific deeds in history on the basis of cool intellectual calculation.\(^{101}\) Take for example, Rudolph Hoess, the commandant of Auschwitz, who supervised the murders of over two million people. Hoess can certainly be regarded as a thoroughly intellectual man - who also promoted the same sort of approach with his collaborators. He wanted his men to be thoroughly intellectual and not allow or show the slightest bit of emotion during the execution of their atrocious practices. As such, a person who behaves exclusively in accordance with strict intellect, like Spock or Data from Star Trek, might easily become indifferent to others without the watchful eye of the capacity to feel guilty. Moral behaviour therefore becomes difficult, if not impossible, for people who lack the appropriate emotions, such as guilt. Such people, if they, for some reason, are interested in acting morally, need to remind and convince themselves to follow certain codes of conduct because the emotional impetus to do so is lacking. This is the challenging approach that faces psychologists who attempt to modify the behaviour of psychopaths by convincing them to act with the interests of others in mind because it ultimately serves their own interests as well.

In light of the above, people who lack the capacity to feel guilt, such as psychopaths, are very dangerous from a moral and social point of view. They simply do not have the capacity to feel any internal obstacles preventing them from acting immorally and hurtfully. The unpleasant and undesirable emotional states associated with feeling guilty encourages people to avoid some immoral and hurtful behaviours and engage in moral and altruistic ones.\(^{102}\)

\(^{101}\) Aaron Ben-Ze'ev, *The Subtlety of Emotions* (MA: MIT Press, 2000) 264. The example and brief analysis that follows is also cited from this reference.

\(^{102}\) Ben-Ze'ev 508.
It is important to note that the original value and function of guilt - as a negative evaluation of a specific action - is often lost and misplaced when it becomes a generalized negative evaluation of the self. In such cases, guilt becomes an impediment to both healthy behaviour and healthy emotional development. This, it seems to me, is a worry that modern day self-help advocates have concerning the value of guilt. This, I accept. So long as guilt remains specific to an action, rather than a whole personality, I believe it serves a valuable function where self-awareness is heightened, and behaviour modification is prompted, and the guilt feelings, as a result, last for a relatively short period of time. I shall refer to this as “objective guilt.”

“Neurotic guilt,” on the other hand, is longstanding and occurs when someone tends to immediately assume responsibility and blame for relatively remote mishaps that occur around them - however far-fetched doing so might seem to others. A person with neurotic guilt will feel tormented by a mistake - perceived or real - and will ruminate over the misdeed for an overextended period of time. As a result, they will find themselves in emotional pain that will most likely result in little change. Conversely, although the same misdeed will also prompt wretched feelings in the healthy person, such a person will make whatever amends are possible and necessary and will modify the behaviour that caused the original problem. So, objective guilt can be assuaged because like debt, to which it is related, it can be paid. It carries with it the likelihood of action to make things right. But neurotic guilt is insatiable. It can neither be appeased, nor settled. It therefore causes the depression and negative evaluations of the self that the self-help movement is rightfully striving to remedy and eliminate.

As such, too much guilt is indicative of an existent, but dysfunctional conscience. Too little guilt is indicative of a non-existental or infantile conscience - like infants and

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103 Ben-Ze'ev 508.
psychopaths who have no sense of the consequences their behaviour has upon others, so they are apt to heedlessly violate social rules and conventions. Lacking the intrinsic ability to feel guilt, psychopaths are unable to improve or mature themselves because they cannot be subjectively prompted to critically examine their own behaviour when they injure others. In close relation to this, the role of empathy is very crucial here; let us now examine how.

2.1.3: The Significance of Empathy

I believe that empathy is an essential ingredient in the development of moral and prosocial behaviour. Conversely, the lack of empathy, or failing to develop empathy, is the key element in the development of immoral and anti-social behaviour. But before I explain this further, I shall examine the concept of empathy.

Since the term “empathy” is often used synonymously with “sympathy”, it is important to first distinguish between these two terms, even though it is a difficult, and somewhat arbitrary task. However, I believe that core definitions can be determined by considering the etymology of both words.

The term “empathy” is a recent term (i.e., late nineteenth and early twentieth century) that derived from the German word einfühlung, which means to “feel into, finding or searching.” The meaning of einfühlung was eventually elaborated by Theodore Lipps to refer to a “mode of inner imitation.”104 This construal extended einfühlung to the domain of “interpersonal understanding.” As such, the German synonyms for einfühlung are "sich hineinversetzen" (“to put oneself in another's place”) and "fremdwahrnehmung" (“to come to know the other or the stranger”). In comparison, the Greek derivation of “empathy” entails the root word “pathos”, which means “feeling” or “passion”; and the prefix “em” means "in" or "within." So, for the

Greeks, the word *empatheia* literally meant "within feeling." Etymologically, therefore, the term empathy signifies *the ability to comprehend another's subjective state without actually experiencing that state*. In other words, empathy is a process that induces feelings in a person that are more congruent with another's situation rather than one's own situation.

Reflecting this notion, Webster's Dictionary offers the following definitions of "empathy": "the intellectual identification with or vicarious experiencing of the feelings, thoughts, or attitudes of another...the imaginative projection of a subjective state into an object so that the object appears to be infused with it...the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another of either the past or present without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner; also: the capacity for this."\(^{105}\)

The etymology of the term "sympathy", on the other hand, has a long history dating back to Aristotle. In Greek, the prefix "sym" means "with", "along with" or "together." Connecting the prefix sym with *pathos* (passion/feeling) literally results in "with feeling." Similarly, the German term "mitfuhlung" translates to "feeling with." Therefore, sympathy denotes the sharing of an emotional experience with someone else. Webster's defines sympathy as "harmony of or agreement in feeling, as between persons or on that part of one person with respect to another...the fact or power of sharing the feelings of another, especially in sorrow or trouble; fellow feeling compassion, or commiseration...an affinity, association, or relationship between persons or things wherein whatever affects one similarly affects the other...inclination to

think or feel alike...emotional or intellectual accord...the act or capacity of entering into or sharing the feelings or interests of another [and] the feeling or mental state brought about by such sensitivity.”\textsuperscript{106} Basically, when one sympathizes with others, one "feels with" or shares their suffering.

As such, “empathy” refers to the attempt to comprehend the subjective state of another, and the term “sympathy” refers to our awareness and participation in the suffering of another person. Lauren Wispe describes the difference this way:

In empathy the self is the vehicle for understanding, and it never loses its identity. Sympathy, on the other hand, is concerned with communion rather than accuracy, and self-awareness is reduced rather than enhanced... in empathy one substitutes oneself for the other person; in sympathy one substitutes others for oneself. To know what something would be like for the other person is empathy. To know what it would be like to be that person is sympathy. In empathy one acts "as if" one were the other person...the object of empathy is understanding. The object of sympathy is the other person's well-being. In sum, empathy is a way of knowing; sympathy is a way of relating.\textsuperscript{107}

Accordingly, these related terms make essentially similar distinctions with a slight difference: empathy is the imaginative putting of yourself in others' shoes, being able to identify with their feelings, thereby having an emphasis on understanding; whereas sympathy involves supporting the plight of others, with an emphasis on sharing the other person's feelings and experiences. Sympathy is essentially performed with altruistic ends, but empathy may or may not be motivated by good intentions. So, one may empathize solely with narcissistic ends. For example, it could be said that Hitler empathized with the Jews in order to annihilate them (i.e., he knew how they felt being


subjected to such horrendous conditions), but he certainly did not sympathize with them (i.e., he did not feel sorrow for them). Empathy, therefore, can be utilized for negative purposes, like in psychological warfare, or by the cunning salesman, to manipulate others, or even as a means of deriving sadistic pleasure from another's pain.

As we have seen, the nature of the psychopath is such that they are not interested in alleviating suffering in others; rather, they are interested in causing and exploiting the suffering of others. Thus, psychopaths are unable to empathize with another when the other is suffering because they simply do not understand what it means to suffer in the same way as non-psychopaths do. This notion is in keeping with both their characteristic egocentric sense of grandiosity, along with their propensity to blame others for their suffering whenever they are indeed suffering. Non-psychopaths, on the other hand, upon suffering, often recognize and accept their relative powerlessness and, as a result, are faced with feelings of humility rather than grandiosity. Moreover, unlike psychopaths, non-psychopaths are encouraged to take responsibility for their plight, rather than blaming others, and to demonstrate courage in an effort to alleviate their own suffering. As such, psychopaths are also inherently unable to empathize with others because sympathy involves a way of relating to another when he/she is suffering by expressing sorrow towards their relatively temporal lack of well-being. Bear in mind, however, that in order to do this (i.e., express sympathy), one first needs to understand the suffering of another, which is accomplished through "positive empathy." Therefore, since psychopaths are unable to demonstrate "positive empathy", they are also unable to experience and express sympathy.

The element of "action" inherent in the concept of empathy is crucial ingredient in a constructive understanding of morality. By "taking to heart" another person's interests
- in the face of a conflicting self-interest - through empathetic identification, and by acknowledging the potential harmful effects upon another person if we fail to take their interests into account when we act, we readily make a sacrifice for others not because we believe in the equality of all persons, but because we love them and we do not want them to suffer if we can prevent it. For those people with whom we have an emotional affinity, we actively tolerate the suspension of our interests by sacrificing our needs in order to see to it that their needs are met in exchange. Practicing such “tolerance” is not necessarily something required by us, but we do it because it is an attitude we want to have since we are emotionally convinced of its value by virtue of our experience of empathy. In this way, we exercise self-control by restraining our impulses to fulfill our own needs and, instead, we attempt to help fulfill the needs of those with whom we have an emotional affinity.

Exercising self-control in this manner is not possible for psychopaths by virtue of their sheer impulsive nature. Closely associated with this aspect of the psychopathic personality is their inability to empathize with others. That is to say, psychopaths are unable to exercise self-control and restrain their impulsive inclinations because they cannot imaginatively internalize the anxieties of others when others have their interests frustrated or exploited. In addition to this, psychopaths are dominated by their impulsive nature - which reflects their need for excitement and “thrill seeking” - not because they fail to appreciate the potential for harm when taking unreasonable risks, but because they are underaroused. Since the ordinary emotions of life have little to no meaning for them, this emotional void leaves them bored, restless and on a perpetual quest for dangerous activities and excitement in order to experience emotional satisfaction. And, often the psychopath’s satisfaction simply comes at the cost of others because the restraining power of guilt, which is normally stimulated through empathetic identification,
is impotent towards curbing their impulsive drive to violate another person in order to secure their own ends.

By considering the above, we can identify the main distinguishing feature of non-psychopaths, that is, the "conscience." And, as I have discussed, the role of empathy is central to the operation of a conscience. For those of us who are not purely anti-social beings, we feel genuine emotions and, in effect, we have the ability to sense the same emotional states in others. Since we lack the "emotional void" experienced by psychopaths, we are not irresistibly inclined to impulsive actions that might lead to treating others as objects solely intended to satisfy our insatiable need for personal excitement. By virtue of our ability to empathize with the suffering of others, we are able to be motivated to judge our own behaviour through the eye of a disinterested spectator, or what Adam Smith called "the man within the breast."\textsuperscript{108}

As such, human existence without the presence of empathy would result in Hobbesian "state of war" of all against all. Each person would strive to outdo the other in every aspect of life, pursuing power, wealth, fame, pride and longevity. Essentially, it would be like living in a world full of psychopaths. Thankfully, human nature is not as Hobbes had surmised. Most people not only have the natural capacity for empathy, but also they exercise it to an extent where the world continues to function under a relative degree of personal and collective security. This "natural" capacity is, as I see it, an integral aspect of human nature. The moral emotions, discussed earlier, constitute what eighteenth century philosophers called the \textit{moral sense}, what Adam Smith referred to as \textit{the man within the breast}, what Kant called \textit{respect for duty}, what Freud referred to as the \textit{supêrego}, and we today commonly refer to as the \textit{conscience}. This

\textsuperscript{108} Smith 3.2.32 (p. 130).
capacity is what naturally predisposes non-psychopaths to understand morality and, as a result, enables us to make prosocial moral judgments.

2.2: Personhood and The Moral Sense

Jeffrie Murphy states that “in coming to terms with the concept of psychopathy, one is also forced to come to terms with the question of what it is to be a person - an individual having the value which Kant calls ‘dignity’ and thereby meriting that special kind of respect which is entailed by a moral commitment to justice rather than mere utility.”

Immanuel Kant, in The Metaphysical Elements of Ethics, states:

No man is wholly destitute of moral feeling, for if he were totally unsusceptible of this sensation he would be morally dead...if the moral vital force could no longer produce any effect on this feeling, then his humanity would be dissolved into mere animality...but we have no special sense for (moral) good and evil any more than truth, although such expressions are often used...similarly, conscience is not a thing to be acquired...every man, as a moral being, has it originally within him...[therefore] when it is said “This man has no conscience,” what is meant is that he pays no heed to its dictates.

Kant’s assertion lies in stark contrast to the argument I have been developing thus far, which reflects the position assumed by Murphy:

[Psychopaths] feel no guilt, regret, shame, or remorse (though they may superficially fake these feelings) when they have engaged in harmful conduct...he is socially dissimilar from the majority of his fellows in his lack of moral feeling, by his failure to be motivated by a recognition of the rights of others and the obligations he has to them. Thus, he is in no position to claim rights for himself...this indicates to me that, from a moral point of view, it is very implausible to regard them as persons at all...he is more profitably pictured

109 Murphy 285.
as an *animal*...for it seems to me that it is the possession of rights that morally distinguishes *persons* from *animals.*

There are two key related points of contention that arise from this apparent disparity: (1) Is human nature such that it is possible for a human being to have no moral feelings whatsoever? (2) Do human beings naturally have a “special sense” for moral good and evil?

In resolving this discrepancy between my view and that of Kant’s, it appears as though, with respect to the first issue, Kant seems to be in agreement by virtue of his suggestion that *if* someone was “wholly destitute of moral feeling...he would be morally dead...then his humanity would be dissolved into mere animality.” Kant’s claim, it seems to me, appropriately applies to psychopaths. Therefore, it *is* possible for a human being - if we can consider psychopaths as “human beings” at this point - to have no moral feelings whatsoever. But, if we cannot consider psychopaths as human beings, then what should we consider them as? Are they *animals* rather than human beings? After all, they *look* like human beings, they *talk* like human beings and, at face value, they *act* like human beings. Basically, they *seem* to fit in to our social structure like everyone else. Perhaps this is why it is quite difficult to detect and identify them. But then, what quality should we look for in an attempt to detect and identify them? That is, what is the essential difference between them and us? In order to address this question, I believe I must first inquire and examine the key qualities that constitute *us* in the context of morality that, in turn, psychopaths lack. Subsequent to this inquiry, I will

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111 Murphy 286-294.
112 It is at this point that, it seems to me, the significant value in studying the nature of the psychopathic personality, in the context of moral responsibility, illuminates itself, namely because it compels us to examine and understand the very issues that are articulated above; that is to say, “What does it mean to be a human being” or “What does it take to be considered a human being”, and “What can we learn about the nature of the moral emotions, conscience, or moral sense by studying those who lack these qualities?” Of course, I do not plan or expect to offer the final word on either of these two convoluted issues in this project, but there are strong existing arguments that I hope to elucidate and amalgamate in an effort to coherently address these interesting and important issues.
address the second related issue outlined above, that is, what is the nature of the moral sense and, is it a product of human nature?

2.2.1: Personhood

Behind most, if not all, moral and ethical issues we find the difficult age-old question of the nature of personhood. The definitive ethical question "What ought I do?" is invariably linked to the fundamental question of "What can I do?" That is to say, a person cannot be expected to do something that is not within his natural capacity to do. This necessarily leads to an inquiry concerning the nature of personhood since all moral considerations presuppose a particular concept of personhood, whether or not it is explicitly stated. Thus, how a moral philosopher conceives the nature of the self will, in effect, determine the structure of his moral theory.

Eighteenth century sentimentalist philosopher Joseph Butler maintained that a man can doubt everything else, but he cannot doubt his obligation to the practice of virtue. Bishop Butler stated that "there are two ways in which the subject of morals can be treated. One begins from inquiring into the abstract relations of things: the other from a matter of fact, namely, what the particular nature of man is [consisting of] its several parts...[and] they both lead us to the same thing, our obligations to the practice of virtue." The constituent "several parts" of a human being's inward nature, for Butler, consists of the relations between the appetites, passions, affections, and the principle of reflection - the chief of which is the authority of reflection, or conscience.

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113 Of course, I cannot adequately address this issue here, but a brief discussion of this question will illuminate what I believe to be a highly relevant issue inherent in my general thesis, and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding thereof.
116 Butler 327. Notably, Butler considers and refers to the "conscience" as a "moral faculty", "moral reason", "moral sense", "divine reason", "sentiment of understanding", or a "perception of the heart," p. 379.
According to Butler, "the conscience" is the natural principle in a human being by which he approves or disapproves his heart, temper, and actions. Essentially, by virtue of the conscience, every person is naturally a law unto himself, through which every one may find within himself the rule of right, and obligations to follow it. In this sense, the purpose of the conscience is to pass judgment upon the principles of the heart, our own behaviours and those of others, and to determine them as being either just, right, or good, or, unjust, wrong, or evil. Butler links the purpose of the faculty of conscience to Socrates' famous guiding dictum "know thyself" by stating that the constitution of our nature requires "that we bring our whole conduct before this superior faculty; wait its determination, enforce upon ourselves its authority, and make it the business of our lives, as it is absolutely the whole business of a moral agent, to conform ourselves to it. This is the true meaning of that ancient precept, Reverence thyself."

Through experience, we are certain that we naturally have this moral approving faculty in ourselves, and we also recognize it in others. The role of empathy, therefore, is inherent in the presence of conscience. It enables us to promote not only the good in ourselves, but also the good in others and society-at-large. Along these lines, Butler states:

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every man is to be considered in two capacities, the private and public; as designed to pursue his own interest, and likewise to contribute to the good of others...when we rejoice in the prosperity of others, and compassionate their distress, we, as it were, substitute them for ourselves, their interest for our own; and have the same kind of pleasure in their prosperity and sorrow in their distress, as we have from reflection upon our own...the principle of reflection or conscience [manifests] that we were made for society, and
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117 Butler 341.
118 Butler 349.
119 Butler 351.
120 Butler 330.
121 Butler 378.
Accordingly, Bishop Butler highlights the primary feature of human nature that facilitates virtue and that, in light of the discussion conducted earlier on the psychopathic personality, psychopaths lack: reflection or conscience. Butler acknowledges the existence of affectionless individuals, but suggests that human nature should not be judged based on these rare instances. He states: "If it be said, that there are persons in the world, who are in great measure without the natural affections towards their fellow-creatures: there are likewise instances of persons without the common natural affections to themselves: but the nature of man is not to be judged by either of these, but by what appears in the common world, in the bulk of mankind."  

The discussion of Bishop Butler’s argument conducted above for selfhood and morality boils down to an obligation to adhere human nature, of which the principle of reflection, or conscience, is the chief principle in the nature of man. The constituents of human nature are ordered with the principle of reflection being of the utmost significance. The autonomous conscience judges matters of good and evil, right and wrong, and justice and injustice. Accordingly, Butler believes that to disregard the inclinations of our conscience, or to dismiss morality, is - in effect - to dismiss our nature. Butler’s appeal to the superior rank of conscience attempts to show us that we are naturally inclined towards virtue. And in reference to the rare cases of those individuals (i.e., psychopaths) who lack the principle of reflection, and are therefore naturally inclined towards vice, we are not to judge human nature by their qualities, or the lack thereof.

122 Butler 361 & 342.
123 Butler 344 - 345.
124 I should like to note that Butler discusses the important role of "reasonable self love" in the nature of man, and how it is not contrary to benevolence. Thus, human nature urges us to practice reasonable self-love in conjunction with benevolence.
Writing from within the same tradition as Bishop Butler, Lord Shaftsbury provides an explanation as to how we should think about those rare individuals who have a contrary disposition, or nature, to that of most others. He begins by stating that in order to accurately determine the nature of anything, it is necessary to consider its role and purpose in the broader framework of nature. He states,

> when we reflect on any ordinary frame or constitution either of art or nature; and consider how hard it is to give the least account of a particular part, without a competent knowledge of the whole: we need not wonder to find ourselves at a loss in many things relating to the constitution and frame of nature herself. For to what end in nature many things, even whole species of creatures, refer; or to what purpose they serve; will be hard for any one justly to determine: but to what end the many proportions and various shapes of parts in many creatures actually serve; we are able, by the help of study and observation, to demonstrate, with great exactness.\(^\text{125}\)

The underlying assumption that develops Lord Shaftsbury's inquiry concerning the "nature of things" is that:

> every creature has a private good and interest of his own; which nature has compelled him to seek...[therefore] there must also be a certain END to which every thing in his constitution must naturally refer. To this END if anything, either in his appetites, passions, or affections, be not conduction, but the contrary; we must of necessity own it ill to him. And in this manner he is ill, with respect to himself; as he certainly is, with respect to others of his kind, when any such appetites or passions make him injurious to them. Now, if by the natural composition of any rational creature, the same irregularities of appetite which make him ill to others, make him ill also to himself...it is [in this case] we call any creature worthy or virtuous when it can have the notion of a public interest, and can attain the speculation or science of what is morally good or ill, admirable or blameable, right or wrong.\(^\text{126}\)

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\(^{126}\) Shaftsbury 169 & 173.
Thus, for Lord Shaftsbury, any creature that naturally follows his appetites, passions, or affections and causes injury to others within his own system by having no notion of public interest, or of right and wrong, is also injurious, or ill, to himself insofar as he is not conducive to the goodness or benefit to the system within which he belongs. As such, the nature of the psychopath, according to Lord Shaftsbury, would definitely be considered ill. Reflecting this conclusion, he claims that “if in any species of animals (as in men, for example) one man is of a nature pernicious to the rest, he is in this respect justly styled an ill man...[and] no-one can be vicious or ill, except either, (1) by the deficiency or weakness of natural affections; or (2) by the violence of the selfish; or (3) by such as are plainly unnatural...[thus] TO BE WICKED OR VICIOUS, IS TO BE MISERABLE AND UNHAPPY.”

However, Lord Shaftsbury finds it hard to believe that any such person (i.e., a psychopath) could naturally exist. He states:

it is impossible to suppose a mere sensible creature originally so ill-constituted and unnatural, as that from the moment he comes to be tried by sensible objects, he should have no one good passion towards his kind, no foundation of either pity, love, kindness, or social affection. It is full as impossible to conceive, that a rational creature coming first to be tried by rational objects, and receiving into his mind the images or representations of justice, generosity, gratitude, or other virtue, should have no liking of these, or dislike of their contrary; but be found absolutely indifferent towards whatsoever is presented to him of this sort.

In order to reconcile Lord Shaftsbury's inquiry regarding, on one hand, the nature of an "ill-tempered" person - which presupposes the natural existence of such a person - and, on the other hand, his apparent disbelief in the possibility of such an ill-tempered person naturally existing, it appears as though Lord Shaftsbury would have to conclude that a

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127 Shaftsbury 171 & 186.
128 Shaftsbury 174.
naturally ill-tempered person (e.g., a psychopath) is not fully rational or sensible. In support of this, he claims that “there are TWO things, which to a rational creature, must be horridly offensive and grievous; viz. ‘to have the reflection in his mind of any unjust action or behaviour, which he knows to be naturally odious and ill-deserving; ‘or, of any foolish action or behavior, which he knows to be prejudicial to his own interest or happiness.’ The former of these is alone properly called CONSCIENCE; whether in a moral, or religious sense.”

2.2.2: Morality and the Moral Sense

The terms “personhood” and “morality” designate two distinct conceptual domains, each of which can be understood quite well without having reference to one another. But, a probing and thorough examination of each concept will eventually lead to overlap; and, as I see it, *The Moral Sense* is the point at which the two concepts connect.

Briefly, the concept of morality refers to the realm of thoughts, feelings and behaviours that have direct implications upon the welfare of other people. Although the concept of morality transcends culture (as evident from the discussion on human nature and conscience), there are various ways to conceptualize how morality should operate in a given culture. That is to say, “morality” is transcultural because it expresses human beings’ general realization that there are “good” and “bad” ways to interact with the world and our fellow beings. In turn, “conceptions of morality” vary because what exactly is considered as a “good” and “bad” way to interact with the world will vary from culture to culture, individual to individual, and situation to situation. But, all of us, with the exclusion of psychopaths, basically agree - by virtue of our shared nature of personhood - that there is a “good” way and a “bad” way to interact with the world that

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129 Shaftsbury 185.
resonates some degree of consideration heeded to interests other than our own. Accordingly, my purpose here is to discuss the nature of our shared knowledge of the existence of the concept of morality, rather than the variety of ways in which the concept of morality can be conceptualized and applied.

Adam Smith was one of the writers who asserted that the intrinsically motivated pursuit of interests in a calm, rather than unruly manner, produced a more stable social order and a more willing acceptance of mutually advantageous rules of conduct than, say, an arbitrary power could provide.\textsuperscript{130} Smith’s basis of this notion was grounded in his view of human nature. According to Smith, how selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it. Of this kind is pity or compassion, the emotion which we feel for the misery of others, when we either see it, or are made to conceive it in a very lively manner. That we often derive sorrow from the sorrow of others, is a matter of fact too obvious to require any instances to prove it.\textsuperscript{131}

The emotion Smith is referring to is “sympathy” and we are capable of feeling such an emotion because of our innate capacity to feel empathy:

As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel like in the situation…it is by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations…by the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them. His agonies, when they are thus brought home to ourselves, when we have thus adopted and made them our own, begin at last to affect

\textsuperscript{130} This point is made in reference to the *Leviathan* derived from the model of human nature put forth by Thomas Hobbes.

\textsuperscript{131} Smith 1.1.1:1 (p. 9).
us, and we then tremble and shudder at the thought of what he feels.\textsuperscript{132}

As such, our innate capacity to sympathize, by virtue of our innate capacity to empathize, is what constitutes the \textit{moral sense}. It also includes the capacity to appreciate proper, fit, considerate, benevolent and righteous actions. It includes the sense of justice and the sense of fairness. It includes the human emotions associated with justice, fairness and benevolence. And it includes the conscience. In brief, as stated by Paul Russell in Responsibility, Moral Sense & Symmetry, the moral sense is “the general capacity to feel and experience reactive emotions or moral sentiments.”\textsuperscript{133}

Although Adam Smith believes that the moral sense is self-evident, evidence for the natural existence of the moral sense, in part, lies in the fact that human societies are organized around kinship patterns and children, no matter how burdensome, are rarely abandoned. Since kinship and child rearing cannot wholly be explained on the grounds of personal self-interest, they involve an important element of \textit{felt} obligation that is not forced by threats of punishment or promises of reciprocity. For the most part, kin are loyal to each other, and parents care for their children for subjectively, rather than objectively, motivated reasons – most often without any hope or expectation of receiving benefits in return.

From an evolutionary perspective, \textit{if} the moral sense \textit{is} natural, and if it did not have any adaptive value, natural selection would have worked against those who exercised such useless traits as sympathy, self-control and fairness. Rather, ruthless predation, preference for immediate gratification, and a disinclination for sharing would have been beneficial, thereby facilitating survival and evolution accordingly.

\textsuperscript{132} Smith 1.1.1:2 (p.9).
\textsuperscript{133} Paul Russell, “Responsibility, Moral Sense & Symmetry,” Unpublished manuscript, 10.
Support from the evolutionary perspective reveals what psychologists have maintained throughout the twentieth century – that is, man is by nature a social animal. Thus, our moral nature is simply a reflection of our social nature. Like Smith suggests, we express sympathy for the plight of others, and feel what others feel, because it enables us to relate better. We want to relate better because we naturally value the company of others, and want to develop meaningful emotional attachments with them. In order to accomplish this, however, we need to practice a strategy where the distribution of things reflects the worth of others, and where we help facilitate the satisfaction of their interests. By conducting ourselves in such a moral fashion we gain the esteem of not only others, but also our own.

As discussed in chapter one, the underlying mechanism that originates from the moral sense, and promotes moral conduct, is the desire and drive for attachment and affiliation. This desire is self-evident in the instinctive prosocial behaviours of the newborn infant and in the instinctive caregiving response offered, in turn, by the caregivers. In this sense, children are intuitive moralists, but the range of their moral judgments is, of course, limited by the circumstances in which they formed.

It has long been known, for example, that when infants hear other infants cry, they themselves start to cry.134 This response occurs not because of the loudness of the other’s cry, or because of an imitative vocal response, but because there appears to be something uniquely unpleasant about the sound of a human infant crying from discomfort that induces other nearby infants to cry empathetically. Also, it is not uncommon to witness young children who often feel sympathy for many of their

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playmates by sharing their toys and blankets with those who have none, especially with those whom they know.

Such fundamental “other-regarding” dispositions are largely developed through affectionate care received during infancy and childhood, especially through the mother. The moral sense is forged in the crucible of early loving relationships, and continues to expand and reveal itself through extended relationships outside the immediate family and, eventually, into peer relations and society-at-large. From the attachment relationship between caregiver and child, a sense of empathy and fairness develops for the former that facilitates self-control and a duty to respect others. Interestingly, in addition to this, child psychologists have found that the emergence of the moral sense occurs before the child has acquired language skills. That is to say, the essentials for moral action – a regard of the well-being of others and anxiety or guilt at having failed to perform at some moral standard – are present before moral reasoning could possibly occur. Thus, the acquisition of language and its role in moral reasoning, rather than a necessary precondition for moral action, is itself a manifestation of the natural sociability of humankind.

The natural origins of conscience, self-control, fairness and sympathy develop from our innate desire for attachment, and thus it acquires its strongest development through those with whom we are most strongly attached to in our environment. Accordingly, it is important to keep in mind that the environment is important insofar as the moral sense, in and of itself, cannot cause or drive moral actions; our behaviours are the product of our senses interacting with the circumstances we experience in our environment. In this way, certain experiences develop our senses, and others hinder

their development. This is why different attachment styles will generally produce different emotional sensitivities and, in Freudian terms, different superego strengths.

Although it appears as though the "raw material" required for moral action is innately present with the moral sense, there are contrary views to this with respect to the role of reason in moral motivation which must be appraised, with an example, in order to establish the basic preconditions for moral performance.

2.3: The Basic Preconditions for Moral Performance: Reason, Emotion, & Sensible Knaves

Before I discuss the basic preconditions for moral performance, I think it is useful to offer some clarification as to what is meant by the term "moral performance." The main issue here is determining the difference between performing a "moral act" and a "non-moral act."

Beginning with an example, suppose Jack was to perform the act of throwing a punch, would that be considered a moral act or a non-moral act? Basically, to determine the answer to this, it seems to me two factors need to be considered. First, it must be recognized and established that the act is actually performed by the agent in question, that is, Jack. The "throwing of the punch" must belong to Jack. Second, in order for the act to be considered a "moral act", it must be recognized as being "good" or "bad", that is, "beneficial" or "detrimental" to those towards whom it is being performed. So, on this account, let us suppose that Jack threw a punch at a heavy bag in the gym. According to the second condition, punching a heavy bag is typically recognized as being neither beneficial nor detrimental towards the bag. So, the act of Jack punching a heavy bag is a "non-moral" act. Now, let us suppose that Jack threw a punch at Fred. According to the second condition, depending on the reasons and

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136 This first factor (i.e., "ownership of a moral act") will be further developed in Chapter Three.
conditions under which Jack punched Fred, some might recognize the act of punching Fred as either “good” or “bad.” But, the act of “throwing a punch at Fred” will be recognized by most as being one or the other, thus making it a “moral act.” So, for my purposes here, a “moral act” can be thought of as the performance of an act by an agent that can be recognizably deemed as either “good” or “bad”, or “beneficial” or “detrimental” to those towards whom the act is being performed.

With respect to the second factor stated above, what is the moral significance of being able to see, consider and determine whether, and to what extent, the benefit or harm of others is at stake? That is, how is it that we come to conclude whether a moral act is beneficial or detrimental? Does it occur through a purely cognitive manner, or is it a purely emotional determination, or through some combination of both? In keeping with the argument I have been developing thus far on the relation between humanity's natural emotional capacities on the one hand and morality on the other, I believe our determinations regarding the moral nature of an act are conducted through some combination of both reason and emotion; but, I emphasize that the moral emotions are an indispensable factor in disclosing to us whether others' benefit or whether harm is impending in a given situation. Thus, if I am right in thinking this, then our understanding of, access to, and performance in the moral domain, and the implications upon others by some moral act performed towards them, cannot bypass emotion, but must be attained through it.

With respect to the role of emotions in the context of moral motivation, Kant argued that (1) emotions and feelings are transitory, changeable, and capricious, (2) emotionally motivated conduct is therefore unreliable, inconsistent, unprincipled, and even irrational, (3) that to clearly see the rights and wrongs in a situation, we must abstract or distance ourselves from our feelings and emotions, (4) that we are passive
with respect to our feelings not under our own control and therefore beyond our responsibility, and (5) that emotions are directed towards particular persons in particular circumstances and therefore do not have the generality and universality for rational morality: they are not based on principles, and thus they involve “partiality.”

The view I am defending, in contrast to that of Kant’s, reflects that of David Hume and his contemporaries. The point of contention between the two perspectives is, of course, whether universal reason or the role of emotion in human nature is the precondition for moral action. In clear recognition of this conflict, Hume states:

> there has been controversy started of late, much better worth examination, concerning the general foundation of Morals; whether they be derived from Reason, or from Sentiment; whether we attain the knowledge of them by a chain of argument and induction, or by an immediate feeling and finer inner sense; whether like all sound judgement of truth and falsehood; they should be the same to every rational intelligent being; or whether, like the perception of beauty and deformity, they be founded entirely on the particular fabric and constitution of the human species...[in sum, on the one hand] moral distinctions, it may be said are discernible by pure reason, [and] on the other hand, those who would resolve all moral determinations into sentiment, may endeavor to show, that it is impossible for reason ever to draw conclusions of this nature.

Hume’s conclusion is that although reason can assist us in discovering truths about morality, it is unable to influence behaviour. That is to say, emotion is necessary in moral perception and performance or else we would have a world full of psychopaths. Reflecting this notion, Hume states: “Extinguish all the warm feelings and prepossessions in favour of virtue, and all disgust or aversion to vice: render men totally

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indifferent towards these distinctions; and morality is no longer a practical study, nor has any tendency to regulate our lives and actions."\textsuperscript{139}

However, Hume does not maintain that reason has no role in moral performance; it is just that the role of reason in moral perception and performance \textit{is dependant} upon the moral sense. He states: "\textit{reason} and \textit{sentiment} concur in almost all moral determinations and conclusions...[but this] sentence depends on some internal sense or feeling, which nature has made universal in the whole species."\textsuperscript{140}

To illustrate the practical role of reason and emotion in moral motivation and performance, it is useful to consider Hume's \textit{sensible knave}\textsuperscript{141} Similar to the psychopath, the sensible knave has a defect not of rationality, but of lacking normal desires or sources of emotion. With reference to the knave, Hume posits that "if his heart rebel not against such pernicious maxims, if he feel no reluctance to the thoughts of villainy or baseness, he has indeed lost a considerable motive to virtue."\textsuperscript{142}

Accordingly, mere rational moral requirements, like those put forth by Kant, seemingly fail to provide him with motives to act morally.\textsuperscript{143} So, the question is, "how would one urge a sensible knave to act morally? In other words, what are the basic preconditions that must be satisfied for moral performance?

First off, my argument thus far reflects my understanding that moral comprehension, and subsequent moral performance, \textit{must} somehow be grounded and integrated in one's core identity, or in human nature. Thus, any answer to the question posed above must somehow intimately relate with one's conception of human nature. From this, we can continue to examine possible approaches to provide the sensible

\textsuperscript{139} Hume, \textit{Enquires} 172 (Sect. I).
\textsuperscript{140} Hume, \textit{Enquires} 172-173 (Sect. I).
\textsuperscript{141} Hume, \textit{Enquires} 282 (Sect. IX:II).
\textsuperscript{142} Hume, \textit{Enquires} 283 (Sect. IX:II).
\textsuperscript{143} For my purposes here, a "strong reason" is a reason that "should" override other reasons, that is to say, one "ought" to follow that reason in light of all things considered.
knave with strong reasons to motivate him to act morally. And if none can be found, then, it seems to me, that the basic precondition for moral performance will have been identified, which will, in turn, reflect the precondition that motivates all others – except sensible knaves and psychopaths.

From Kant’s perspective, logical requirements of morality and duty always provide us with strong reasons to act accordingly. Thus, Kant’s focus is on the nature of rational beings. But, for the sensible knave, these logical requirements are not strong enough motives. So, for the knave, there are no overriding reasons to act morally, unless his personal motives coincidently correspond with the moral demands of the situation; but, of course, this approach to the universal requirements of morality and moral motivation is not reliable, therefore is unacceptable.

In discussing the contrasting views on the role of emotions in moral performance, my objective is to show that the moral emotions, and the faculty of empathy in particular, is indispensable in not only providing human beings access to the moral domain, but also motivating moral performance. The capacity for empathy, it seems to me, enables us to first recognize a situation as a “morally” relevant one before we can consider what to do about it. If our perception of a morally demanding situation fails, at this first level, then we are essentially unable to perform some morally relevant act in the situation. Accordingly, any vulnerability in the ability to recognize a given situation as a morally demanding one is largely related to frailties of the faculty of empathy upon which it rests. Demands for rationally motivated moral action, as put forth by Kant, are impotent if one is unable to recognize a given situation as demanding a moral action in the first place. That is to say, the source of moral motivation does not fundamentally lie

144 Note that the same would apply to Hobbes’ approach: the power of the sovereign, implemented through laws, and our “willfully entered” contractual agreement to justly follow those laws, will provide no impetus for the knave to do so – if he simply doesn’t feel like it.
in some obscure rational faculty universally available to all rational agents. Rather, it is grounded in the moral sense that is naturally found in all persons, with the exclusion of knaves and psychopaths.

As such, I believe Bishop Butler’s perspective most proficiently addresses the problem of the sensible knave. Similar to Kant, Butler boldly asserts that we have an obligation, or duty, to practice virtue. Here, I take Butler to mean that moral requirements always provide overriding reasons to act accordingly. However, unlike Kant, Butler does not reduce “overriding reasons” to the notion of “logical inferences.” For Butler, these “overriding reasons” are, instead, grounded in human nature and, specifically, in the conscience.

Since Butler’s argument relies on the normative exercise of conscience, he is not likely to persuade the knave, even if the knave is “sensible.” Given that the knave’s conscience is different than that of Butler’s (presumably the knave does not have a conscience), he could rationally reject Butler’s argument. However, Butler is not necessarily concerned with rationally convincing knaves or psychopaths. His argument will only, as I understand it, appeal to and convince those of us who have the sort of conscience that Butler does. For those who do, I believe Butler’s argument is rationally convincing of the fact that moral requirements essentially revolve around notions having to do with the moral sense and the conscience. Butler’s view promotes a “proper” way that human beings should live - insofar as living in accordance to the natural and internal principles of the human mind (i.e., passions, self-love, reflection, and conscience) - that can only be understood and accepted by those who have a conscience like Butler’s. And when people do act in accordance to the conscience, actions will be compatible with virtue because the conscience will, by nature, never

145 Butler 325.
approve of any actions that violate moral demands. Thus, the basic precondition of moral performance, on this view is, firstly, to have a conscience in the same sense as Bishop Butler delineates and, secondly, to act in accordance to it.

In light of this, I do not expect a knave or a psychopath, who lacks a conscience like Butler's, to be convinced by Butler's argument, or my argument, or Kant's argument, or any other moral philosophers' argument to act strictly in accordance to any moral standard - especially if a morally demanded act conflicts with his personal self-interest. Without the moral sense to serve as a basic precondition, any procedural set of reasons that aim to convince a so-called "rational being" to perform a moral action in the face of his/her self-interest will inevitably be null and void, and utterly subject to a self-interested interpretation that reflects the basic desires and motivations of the unaffectionate person.

Having said this, is it fair to expect a knave or psychopath to understand the moral discourse of those who do have a conscience? That is, if they lack the basic precondition for moral performance, can we expect them to perform morally? For the rest of us, our inherent capability to understand the concept of morality, to some relative degree, tends to give rise to moral action in certain situations. And because of this, not only can we deem ourselves morally responsible for our own actions, but also we can deem others morally responsible for their actions. But, can we deem those certain others who have no moral sense, and therefore no moral understanding, morally responsible for their actions?
"I've always wondered myself why I don't feel more remorse...one thing I know for sure, it was a definite compulsion because I couldn't quit...it was a craving, a hunger, I don't know how to describe it, a compulsion, and I just kept doing it, doing it and doing it, whenever the opportunity presented itself...I don't know how else to put it. It didn't satisfy me completely so maybe I was thinking another one will. Maybe this one will, and the numbers started growing and growing and just got out of control, as you can see...I wonder just how much predestination controls a person’s life and just how much control they have over themselves."

- Jeffrey Dahmer.

CHAPTER III: The Morally Condemned Psychopath

Since the youthful age of fourteen, Jeffrey Dahmer had unusual fantasies about killing men and engaging in sexual intercourse with the corpses, and it wasn't until he graduated from high school in 1978 that he began to live out his bizarre fantasies in reality. Dahmer, beaten to death by a fellow inmate in 1994, was convicted in the deaths of seventeen young men whose bodies he mutilated and cannibalized during a thirteen-year killing spree. Behind the face of this monstrous individual, however, lurked a desperately lonely young man whose killings were the result of years of progressive and undetected severe mental illness.

Shortly after Jeffrey's death in prison, his father, Lionel Dahmer, published what is considered to be one of the most courageous and unsensational books ever written about serial murders. In his book, Lionel Dahmer assumes much of the guilt and responsibility for his son's monstrous acts by attributing to him a genetic predisposition to murder that he feels as though he might have passed on to his son. He also feels as though his parental neglect may have further contributed to his son's deprived emotional state; that is to say, perhaps if he wasn't blind to certain symptoms that appeared during Jeffrey's childhood, which should have alerted him to his son's

sexually deviant tendencies, early intervention might have prevented the appalling loss of so many lives. To this I ask, should Lionel Dahmer feel guilty and morally responsible for his son's horrific acts? Or, should Jeffrey Dahmer feel morally responsible for his own actions? Who, if either or both, is to blame and should therefore be held morally responsible here? Consider the following.

While pregnant with Jeffrey, Joyce Dahmer endured a particularly difficult pregnancy where she suffered extended bouts of nausea and nervousness with strange fits of rigidity. Doctors prescribed her many types of medication to appease her depressive symptoms — all of which she took during the pregnancy. Nevertheless, Jeffrey underwent a normal birth and grew up as, what appeared to be, a normal and happy child. However, serving as testimony to the insensitivity and blindness towards his son's emerging deviant tendencies, when Jeffrey was four, his father swept out from under their house the remains of some small animals, and Jeffrey became oddly thrilled and fascinated by the sound the tiny bones made as his father gathered them up. At the age of six, Jeffrey underwent a hernia operation that was said to have induced a profound behavioural change in him. After the surgery, he noticeably became fearful, distant, introverted and remote, while around the same time, his parents' marriage began to deteriorate. By the time Jeffrey began elementary school, he had become so deeply shy, reclusive, and uncommunicative that a teacher felt compelled to notify his parents. Nothing was done about it and Jeffrey became increasingly remote, often sitting motionless for hours.

At the age of fifteen, Jeffrey began to drink alcohol regularly, and his fascination with dead things re-emerged. Jeffrey would regularly occupy himself by riding around with plastic garbage bags and collecting the remains of road kill. He would strip the flesh off the bones, and reassemble them in the woods. On one occasion, he
grotesquely mounted a dog's head on a stake. Not surprisingly, Jeffrey came to view himself as being utterly outside the human community, outside all that was normal and acceptable, and outside anything that could be admitted to another human being. While his peers pursued education, careers, and families, Jeffrey was completely unmotivated. Nothing seemed to matter to him. His classmates considered him a loner and an alcoholic who was known to bring liquor to school.

As Jeffrey became more apathetic, the tension and conflict between his parents increased. It culminated in his parents' divorce when he was eighteen years old. That same year, just after he graduated from high school, Jeffrey picked up a hitchhiker, Steven Hicks, and took him back to his parents' place where they drank beer and smoked marijuana together. When Hicks got up to leave, Dahmer, wanting him to stay, struck him on the head with a barbell and killed him. In order to get rid of the body, he cut it up, packaged it in garbage bags and buried the bags in the woods behind the house. Who is morally responsible for all this? Who is to blame for Jeffrey's horrific propensities and actions?

Thus far, I have examined the nature of psychopathy, and the nature of the concept of morality in relation to the moral emotions and moral sense. However, in order to relate these concepts, something needs to be said about the term "responsibility" in the context of morality.

3.1: Moral Responsibility

The common approach to the issue of moral responsibility is through the free-will/determinism debate. However, I have decided to take a slightly different approach. The approach I will be taking goes through considerations of, as we have seen thus far, the nature of personhood in comparison to the nature of psychopathy, the nature of the moral emotions in relation to the moral sense, and, as I will consider later, the nature of
control in relation to normalcy and the moral community. I have chosen this approach because the issue of social similarity, which operates in our moral community, is the standard by which we determine attributions of moral responsibility and excusing conditions in our actual practices. As such, let us take a look at how the notion of moral responsibility operates.

When someone performs or fails to perform a morally significant action, we tend to think that this person is deserving of a particular kind of response - praise and/or blame are perhaps the most common forms this response takes. Thus, to be "morally responsible for something" is to be deserving of a particular kind of response (i.e., praise or blame) for having performed it. But of course the concept of "moral responsibility" is more complex and elusive than this. It seems to me that a comprehensive theory of moral responsibility would need to elucidate the following: (1) the concept of moral responsibility itself; (2) the criteria for being a moral agent, (i.e., one who qualifies as an agent subject to attributions of moral responsibility); and (3) the conditions under which the concept of moral responsibility is properly applied, (i.e., the conditions under which a moral agent is responsible for an action, or for failing to perform an action). The following analysis will focus on the relationship between the first two factors, and will include a discussion related to the third. Thus, I will be outlining some parameters by which attributions of moral responsibility are typically deemed reasonable and acceptable according to standard human practices.

The term "responsibility" is derived from the verb "to respond", which has its roots in the Latin word *respondere*. The dictionary defines "respond" as "to reply or answer in words."147 In turn, the term "responsibility" is defined as "answerable or accountable as

for something within one’s power, control, or management.”¹⁴⁸

Interestingly, the use of this term assumed a special significance in Roman law.¹⁴⁹ A defendant, or his representative, “responded” in court to a complaint filed against him by submitting reasons and arguments designed to satisfy the plaintiff’s charges and to justify his own conduct. If the arguments submitted were not satisfactory to the court, the defendant was required to answer to the complaint in a non-verbal way, that is, by “responding” in damages, or by returning goods unlawfully appropriated to him. Most interestingly, the Roman institution was authorized to hold an individual responsible for breach of an obligation within the framework of social morality, rather than law. Two officials, called “censors”, were elected by the people and were in charge for taking a census over the morals of both governmental functionaries and private citizens. According to this “moral census”, they would affix a “mark of censure” to a person’s name if the census conflicted with, thereby disapproving of, a person’s conduct. For the Romans, there were no stringent restrictions as to the reasons for which the censors might express their disapproval because moral codes were, and still are, normally more vague than legal codes. Therefore, the standard of acceptable conduct, and a person’s responsibility therein as upheld by the court-of-law, reflected the moral sentiments of the “court-of-the-community.”

As such, the fundamental issue in the notion of moral responsibility is that attributions of moral responsibility to a person, in accordance to a common understanding and standard, presuppose that the person had a volitional choice and the ability to avoid the action for which he is being held accountable, and henceforth expected to “respond to” and justify. In this sense, we are inclined to link the concept of

moral responsibility with the notion of blame. Consider, for example, that it is basically futile and nonsensical to “blame” and attribute moral responsibility to a robot, or a dog, or a gust of wind, or perhaps even an infant, or an epileptic adult for knocking an expensive vase off the table. But why is this? That is, upon what grounds are such entities exempted from attributions of blame and moral responsibility? And, in turn, upon what grounds are other entities subjected to attributions of moral responsibility?

In order to answer these questions, it seems to me that two main interrelated sub-questions must first be examined; specifically, what does it mean to say, (1) “in accordance to a common understanding and standard”, and (2) “the person had a volitional choice and the ability to avoid the action for which he is being held accountable.” I will discuss these two questions as listed in their respective order.

3.1.1: “In Accordance to a Common Understanding and Standard”

First of all, it is important to reiterate and keep in mind that the nature of personhood is, it seems to me, the basic issue that underlies the whole of my present inquiry – particularly this chapter. The ways in which we define “what it means to be human” or “human nature” will, in effect, directly influence the ways in which we consider not only my specific topic of “psychopathy and moral responsibility”, but also the more general topics of morality, responsibility, and freewill. As much as the veracity of this assertion has become apparent thus far, it should become progressively more apparent in the remainder of my inquiry.

Offering further support to this, Peter Strawson, in his landmark paper entitled Freedom and Resentment, states that human “practices do not merely exploit our

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150 The notion of “moral responsibility” is not strictly associated with “negative” sentiments like blame, indignation, etc. One can be morally responsible for action that induces “positive” reactive attitudes like praise and admiration. However, in light of the theme of my project, my discussion of moral responsibility will primarily focus on “negative” attributions of moral responsibility.
natures, they express them."\textsuperscript{151} Strawson’s claim suggests that a conception of human nature can be extracted from considering the nature of human practices. In the context of morality, therefore, an examination of our common understanding and standards of behaviour will reveal important aspects of human nature that will help explain \textit{how and why} we typically make attributions of moral responsibility in our everyday social interactions. So, in order to comprehend certain aspects of human nature that give rise to our moral practices, Strawson’s straightforward claim is that we first need to examine our common moral practices. In this sense, “what we do” will reveal the essence of “what we are.”

One basic practice that we characteristically engage in throughout our social interactions is that we tend to regard people as responsible agents.\textsuperscript{152} This is evident by virtue of the fact that we are naturally inclined to, for example, commend someone for displaying an earnest effort at work, or praise someone for doing a good deed, or convey sympathy and encouragement to someone during a time of distress, or express indignation towards someone who has carelessly or intentionally harmed us. Our interpersonal reactive attitudes (i.e., our inner attitudes and emotions, their outward expression in censure or praise, and the imposition of corresponding sanctions or rewards, etc.) are constitutive elements of normal human relationships. It is difficult to imagine a meaningful and rich interpersonal relationship without attitudes of praise, anger, or blame being expressed between individuals from time-to-time. Such attitudes of expression, and many others of like kind, reflect certain human needs and aversions that are basic to our conception of being human.\textsuperscript{153}

\textsuperscript{153} Watson 120.
In this sense, according to Peter Strawson, the relationship between our "reactive attitudes" and moral responsibility is not premised upon some theory of moral responsibility, but, to the contrary, it is premised upon a recognition of natural human reactions and practices towards the good or ill will or indifference of others toward us, or toward those we care about, as displayed in their attitudes and actions.\textsuperscript{154} It is not that we hold people responsible because they really are responsible in some metaphysical, theoretical or propositional sense. Rather, the notion and application of "responsibility" is to be first and foremost understood by our practices of expressing our values, concerns and demands regarding our treatment of one another.\textsuperscript{155} In other words, it is simply because of our natural tendency to express "reactive attitudes" towards certain behaviours that underlies and motivates attributions of moral responsibility. Our "reactive attitudes" expressed towards the sort of treatment we personally experience, or that we witness others experiencing are, in turn, indicative and a product of our capacity to feel and experience the moral emotions. Thus, the notion of moral responsibility can only be understood with reference to our natural capacity to experience the moral emotions. This "naturalistic" approach to responsibility is therefore committed to the notion that "holding people responsible involves our capacity to feel and experience moral sentiments."\textsuperscript{156}

From the naturalist perspective, normal human interpersonal relationships entail the possibility of experiencing a wide range of reactive attitudes from sheer resentment to utter gratitude. In this way, normal human beings have the potential to meaningfully express a particular reactive attitude from within the spectrum of possibilities - given the right circumstances and experiences. In addition to this, normal human beings have the

\textsuperscript{154} Strawson 53.
\textsuperscript{155} Watson 121.
\textsuperscript{156} Russell 2.
capacity to understand reactive attitudes directed towards them by other members of the community. Understanding the reactive attitudes of others, or “moral address”, is to intuitively understand the meaning of responsibility, guilt, condemnation, justice and desert. As such, normal human beings are capable of expressing and understanding moral address, and attributions of moral responsibility, because of their natural capacity to feel and experience the moral sentiments. In support of this, Paul Russell states that this general capacity to understand moral address, and to feel and experience reactive emotions or moral sentiments is our moral sense.

The general view I have been developing thus far, regarding psychopathy and moral responsibility, largely rests upon the notion that the moral sense is the decisive element of human nature, and it is what constitutes the fiber of our moral community. Without the moral sense, we would be unable to empathize, sympathize and meaningfully understand, regard and serve the interests of other people. Our community would be, as portrayed by Hobbes, strictly reliant upon regulation by law in order to establish social order. But, this is not actually the case because the moral sense is the defining and unifying element of our moral community. At the outset, the moral community is a community of people fundamentally united by a common interest in the practice of morality, rather than by a common interest in the practice and promotion of law. Our common interest in the practice of law within our community is essentially grounded upon and derived from our common interest in the practice of morality. In this sense, the community's laws are an extension or a by-product of the community's moral sense. Thus, the phrase “in accordance to a common understanding and standard” derives its core meaning from the “heart” of human nature,
that is to say, from the moral sense. It is the moral sense that facilitates and establishes "a common understanding and standard" through which attributions of moral responsibility, and moral address in general, can be meaningfully deemed and justified.

3.1.2: "The Person had a Volitional Choice and the Ability to Avoid the Action for which he is Being Held Accountable"

Although this convoluted statement is rich in philosophical possibilities, I will highlight its central themes, and offer some clarification accordingly. The three main elements of this statement are the phrases "volitional choice", "ability to avoid", and "being held accountable." My discussion in this section will revolve around explaining the meaning of these phrases in the context of this project.

In order to grasp the basic meaning of this entire phrase, we need to first relate it to the phrase from the previous section (i.e., "in accordance to a common understanding and standard"). It is important to do this, namely because the phrase "the person had a volitional choice and the ability to avoid the action for which he is being held accountable" assumes that the person is a member of the moral community and is therefore subject to the common understanding and standard of morality.

Peter Strawson states that the reactive attitudes essentially involve regarding the other as a "morally responsible agent, as a term of moral relationships, as a member of the moral community." Accordingly, when we regard someone as "being held accountable", we are regarding him as a responsible agent and an appropriate target for our reactive attitudes insofar as he is capable of understanding moral address. Basically, we are regarding such a person as being part of the moral community by sharing and applying our general framework for practical reasoning in the realm of morality. In this sense, an agent who is being held accountable is "in the ballpark" as a

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159 Watson 130.
potential candidate for at least some of the reactive attitudes.\textsuperscript{160}

To be blamed for one’s actions implies that the person \textit{should} have done otherwise which, in turn, implies that the person \textit{could} have done otherwise. In this sense, the person is thought to have had both the option and the ability to avoid the conduct for which they are reprehensibly being held morally responsible. Thus, the ability to avoid an action for which one is being held accountable presupposes that a responsible agent \textit{could} have demonstrated a sense of control over his own behaviour insofar as he \textit{should} have capitalized on the option to have done otherwise. But what exactly does it mean to “control one’s own behaviour” by doing otherwise?

I should like to point out that it is beginning to become apparent as to why it is basically futile and nonsensical to “blame” and attribute moral responsibility to a robot, or a dog, or a gust of wind, or an infant, or an epileptic adult for knocking an expensive vase off the table. My examination of “what it means to be a person”, and the intimate role that the moral sense plays in the definition of personhood, moral responsibility, and the moral community highlights the main difference between humans and the likes of robots, dogs and gusts of wind. Since we do not think of robots, dogs and gusts of wind as having a “moral sense”, and the associated qualities that are closely identified with the moral sense (i.e., moral emotions, authority of self-reflection, conscience, etc.), we therefore do not consider them part of our moral community. As a result, entities such as robots, pets/animals, and acts of nature are exempt from attributions of moral responsibility and expectations of exhibiting any sense of a certain type of self-control.\textsuperscript{161}


\textsuperscript{161} Note that although an infant or an epileptic adult may possess a moral sense, they are unable to demonstrate the sort of self-control that is necessary for membership into the moral community. My discussion of “reasons-responsiveness” from Fischer and Ravizza’s theory of responsibility and control.
To help understand the claim that persons, and not non-persons, are capable of exhibiting a certain type of control, we can consider, for instance, that although a dog can be causally responsible for bringing about an event, say by knocking an expensive vase off the table by wagging its tail, it seems counter-intuitive to hold a dog morally responsible for doing so, namely because dogs lack a certain type of control over their actions. Of course, persons can also be held causally responsible for their actions, but persons, unlike dogs, can be held morally responsible for their actions under a certain set of conditions. In this sense, concepts of personhood, moral responsibility, and control are intimately intertwined.

So, with this groundwork in place, what exactly does it mean for a human being to “control one’s own behaviour” by doing otherwise? And, what is it about normal human beings that enables them to exercise this sort of control, and effectively prevents dogs, infants, epileptics and, of course, psychopaths from exercising the same sort of control?

Recall that a morally responsible agent is one who is an appropriate target for the reactive attitudes, which means that the agent is a member of the moral community and is, therefore, rationally accessible to the reactive attitudes and able to control his behaviour in a related and appropriate way. John Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza, in their text Responsibility and Control: A Theory of Moral Responsibility, offer an account of what it means to be rationally accessible to the reactive attitudes and to be able to control one’s behaviour in a related and appropriate way.

The leading idea in Fischer and Ravizza’s text is that moral responsibility is based on “guidance control.” The authors are committed to the view that guidance addresses this assertion. Although, this issue is not directly relevant to my theory on the nature of responsibility and control for psychopaths.
control is the relevant condition that is sufficient for moral responsibility. Guidance control is to be distinguished from "regulative control," which involves alternative possibilities (i.e., having the "dual power" to freely do one act, and the power to freely do something else instead). Although regulative control often goes hand-in-hand with guidance control, attributions of moral responsibility only require guidance control. Thus, we are morally responsible for our actions so long as we have guidance control, even if we lack regulative control and could not have done otherwise.

The notion of "guidance control" is refined by connecting it to the notion of "reasons-responsiveness." The idea here is that an agent is morally responsible for an action when the "mechanism" that issues the action is "reasons-responsive" in an appropriate way. An example should help clarify this. Suppose Jack has a neurological disorder that causes his right arm to swing forward every few seconds. Clearly, Jack lacks guidance control over his "arm swinging" movements because the physical mechanism issuing Jack's behaviour has nothing to do with him responding to reasons; in other words, the reason why Jack's arm swings forward is not responsive to reasons. Instead, Jack's arm is responding to some neurological effect, or defect in Jack's brain. His right arm is not responding to Jack's desires or his contemplative will. Thus, no matter what set of reasons are presented to Jack, we will be unable to persuade him to refrain from swinging his right arm forward because the mechanism issuing this action is not responsive to reasons. Hence, Jack lacks guidance control over his right arm swinging forward.

In such a case, if we became aware of Jack's neurological disorder as playing a key role in his arm swinging forward and striking Fred in the face, for example, our reactive attitude towards Jack would likely be one of sympathy rather than blame, thereby exempting him from attributions of moral responsibility for striking Fred.
Although it certainly was Jack's arm that causally struck Fred, we would not morally blame him for doing so because it was not within Jack's ability to control his arm in that way (i.e., he lacked guidance control), which means Jack did not have the option to have done otherwise (i.e., he also lacked regulative control, so he could not swing his arm around Fred, or not swing it at all). So, Jack does not have guidance control, or regulative control, over his “arm swinging” movements because the relevant mechanism that issues Jack's “arm swinging” action is not responsive to reasons. We can note that Jack's case here is similar to that of an epileptic's.

Now consider Fred, who is considering whether to retaliate by striking Jack in return, or to sympathize with Jack's condition by donating money for research to “The Centre for Arm Disorders.” Suppose Fred decided to donate some money rather than retaliating. Since the process by which Fred made this decision was presumably not induced by a psychotic impulse, brain manipulation, or neurological disorder, we can conclude that the mechanism that issued Fred's act of “donating money” was responsive to reasons. That is to say, Fred potentially could have been persuaded to retaliate, or to not donate money, or to just walk away from Jack – neither retaliating nor donating money. Fred's act of donating money was therefore issued from his reasons-responsive mechanism, and he would, as a result, most likely inspire from the moral community a reactive attitude of praise and admiration, and would accordingly be considered morally responsible and praiseworthy for his behaviour.

As such, the main idea here is that guidance control of an action involves an agent's voluntary performance of that action insofar as guidance control is exhibited when actions are issued from an agent's own reasons-responsive mechanism.162 So, there are two relevant and related components to guidance control: (1) the mechanism

162 Fischer and Ravizza 31.
that issues the action must be [moderately] responsive to reasons, and (2) the mechanism that issues the action must be the agent's own.\textsuperscript{163} By appealing to guidance control, rather than regulative control, Fischer and Ravizza argue that an agent can be held morally responsible for an action if the agent had guidance control at some appropriate point prior to performing an action.

I have discussed the role of reasons-responsiveness in the notion of guidance control. I shall now discuss the second component of guidance control by taking into account the process of moral education by which the issuing mechanism becomes one's own; this, in turn, enables guidance control to manifest at some appropriate point prior to performing a moral action. The primary value of considering an individual's past experiences lies in the fact that we can more proficiently ascertain whether or not certain historical features are relevant or useful in making attributions of moral responsibility. Moreover, examining the process through which an agent's reasons-responsive mechanism becomes one's own will show how a non-responsible agent becomes a responsible agent in the first place. This process can be referred to as the process of "taking responsibility."

"Taking responsibility" is a necessary feature of moral responsibility insofar as it is a key part of the process where the mechanism issuing an action becomes one's own. To explain this somewhat obscure notion further, there are three essential ingredients of "taking responsibility:" (1) seeing oneself as an agent – which is basically defined as seeing oneself as a source or cause of one's actions and their consequences; and, in turn, seeing that one's actions and their consequences are the result of one's emotions, desires and intentions; in other words, seeing oneself as the

\footnote{\textsuperscript{163} Fischer and Ravizza explain in detail the degree of "reasons-responsiveness" that is necessary for guidance control, but this aspect of their theory is not relevant to my purposes. The central concern here is that guidance control is necessary for moral responsibility, and that guidance control entails "reasons-responsiveness."}
efficacious cause of one's behaviour insofar as one's motivational states are the causal source of certain upshots in the world; (2) seeing that the reactive attitudes follow in an appropriate way from one's behaviour, and accepting that, as an agent, one is a fair and appropriate target of praise/blame from the moral community according to contextual behaviour; and (3) the individual's view of himself as specified in (1) and (2) must be based on evidence in an appropriate way. In this context, "appropriate" means that the evidence accurately reflects his experiences with the effects of his choices and actions in the world.

The process of "taking responsibility" is a tricky concept to pin down. Do individuals "choose" to take responsibility and henceforth become responsible agents, or do they simply need to "see" themselves as a responsible agent to become a responsible agent, or do others decide when someone is ready to take responsibility and become a responsible agent? And when does the decisive moment of "taking responsibility" officially occur, or is it an ongoing process?

According to Fischer and Ravizza, we have already seen that attributions of moral responsibility are considered applicable and valid if an agent can, in an appropriate way, control his behaviour by virtue of his own deliberative mechanism that is responsive to reasons. This indicates that the agent is rationally accessible to the reactive attitudes and, as a result, acquires membership to the moral community. One's reasons-responsive mechanism thereby enables one to qualify as a member of the moral community. Thus, it is not a matter of whether an agent "chooses" to take responsibility, or whether he "sees" himself as responsible, or whether others decide that he "is" responsible. Rather, it is a matter of when an agent comes to the realization and acceptance that he indeed possesses the capacity to "take responsibility." Upon this realization, he acquires and takes possession of his reasons-responsive
mechanism that facilitates his admittance into the moral community. It is at this moment of “taking responsibility” that an agent recognizes, acknowledges and must accept that he has the capacity to control his actions and their consequences according to the decisions he makes.

Of course, no agent is forced, as it were, to take responsibility and join the moral community. In fact, there are often many incentives not to do so. The costs of taking responsibility often involve experiencing and having to face intense negative feelings such as guilt, embarrassment and/or regret. However, upon coming to the realization that one has the capacity to “take responsibility”, and assume more control over one’s own life, the price of refraining from embracing one’s ability to take responsibility might very well exceed the price involved with taking responsibility. The cost of relinquishing autonomy, remaining a fragmented self, and becoming an individual who does not see one’s self as an appropriate target for the reactive attitudes means that one is unable to fully participate in important and meaningful human relationships. For most of us, such consequences would be psychologically devastating, and would therefore encourage us to take advantage of our capacity to take responsibility and join the moral community. However, this can only occur if we naturally care about engaging in important and meaningful interpersonal relationships.

In addition to the above, the process that facilitates the “taking of responsibility” requires some further analysis. More specifically, how does one come to recognize that one has the capacity to “take responsibility” in the first place? Fischer and Ravizza assert that moral responsibility is essentially a historical notion insofar as becoming a morally responsible agent requires that the past be “a certain way.”164 The history of an action is important, they claim, because it helps specify what it is for a mechanism to be

164 Fischer and Ravizza 207.
the agent's own. In other words, examining the relevant historical phenomena will show where ownership of the reason-responsive mechanism comes from, and whether it was acquired through certain appropriate processes of education and habituation. The main concern here is that a consideration of the history behind an agent's mental configuration at the time of the relevant behavior is crucial towards assessing his moral responsibility for it. Expanding on this notion, Thomas Nagel states that "often we need to know [an individual's] history to tell whether something is a misfortune or not; this applies to ills like deterioration, deprivation, and damage." The notion put forth by Nagel reflects the common conception that an individual's background can have a crucial impact on his subsequent psychological development and moral responsibility. Fischer and Ravizza recognize that "if an individual has been subject to significant sorts of mental and physical abuse as a child or young adult, this may well imply that the agent is not subsequently morally responsible for at least some of his behavior." Thus, there is a strong sense of relevance for the state of one's past in relation to the state of one's present. But exactly how so?

The above view simply states that one's past experiences shape one's present psychological state. This view is relatively uncontentious, and has been pervasive since the dawn of psychoanalysis where mental health professionals routinely explore an individual's past in order to illuminate his present psychological state. Moreover, past experiences can affect the present by literally changing the physical structure and/or biochemistry of an individual's brain. In this sense, then, the past is epistemically important because its psychological and physical features are useful in helping us

165 Fischer and Ravizza 170.
166 Fischer and Ravizza 182.
167 Fischer and Ravizza 187.
169 Fischer and Ravizza 187.
characterize and understand the present. But, features of one's background and casual history are relevant only to the extent that they point us to the appropriate and relevant present conditions. Therefore, scrutiny of an individual's childhood or past experiences can only be useful towards attributions of moral responsibility if the past is found to have left some "trace" or "shadow" on the present. \(170\)

The "tracing" aspect of examining the historical development of an agent aims toward establishing whether the mechanism that issues the relevant action is the agent's own. In this sense, it is important to examine both the history of the agent along with the history of the act in question. Fischer and Ravizza offer a useful example to help explain how the history of a particular behavior is relevant in attributions of moral responsibility. \(171\) Suppose that a drunk driver hits a toddler on a tricycle. Even though the driver might have been so intoxicated that he was not, in any relevant sense, in [guidance] control of his actions, we nevertheless hold him morally responsible. We do this because even though he might not have had guidance control over of his actions while he was driving drunk (i.e., the mechanism issuing the act of "him getting behind the wheel of the car and driving drunk and hitting a toddler" was not "reasons-responsive"), he had guidance control of his heavy drinking before he became heavily intoxicated, and he could, and should, have reasonably expected such a tragedy occurring under the circumstances.

But, suppose we had learned that the alcohol had been injected into him against his will, or someone had drugged the soda he was drinking which caused him to lose "guidance control" of his behaviour; certainly, our intuitions, or "reactive attitudes", concerning his moral responsibility would change. This example shows how examining

\(170\) Fischer and Ravizza 189-190 and 195.  
\(171\) Fischer and Ravizza 195.
the history of an act is relevant in making ascriptions of moral responsibility insofar as determining whether or not the agent had guidance control at some appropriate point prior to performing the act in question. But how exactly is the history of an agent relevant in determining whether or not the mechanism that issues the action is the agent's own? That is, what is it about a person's childhood that facilitates mechanism ownership, and the subsequent "taking of responsibility?"

In the historical process of becoming a moral agent, and taking claim to mechanism ownership, an individual goes through a lengthy and complicated moral education. It is through the "moral educational" process that an individual comes to view himself as a moral agent and as a member of the moral community. Recall that in chapter one, I argued that it is imperative for parents to facilitate the development of empathy in their children by ensuring and providing sensitive and responsive caregiving to the child's needs. This, I believe, is the foundation upon which prosocial attitudes, and a child's moral education, will be subsequently cultivated and flourished. The main point here is that the nature of parental responses to a child is a crucial and determinative feature of a child's moral education. In other words, the parents' "reactive attitudes" expressed towards the child significantly influence the child's moral development and education. Fischer and Ravizza acknowledge the importance of parental influence on a child's qualification for "moral agency" and the "moral community" by stating:

parental responses to a child's behavior, as part of the typical process of moral education, seek to induce the child to accept a certain view of himself as an agent. The relevant notion of "agency" is a rather minimal notion, according to which the child sees himself as the source - in a specific sense - of certain upshots in the external world. The sense in which the child sees himself as the "source" of these upshots is that he sees that their occurrence is caused - in a certain characteristic way - by him. The child is brought to
see that his desires, beliefs, and intentions result in actions and upshots in the world; these upshots are not the results of freakish accidents or other agents.\textsuperscript{172}

For example, if young Fred was found to have broken into his sister’s piggybank and to have stolen some money, punishment and scolding would encourage Fred to see himself as an appropriate candidate for the reactive attitudes. Such a reaction from Fred’s parents would facilitate Fred acquiring a view of himself as a morally responsible agent who is [becoming] a member of the moral community, and it promotes him towards becoming rationally accessible to the reactive attitudes. By adopting such attitudes towards children, we expect that they will be met with an appropriate response, and that the child will adopt an internal attitude toward himself that corresponds to the external attitude we adopt towards him.\textsuperscript{173} In this sense, the reactive attitudes serve as “moral address” directed towards the child, and the child, in effect, gradually learns to understand and express, in return, appropriate reactive attitudes that are conducive to his emerging sense of self as a moral agent who has [guidance] control over his own conduct. Expanding on this, Fischer and Ravizza state that as the child “is ‘praised’ and ‘blamed’ for the actions that flow from his practical reason, the child is further encouraged to accept that he is appropriately praised and blamed for such actions. By the time the child becomes a full member of the moral community, he is expected to take full responsibility for the actions that flow from his mechanism of practical reason. In this sense, the mechanism of practical reason is now appropriately considered his own.\textsuperscript{174} By undergoing this process, the child, then, as a moral agent, comes to understand that he is a fair target of the reactive attitudes that ensue from the way he

\textsuperscript{172} Fischer and Ravizza 208.
\textsuperscript{173} Fischer and Ravizza 209.
\textsuperscript{174} Fischer and Ravizza 215. It is important to note that Fischer and Ravizza acknowledge that although the process of taking responsibility for acting from a moderate reasons-responsive mechanism typically occurs during the moral education of children, this process can also result from “reflection” later in life. See page 224 of \textit{Responsibility and Control: A Theory of Moral Responsibility}.
exercises his agency in the moral community. In effect, this process encompasses and promotes the three ingredients for “taking responsibility” outlined earlier.175

To summarize the discussion in this section, the complicated phrase under scrutiny—“the person had a volitional choice and the ability to avoid the action for which he is being held accountable”—depicts a more meaningful and comprehensive picture. By employing the theory of Fischer and Ravizza, I have argued that the three main elements of this phrase (i.e., “volitional choice”, “ability to avoid”, and “being held accountable”) are directly related to the notion of “guidance control.” Guidance control is essentially a necessary and sufficient condition for moral responsibility. Moral responsibility, in turn, is essentially a historical notion insofar as in order to qualify as a moral agent, and to possess the capacity to make a volitional choice in moral matters by means of one’s own reasons-responsive mechanism, one’s past must have been a “certain way.” In order to determine whether one’s conduct flowed from one’s own reasons-responsive mechanism, an examination of one’s moral education and childhood experiences will show whether one has shifted from being a non-responsible agent to being a responsible agent by virtue of undergoing the process of “taking responsibility.” The process of “taking responsibility” is promoted by the parents’ sensitive and empathetic caregiving to the child’s needs. The reactive attitudes expressed by the child’s parents induce the child to accept a certain view of himself as an agent. The manner in which the child is praised and blamed for conduct judged by the parents will facilitate the child adopting an internal attitude toward himself that

175 (1) seeing oneself as an agent – which is basically defined as seeing oneself as a source or cause of one’s actions and their consequences; and seeing that one’s actions and their consequences are the result of one’s emotions, desires, and intentions; in other words, seeing oneself as the efficacious cause of one’s behaviour insofar as one’s motivational states are the causal source of certain upshots in the world; (2) seeing that the reactive attitudes follow in an appropriate way from one’s behavior, and having an acceptance that, as an agent, one is a fair and appropriate target of praise/blame from the moral community according to contextual behaviour; and (3) the individual’s view of himself as specified in (1) and (2) must be based on evidence in an appropriate way. “Appropriate”, here, means that the evidence accurately reflects his experiences with the effects of his choices and actions in the world.
corresponds to the external attitude adopted towards him. In this sense, the reactive attitudes expressed by the parents serve as “moral address” directed towards the child, and the child, in effect, gradually learns to understand and express in return appropriate reactive attitudes that are conducive to his emerging sense of self as a moral agent who has [guidance] control over his own conduct.

In review, the process of “taking responsibility” entails three essential ingredients: (1) the individual needs to see himself as an agent who is the efficacious cause of one’s own behaviour insofar as one’s motivational states are the causal source of certain upshots in the world; (2) the agent needs to see that the reactive attitudes follow in an appropriate way from one’s own behavior, and accepting that, as an agent, one is a fair and appropriate target of praise/blame from the moral community according to contextual behaviour; and (3) the agent’s view himself, as specified in (1) and (2), must be based on evidence in an appropriate way. By “taking responsibility”, the agent becomes rationally accessible to the reactive attitudes and becomes a member of the moral community. By undergoing this process, the child, then, as a moral agent, comes to understand that he is a fair target of the reactive attitudes that ensue from the way he exercises his agency in the moral community. By the time the child becomes a full member of the moral community, he is expected to have fully taken responsibility for the actions that flow from his mechanism of practical reason. In this sense, the mechanism of practical reason is now appropriately considered his own. Although the incentives are high to avoid “taking responsibility”, the price of not “taking responsibility” and assuming “guidance control” over one’s own life, in turn, is much higher. The cost of relinquishing one’s autonomy, remaining a fragmented self, and becoming an individual who does not see oneself as an appropriate target for the reactive attitudes means that one is unable to enjoy rich, meaningful human relationships. Failing to take advantage
of this, for most of us, would, and often does, result in devastating psychological consequences. Therefore, it is better to take responsibility and join the moral community by taking advantage of one's natural capacity to take responsibility.

However, this is only possible if one actually has the capacity to take responsibility, which is, in my view, entirely dependent upon the existence of the moral sense. Without the moral sense, the process of moral education, and the three ingredients of "taking responsibility" would effectively be short-circuited and undermined. Without the essential capacity to feel empathy, a child would effectively be unable to adopt an internal attitude toward himself that corresponds to the external attitude adopted towards him. In this sense, the reactive attitudes expressed by one's parents would fail to serve as meaningful "moral address" to the child because the child would be incapable of empathetically relating to, and understanding, the harm done to others by him that prompted the moral address in the first place. The child would fail to develop guidance control over his actions because the mechanism issuing his conduct would not be responsive to reasons since he effectively truncated the completion of the process of "taking responsibility." Thus, he cannot be considered a member of the moral community because moral address is unintelligible to him. What, therefore, do we do with such people? Can we hold them morally responsible in some sense?

3.2: Moral Responsibility and the Psychopath

I have shown why robots, pets/animals and acts of nature are generally exempt from attributions of moral responsibility. I have also argued why epileptics and young children qualify for exemption by virtue of lacking guidance control and a reasons-responsive mechanism. Psychopaths, however, are a different breed altogether. The rules that apply to these other subjects do not apply to psychopaths. For this reason, opinions on whether or not psychopaths can legitimately be viewed as morally
responsible range from the affirmative to the negative. Regardless of one's position, however, it seems to me that the crux of the issue revolves around notions of “moral understanding” and “rational self-control.” Recall that in the previous section, I argued that the notion of “guidance control” and the possession of a “reasons-responsive mechanism” was a necessary and sufficient condition for ascriptions of moral responsibility. Along these lines, if one is of the opinion that psychopaths have the capacity of rational self-control and that they understand moral address, the upshot of this view is that they can legitimately be held morally responsible for their actions. Conversely, if one is of the opinion that they neither have the capacity for rational self-control nor do they understand moral address, then one is committed to the view that psychopaths cannot legitimately be held morally responsible. In this final section, I will survey the predominant views on the topic and, from this, the development of my theory on the matter will emerge.

Robert Hare, who is one of the leading authorities in the study of psychopathy, asserts that:

psychopaths are rational and aware of what they are doing and why. Their behaviour is the result of choice, freely exercised...they understand the rules of society and the conventional meanings of right and wrong. They are capable of controlling their behavior, and they are aware of the potential consequences of their acts...in my opinion, psychopaths certainly know enough about what they are doing to be held accountable for their actions. Their problem is that this knowledge frequently fails to deter them from antisocial behavior.

Although it seems somewhat unclear, I take what Hare refers to as “knowledge” as being some sort of awareness, understanding or comprehension of “what they are doing and why.”

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176 Bear in mind that the “possession” of a reasons-responsive mechanism means that one has successfully undergone the process of “taking responsibility”, which entails the three essential ingredients that are indicative of moral understanding.

177 Hare 22 and 143.
doing." From this, the phrase "what they are doing" would suggest that psychopaths possess an understanding of why they are doing what they are doing, which would entail a genuine appreciation for the rules of society, for the interests of others, for the conventional meanings of right and wrong, and for the potential consequences of their actions.

In an apparent conflict, Hare also maintains that "the 'inner speech' of psychopaths lacks emotional punch...[and] the inner voice plays a crucial role in regulating behavior...[moreover] psychopaths have a weak capacity for mentally 'picturing' the consequences of their behavior."178 It is with the latter view I agree, and which the adage "the psychopath knows the words but not the music" lends credence to.179 By not knowing the "music", psychopaths are effectively unable to truly understand and appreciate the rules of society, the interests of others, the conventional meanings of right and wrong, and the potential consequences of their actions. Anyone who is categorically "not deterred by the possibility that their actions may cause hardship or risk to others" cannot possibly understand and appreciate conventional meanings of right and wrong and the potential consequences of their actions.180 Moreover, such an individual surely lacks complete awareness, appreciation and respect for the interests of others. Reflecting this notion, Hervey Cleckley states that a psychopathic individual is:

unfamiliar with the primary facts or data of what might be called personal values and is altogether incapable of understanding such matters. It is impossible for him to take even a slight interest in the tragedy or joy of the striving humanity as presented in serious literature or art. He is also indifferent to all these matters in life itself. Beauty and ugliness, except in a very superficial sense, goodness, evil, love, horror, and humor have no actual meaning, no power

176 Hare 77.
177 Hare 53.
180 Hare 64.
to move him. He is, furthermore, lacking in the ability to see that others are moved. It is as though he were color-blind, despite his sharp intelligence, to this aspect of human existence. It cannot be explained to him because there is nothing in his orbit of awareness that can bridge that gap with comparison. He can repeat the words and say glibly that he understands, and there is no way for him to realize that he does not understand.\textsuperscript{181}

The upshot of this is that such individuals are incapable of controlling their behaviour by avoiding anti-social conduct because the "knowledge" by which their conduct is being regulated is essentially truncated, incomplete and inconsistent, as compared with most others in the human community. As such, the mirror reflection, or "reactive attitudes" that other human beings reverberate back to psychopaths is of no force or effect towards influencing change and promoting understanding because, as Hare notes, psychopaths characteristically demonstrate a "clear inability to learn from past experience...[and] in particular, attempts to teach psychopaths how to 'really feel' remorse or empathy are doomed to failure."\textsuperscript{182}

In his paper \textit{Psychopathy and Moral Understanding}, Antony Duff explains that:

a psychopath is not a rebel, who rejects more conventional values and emotions in light of some favoured conception of the good...a moral rebel develops, extends, and modifies both the values and the concepts of the tradition within which he was brought up: but if his rebellion is to be intelligible as such, there must be a logical continuity between that public, shared, tradition and his present beliefs: we must be able to see how his present values and concepts form an intelligible development of that tradition...but a psychopath does not have his own, revolutionary, values: for he does not share in, and cannot be seen to be modifying, and such tradition, any common form of life. He is \textit{defective}: he has never come to share in a common form of moral or emotional life, and thus can neither understand these dimensions to the lives of others, nor develop them in his own life.\textsuperscript{183}

\textsuperscript{181} Cleckley 90.
\textsuperscript{182} Hare 64 and 197.
For Duff, the "defectiveness" of a psychopath is associated with two capacities deemed essential for a rational human life: (1) the intellectual capacity for reasoning about the empirical features of one's environment, one's actions, and their consequences; and (2) the capacity to control one's actions, and resist contrary impulses, in light of one's rational purposes. Psychopaths therefore have deficiencies related to an important aspect of "intellectual capacity" and "understanding." Duff states that the psychopath:

is not intellectually defective: he can give a factual account of his actions; he can see that others find matters such as death, love, friendship, career, important, and that they are irritated or annoyed by his actions and responses. But his understanding is still deficient: for he cannot see how these things can be important, how they can provide reasons for action and judgment; he cannot understand the emotional and moral significance these aspects of life have for others. And thus he cannot understand the "nature and quality" of his actions, since he has no grasp of the aspects of them.

Accordingly, Duff's objective is to argue that although psychopaths can satisfy certain criteria of practical rationality (i.e., he factually knows what he is doing, and is doing what he wants), they are nevertheless disordered because of their inability to understand the nature and quality of their actions in terms of morally relevant concepts. In a nutshell, the problem of the psychopath is one of understanding - not of facts, but of morality.

Closely connected with the nature of their disorder is their incapacity for emotional and moral responses such as love, remorse, and concern for others. As we have seen, these empathetic qualities are products of the moral sense that facilitate the understanding of morally relevant concepts and moral language. Duff suggests that "understanding", in this sense, requires more than just purely intellectual capacities. It

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184 Duff 189.
185 Duff 193.
187 Duff 191.
requires emotional and imaginative capacities that psychopaths lack. It requires a type of sensitivity and imagination possible only from someone who already shares a form of moral and emotional life, and whose life includes values and emotions logically connected to those whom he is trying to understand.\footnote{Duff 195.} Since psychopaths lack any dimension of emotion or value, they cannot (empathetically) understand how a certain act might be hurtful to someone. This is not to say that psychopaths do not know that certain acts are hurtful to others; in fact, they often do know, but it is just that they simply don’t care. Since they don’t care about hurting others, they simply don’t understand the moral significance of hurting others, because they don’t understand what it is to get hurt themselves. This latter point is connected to their characteristic lack of fear and anxiety, which effectively safeguards them from normal feelings of vulnerability.

Thus, if we are to expect a psychopath to understand what it is to hurt someone, we must first expect him to understand the significance of the kinds of interests and concerns normal people have, and how, in light of such interests, people get hurt by conduct that undermines those interests and concerns. By failing to understand the significance of certain interests and concerns, one cannot be expected to understand why it is wrong to act in such a manner that might compromise someone’s interests and concerns. An example will help explain this further.

Suppose Jack, while at a hockey game recently, obtained an autograph from his favourite player on a scrap piece of paper. A few days later, while cleaning his room, his mother, who has no appreciation of hockey or autographs, threw the piece of paper in the garbage. Understandably, Jack resented his mother for cleaning his room, and blamed her for throwing his highly valued autograph in the garbage. In such a scenario,
is it reasonable to hold Jack’s mother morally responsible for her conduct? After all, she not only did not know that the autograph was valuable to Jack, but also, she does not understand why another person’s name scribbled on a piece of paper would be valuable to anyone, which is why she thought of it as just “doodle” and innocently tossed it in the garbage. So, once Jack learns of his mother’s pleas, his reactive attitudes, although surely still expressions of disappointment, will probably not be strong expressions of resentment and blame.

However, upon learning of Jack’s hurt and disappointment, his mother has the capacity to learn not to hurt Jack in that way again because she can understand, unlike a psychopath, why certain things are of value to people, and why people have interests and concerns with respect to these things. In this sense, by virtue of her natural ability to empathize, Jack’s mother is able to extend her understanding of, say, why someone would value a collectable vase to why someone would value a collectable signature. Or, in the least, because Jack’s mother understands what it means to value something and, through empathy, why one would feel hurt over the loss of that something, she is able to come to the understanding of why Jack values someone’s name scribbled on a piece of paper. If Jack’s mother is to learn from this experience, the increased knowledge of her son’s values should be enough for her to protect Jack’s related interests in the future.

In keeping with this analogy, Duff states that a psychopath is not a man living by unconventional or unusual values: for he has no rational values, concerns, or interests at all; that dimension of thought and experience which he cannot understand in the lives of others is equally missing from his own life...[understanding] requires that we have moral values, and a moral language, of our own; and that we can find logical connections between our concepts and values and theirs: we come to understand them by tracing out these connections. Unless we can understand their concepts and
values in terms of our own (which may involve extending, stretching, and modifying ours), we cannot understand them at all: unless we have moral concerns of our own, values to which we are practically committed, we cannot understand their values as practical...[thus] coming to understand values must involve coming to care for some values...[accordingly] change is conceivable for a person living by intelligible values of his own, who can thus understand, whether he bothers to or not...but a psychopath is incapable of such understanding: nor does his own life exhibit that basis, of values, concerns, and understanding, from which we could imagine any rational reform developing; and that is why he is disordered.\(^\text{189}\)

Thus, the fact that the psychopath does not understand moral concerns is directly related to the fact that he has no moral concerns. He is unable to comprehend why the interests of others matter. This incapacity is critical for moral matters because we ordinarily expect that the interests of others must be important to a person self-evidently.\(^\text{190}\)

As such, psychopaths can never come to understand the nature and quality of their actions, or the lives and interests of normal people. They cannot control their actions in light of any rational concerns or interests expressed towards them because they cannot empathetically understand those reasons that would otherwise, with normal people, serve as an impetus for change and reason for action. The role of empathy is crucial here because by empathetically relating to others, one is able to learn and adjust one’s own behaviour to facilitate and promote the interest of others. This capacity, that psychopaths’ lack, is directly related to the ability to control one’s own behaviour. Acknowledging this imperative notion, a chapter title in Hare’s book - “Internal Controls: The Missing Piece” - makes direct reference to the “role of conscience in the regulation of behaviour.”\(^\text{191}\)

\(^\text{189}\) Duff 193-194.
\(^\text{190}\) Elliott 80.
\(^\text{191}\) Hare 70.
Perhaps the apparent inconsistency with Hare's assertions, concerning whether or not psychopaths can legitimately be held responsible, can be reconciled through his position that the theory of "moral insanity" of the psychopath that I am advancing "may make some theoretical sense, but it is not relevant to practical decisions about criminal responsibility." Hare clearly acknowledges the view I am putting forth, by stating:

some observers [who contend that] psychopaths are deficient in their mental and emotional mechanisms needed to translate their knowledge of the rules into behavior acceptable to society. If they have failed to develop a conscience, are unable to experience guilt or remorse, and have difficulty in monitoring their behavior and its effects on others, the argument runs, then surely they are at a serious disadvantage compared to the rest of us. They understand the intellectual rules of the game but the emotional rules are lost to them.

The "observers" Hare is referring to are theorists who advocate the "sentimentalist" or "naturalistic" point-of-view with regards to moral responsibility of the psychopath. It is important to recognize that the "sentimentalist" perspective is the position through which an essential element of the constitution of a crime is established and justified. That is to say, in order to be found guilty of a crime, an accused must be found to possess the requisite level of mens rea. This means that no act makes an actor guilty of a crime unless the mind is also guilty. Mens rea poses particular problems with regards to psychopaths because, in my view, psychopaths typically do not possess the "guilty mind" that is required for criminal responsibility. In the case of a murder charge, for example, the Crown must prove beyond a reasonable doubt a significantly high level of moral blameworthiness (i.e., mens rea) because the gravity of such an offence carries with it a high degree of stigmatization (i.e., negative reactive attitudes). Of course, virtually all criminal convictions carry a relative degree of social stigma. For this reason,

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192 Hare 143.
193 Hare 143.
one cannot be convicted of a criminal offence unless the appropriate degree of *mens rea* (i.e., guilty mind or moral blameworthiness) is established in conjunction with evidence of a guilty act (i.e., *actus reus*). An argument that advocates the notion that psychopaths cannot be held morally responsible because it is evident that inherent deficiencies in their mind precludes them from possessing a guilty mind is, in my view, directly relevant to criminal matters where a particular level of *mens rea* is always required for a conviction.\(^{194}\) Therefore, the sentimentalist theory of “moral insanity” of the psychopath that I am advancing makes more than just theoretical sense and, it is highly relevant to practical decisions about criminal responsibility.

The essence of the sentimentalist perspective, as articulated by Paul Russell, “is that holding people responsible involves our capacity to feel and experience moral sentiments.”\(^{195}\) Russell also notes, however, that prominent “naturalists” have recently argued that all that is required for moral responsibility is a capacity for “rational self-control”, and that this capacity is *distinct* from the capacity of the moral sense.\(^{196}\) This distinction reflects the difference between “what is required for being responsible is ‘powers of rational self control’, whereas what is required for holding people responsible is a capacity to feel moral sentiments or (moral) reactive emotions.”\(^{197}\) The former aspect of this distinction is the “Kantian approach” to the nature of moral responsibility, whereas the latter aspect is the “Strawsonian approach.”

Although this distinction has traditionally not been treated separately in the philosophical literature on responsibility, in his recent book *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments*, R. Jay Wallace attempts to weave these two distinct strands together by

\(^{194}\) This assertion is certainly not intended to suggest that psychopaths should, therefore, “get away with” any crime in which they participate. Policy issues, such as public safety and social welfare, can and do circumvent such an absurd conclusion.

\(^{195}\) Russell 2.

\(^{196}\) Russell 2.

\(^{197}\) Russell 7. *Italics* mine.
giving equal consideration to both components. However, in attempting to do so, Russell identifies that “on Wallace’s account, as presented, it is possible for an agent to possess powers of rational self-control (or “normative competence”), and be viewed as a fair target of our moral reactive emotions, even though this individual lacks any capacity to feel and experience emotions of this kind.” Along these lines, an agent can be a rational self-controller and lack any moral sense.

Conversely, in keeping with the perspective I have been developing thus far, I am of the opinion that this is a psychological impossibility insofar as “a person who is incapable of moral sense must inevitably be incapable of rational self-control or the ability to respond to moral reasons.” In order to explain why this is so, that is to say, how the relationship between rational self-control and the moral sense is such that the moral sense is fundamentally necessary for rational self-control, we need only to consider how ascriptions of moral responsibility are essentially null and void when directed towards psychopaths.

Russell’s example of “Omega” explains why individuals lacking the moral sense are incapable of understanding and responding to moral sentiments. As a result, such individuals cannot be fair and appropriate targets of the reactive attitudes. He states:

to the extent that Omega lacks any moral sense, he stands outside our own (human) moral community, which is constituted by, and held together through, our shared capacity for moral emotions of the kind that this individual cannot experience or understand from within. To this extent, therefore, we cannot view Omega as an appropriate object of our moral sentiments. We may deal with him in various

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199 Russell 10.
200 Russell 11.
201 Recall in the previous section of this chapter, my exposition of Fischer and Ravizza’s theory of moral responsibility, and the notion of “guidance control” in particular, demonstrated how the moral sense is necessary and conducive for the process of “taking responsibility” of one’s own reasons-responsive mechanism.
other ways that take advantage of his rational capacities, but our moral sentiments must be confined to those who are able to experience and understand these emotions from within.\textsuperscript{202}

Accordingly, even though Omega might not lack powers of rational self-control, since he is lacking any moral sense, he cannot possibly come to care about moral matters in the same way as a normal human being, thereby exempting him from attributions of moral responsibility. The primary reason for this is because of an essential feature of the moral sense that Russell refers to as the "condition of symmetry."\textsuperscript{203}

The "condition of symmetry" is the idea that "to be a responsible agent presupposes that the agent is able to hold a person responsible, and able to form and direct moral sentiments towards himself and others. That is to say, agents who are legitimate objects of moral sentiments must be able to experience, understand and (potentially) share the sentiments in question."\textsuperscript{204} The claim here is that a responsible agent must be able to hold himself and others responsible, but in order to do that, one must first be part of the moral community, which means one must first possess the essential ingredient of the capacity to experience the moral sentiments.

In essence, therefore, as in the case of Omega, the psychopath is a person who possesses, to some extent, powers of rational self-control, but he is not (fully) responsible to the extent that he lacks the moral sense.\textsuperscript{205} By lacking the moral sense, psychopaths are effectively unable to satisfy the condition of symmetry insofar as they are inherently unable to hold others and themselves morally responsible. As such, by taking into account the nature of the psychopathic personality, in order to maintain the sharp distinction between "rational self-control" and the "moral sense", as forwarded by

\textsuperscript{202} Russell 12.  
\textsuperscript{203} Russell 14.  
\textsuperscript{204} Russell 14.  
\textsuperscript{205} Russell 18.
Wallace, it seems to me that the notion of “rational self-control” must collapse upon the initial requirement of possessing the moral sense in order to subsequently establish fair ascriptions of moral responsibility.

To expand on this notion, Russell indicates that “since Wallace is committed to a ‘Kantian’ account of responsible agency, he cannot endorse a (Humean) condition of this kind, without compromising his own ‘Kantian’ position of this issue...[and] since Wallace cannot accept the condition of the moral sense without repudiating his ‘Kantian’ account of responsible agency, he is committed to the view that an individual like Omega is a (fully) responsible moral agent - even though symmetry is not satisfied in this case.”

However, contrary to the view attributed to him by Russell, Wallace does not expressly believe that psychopaths are fully responsible agents. Wallace’s position on the exempting conditions of moral responsibility for an agent, as opposed to a particular act, revolves around two subgroups, which reflect those of P. F. Strawson: (1) it is unfair to hold someone morally responsible during a restricted segment of one’s life when under the influence of hypnotism, extreme stress or physical deprivation, and the short term effects of some drugs, and (2) it is unfair to hold someone morally responsible when systematic and persistent states such as insanity or mental illness, extreme youth, and psychopathy effects one’s systematic behaviour control or conditioning. Aside from these exempting conditions, attributions and demands of moral responsibility are fair if one possesses the powers of reflective self-control, which entails two abilities: (1) the power to grasp and apply moral reasons, and (2) the power to control or regulate behaviour in light of such reasons.

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206 Russell 10 and 16.
207 Wallace 155.
208 Wallace 157.
Wallace supposes that we generally view mature adults as possessing the abilities under the powers of reflective self-control and, for this reason, we are willing to hold accountable some members of our community who are not, in an important sense, members of our moral community; this would include racists, torturers, rapists, cultists, and terrorists. Unlike psychopaths, such individuals have some understanding of moral address, thereby not being categorically devoid of any moral sense. However, such individuals have outright repudiated their moral obligations. They recognize that they are, at some level, worthy of reactive attitudes, but they simply do not care. This is indicative of the fact that their emotional capacity is impaired, but not utterly incapacitated like psychopaths. In keeping with this, Wallace states, “assuming that such people are not psychopaths, or victims of severe childhood deprivation or social indoctrination - they may possess the general ability to grasp the reasons that support our moral obligations, and to regulate their behavior in light of such reasons, even if they have rejected their obligations.”

The above quote indicates that Wallace believes psychopaths are different in an important sense, even when compared to people who characteristically act, and are generally considered, “evil.” Indeed, he asserts that:

it may in fact be the case that the psychopath is distinguished from the ordinary evil person by being constitutionally unresponsive to moral education…but is unclear why incorrigibility by itself should give us a reason to refrain from treating the psychopath as morally accountable with respect to our moral obligations…what makes it appropriate to exempt the psychopath from accountability, I would suggest, is the fact that psychopathy, as conventionally understood, disables an agent’s capacities for reflective self-control…the point is simply that psychopathy is widely believed to affect one’s capacity to grasp and apply moral principles, and that we can explain in terms of this

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209 Wallace 164. Note that “cultists” and “terrorists” are not mentioned by Wallace in this passage, as they are in my additions to Wallace’s list here.

210 Wallace 164.
belief why it is included among the accepted exempting conditions.\textsuperscript{211}

In light of this, the apparent discrepancy between Wallace and Russell with respect to Wallace's position is directly associated with the notion of "rational/reflective self-control." More specifically, Wallace's objective to treat "rational self-control" distinct from, and equal to, the "moral sense" commits him, according to Russell, to the view that psychopaths can be held morally responsible. It seems to me, however, that Wallace places greater significance upon the moral sense in order to maintain the crux of his argument regarding excusing conditions, and how the conditions associated with "rational self-control" excuse psychopaths from attributions of moral responsibility. With respect to psychopaths, Wallace, in order to maintain consistency, must not only grant the moral sense greater significance as compared to "rational self-control", but deem an important aspect of "rational self-control" as an upshot of, and dependent upon the moral sense. Having said this, I agree with the gist of Russell's criticism of Wallace's position, with respect to the psychopathic personality, insofar as Wallace cannot have it both ways; that is to say, he cannot categorically distinguish between, and equate, the concepts of rational self-control and the moral sense and, at the same time, deem psychopaths, who lack a moral sense, as exempted from ascriptions of moral responsibility because of a lack of rational/reflective self-control. In doing so, Wallace inevitably treats the two concepts with a relative and relevant degree of overlap without explaining how the moral sense presupposes and directly influences reflective self-control which, in turn, justifies exemptions from moral responsibility for psychopaths.

As we saw earlier in this chapter, elucidating the concept of rational self-control is a central tenet of Fischer and Ravizza's theory of moral responsibility. Recall that an

\textsuperscript{211} Wallace 177-178.
agent is morally responsible for an action when the action flows from the agent’s own reasons-responsive mechanism.\textsuperscript{212} This essentially means that one’s ability to practically reason could have led someone to have done otherwise in response to some sufficient reason(s) to have done otherwise. Along these lines, it is important to recognize that the ability to respond to some reasons is referring to not only some practical reasons, but also some moral reasons. Fischer and Ravizza acknowledge that responsibility requires that an agent recognizes a pattern of moral reasons within one’s structure that recognizes practical reasons.\textsuperscript{213} Thus, they realize that even though psychopaths exhibit a certain pattern of responsiveness to reasons, they are nevertheless deemed to be exempt from attributions of moral responsibility because “such creatures are not moral agents. Although they may act on mechanisms that respond to instrumental or prudential reasons, they are not appropriately responsive to moral demands...because they are without any understanding and appreciation of moral reasons.”\textsuperscript{214} The nature of the psychopath is such that they are unable to recognize, and therefore be receptive to, another person’s moral demands directed towards them purely because they are inappropriate candidates for the reactive attitudes. On this account, although psychopaths can be receptive to prudential reasons, since they are not receptive to moral reasons, their reason-responsive mechanism is strictly limited in its application to the context of prudential concerns. In other words, psychopaths can only exhibit guidance control with respect to prudential concerns, and not with respect to moral concerns because they are inherently unable to recognize moral reasons, and translate those reasons into possible choices and

\textsuperscript{212} Fischer and Ravizza 207.
\textsuperscript{213} Fischer and Ravizza 77.
\textsuperscript{214} Fischer and Ravizza 76. The authors distinguish between “prudential reasons” and “moral reasons” insofar as the former means a concern for an agent’s long-term self-interest, and the latter means some sort of suitable balance between one’s own interests against the interests and rights of others. See page 76.
actions. Accordingly, Fischer and Ravizza conclude that “this sort of individual is not appropriately receptive to reasons, on our account, and thus is not a morally responsive agent.”

To further develop the Strawsonian notion that claims “psychopaths are inappropriate candidates for the reactive attitudes”, Gary Watson in his paper Responsibility and Limits of Evil: Variations on a Strawsonian Theme states: “to regard people as responsible agents is to be ready to treat them in certain ways...thus, reactive attitudes depend upon an interpretation of conduct.” In other words, the manner in which we interpret someone’s conduct directly influences the manner in which we respond to someone. The example I offered earlier of Jack’s arm spontaneously thrusting forward can be considered here. That is, if one knows of Jack’s “condition”, one will interpret the act of his arm thrusting forward and making contact with Fred differently than if one does not know of Jack’s condition. In the former context, reactions of resentment and blame towards Jack will be inhibited by virtue of interpreting his action as being outside the realm of [guidance] control expected of someone; in the latter context, however, reactions of resentment and blame will be felt towards Jack because his act will be interpreted as being exercised voluntarily insofar he had [guidance] control of his arm, but nevertheless refrained from doing something other than making contact with Fred, thereby violating a basic moral demand of society by failing to reasonably regard the interests of others (i.e., in this context, not hitting people). As such, the reactive attitudes that ensue from violating the basic demand for reasonably regarding the interests of others depend upon excusing and exempting conditions that can be applied to a situation.

215 Fischer and Ravizza 79.
216 Watson 120 and 122.
Watson outlines two types of “pleas” from Strawson’s theory. The first type of plea corresponds to standard excusing conditions, and “works by denying the appearance that the other failed to fulfill the basic demand; when a valid excuse obtains, the internal criteria of the negative reactive attitudes are not satisfied...[e.g.]

‘he realized what he was doing, but it was an emergency.’”\textsuperscript{217} The second type of plea corresponds to standard exempting conditions. These conditions show that an agent temporarily or permanently, globally or locally, is appropriately exempted from the basic demand in the first place. Agents who qualify for type two pleas are characterized as acting atypically due to extraordinary circumstances, or as being “psychologically abnormal or morally underdeveloped in such a way as to be incapacitated in some or all respects for ordinary adult interpersonal relationships.”\textsuperscript{218} Examples are psychotics, children, those under great strain, hypnotics, and psychopaths - who are “moral idiots.”

Those who qualify for type two exemptions are not to be resented or esteemed, but they are to be controlled, managed, trained, or manipulated.\textsuperscript{219} Since such individuals function with a highly diminished moral understanding, it makes no sense to directly express attitudes of blame or praise towards them. Essentially, they are individuals who are not considered responsible agents, and who are therefore unable to participate in normal relationships that inherently entail the comprehension of moral demands.

As such, the notions above presuppose a sort of “shared framework” of practical reason and moral understanding, which is primarily based upon the nature and practice of the reactive attitudes. Thus, morally addressing another individual does not make sense unless he can, to some extent, understand and appreciate the moral demands.

\begin{itemize}
  \item\textsuperscript{217} Watson 123.
  \item\textsuperscript{218} Watson 123.
  \item\textsuperscript{219} Watson 123.
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that flow from this "shared framework" so that moral communication can successfully take place. An individual who categorically fails to share and appreciate any aspect of this shared framework is simply an individual with whom one is unable to have moral dialogue because he is not part of the community of individuals who in practice share this framework. Such an individual therefore is also one who does not share an understanding of the reactive attitudes. This is the condition of a psychopath. Accordingly, although psychopaths might be seen as ideal candidates for expressions of blame and indignation, invitations for moral dialogue with them is inevitably bound to fall upon barren ground because of their lack of moral understanding.

Interestingly, there are also cases where individuals perform acts of extreme evil, and who are not necessarily "psychopaths" in the clinical sense, but who nevertheless are disqualified from the moral community and attributions of moral responsibility. To explore the degree of evil that [dis]qualifies one from the moral community, Watson discusses the case of Robert Harris.220

At the age of twenty-five, after spending seven of the last ten years in prison, Robert Harris and his brother were looking for a car to rob a bank with. They spotted two sixteen year-old boys eating in a parked car, got in, and told them to drive. Shortly thereafter, Harris directed them to a canyon area, told the boys he was going to use their car for a robbery, park it somewhere afterwards, and leave some money in it for them. Harris told the boys to simply report the car stolen, and return to it later at some agreed upon location to get their cash. Upon dropping the boys off so they could walk into town to file their "report", as they turned and walked away, Harris shot one of the boys in the back, and chased the other down a hill and shot him four times. Harris then

220 Watson 131.
drove the car to a friend’s house and, only fifteen minutes after shooting and killing two young boys, proceeded to eat the slain boys’ lunch.

Undoubtedly, most would find it incomprehensible that someone could perform such an insidious act and then casually eat shortly thereafter. Not surprisingly, “few of Harris’ friends or family were surprised that he ended up on death row.”  

Previous to this incident, Harris had been convicted of car theft at fifteen, arrested twice for torturing animals, and was convicted of manslaughter for beating a neighbour to death. As mentioned earlier, people like Harris are seen by many as the ideal candidates for blame, indignation, attributions of moral responsibility, and the harshest punishments.

However, before we pass moral judgment upon Harris, we ought to consider Fischer and Ravizza’s view stating that moral responsibility is essentially a historical notion insofar as becoming a morally responsible agent requires that the past be “a certain way.”  

In making attributions of moral responsibility, it is important to consider the “past” or “history” of someone like Robert Harris before our reactive attitudes decide whether or not he qualifies for exemption, or whether he actually had guidance control over his actions. Let us review Harris’ case in light of Watson’s theory.

Watson notes that violence presaged the birth of Robert Harris. Harris was born two and a half months premature because his father, an insanely jealous man, came home drunk one night and accused his wife of infidelity, claiming the child was not his, and proceeded to beat and kick her in the stomach. That night, she was taken to the hospital and Robert was born.

Robert’s childhood was plagued with despair and destruction. His father frequently beat his children, sexually molested his daughters, and often caused his

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221 Watson 133.
222 Fischer and Ravizza 207.
family serious physical injuries. "All of the children had monstrous childhoods." His sister said the following of Harris:

he was the most beautiful of all my mother's children; he was an angel...he would just break your heart. He wanted love so bad he would beg for any kind of physical contact...he'd come up to my mother and just try to rub his little hands on her leg or her arm. He just never got touched at all. She'd just push him away or kick him. One time she bloodied his nose when he was trying to get close to her...one killer out of nine kids...the sad thing is he was the most sensitive of us all. When he was 10 and we all saw "Bambi," he cried and cried when Bambi's mother was shot. Everything was pretty to him as a child; he loved animals. But all that changed; it all changed so much...the only way he could vent his feelings was to break or kill something...he took out all the frustrations of his life on animals. He had no feeling for life, no sense of remorse. He had reached the point where there wasn't that much left of him.

Basically, Harris was just too young to have recovered from all the abuse that lasted throughout his childhood. Not surprisingly, Harris' family was ambivalent about his death sentence. Since they intimately know Robert's history and, at the same time, know the evils he has committed, it is difficult not to feel sympathy for both Robert and the families of the victims of his crimes. We must ask ourselves, does this background information prompt a similar "clash" of emotions in us? Perhaps.

The story of Robert Harris I have explicated is not meant to diminish the evils of his actions; rather, it is meant to illuminate the sort of history that significantly contributes to the development and manifestation of such a destructive personality, and it is meant to show how such an unfortunate history might effectively influence the nature of the reactive attitudes expressed towards a wrongdoer. After all, it is not surprising that Harris embarked on such an anti-social path of destruction. Is it reasonable to expect anyone to have done differently? Perhaps. But, can any of us

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223 Watson 135.
224 Watson 135-136.
who might believe in this possibility even come close to relating to such horrendous childhood experiences? That is to say, what sort of positive resources could we reasonably expect a child in Harris' shoes to have recognized and utilized in an effort towards not turning out the way he did and, in turn, doing otherwise?

Admittedly, not every person who undergoes a bad childhood ends up as a bad adult. But, it seems to me that there is usually some mitigating factor, or person who serves as a "source of attachment" that facilitates the development of positive regard for oneself and others. This, in turn, begs the question of whether or not it is reasonable to expect a child to seek, identify, and relate with such a source in an effort towards turning away from becoming a bad adult — all of this after recognizing that one needs such a resource in the first place. In theory, perhaps this level of responsibility is reasonable to expect of a child. But in practice, which is the perspective I am adopting here in light of the practical nature of the reactive attitudes upon which much of my theory is grounded, it seems highly unlikely. This particular debate, however, although interesting and relevant, is outside my scope here.

Lastly, this story is meant to illustrate the possible difference between cases like Harris where social experiences seem to play a greater role in the development of an anti-social personality as compared to the role of nature. This difference is captured in the difference between the terms "sociopath" and "psychopath", where "psychopath" entails a greater reliance on nature for the development of individuals without a conscience. In the case of Harris, therefore, it is not that Harris innately does not understand moral address, it is just that he "exhibits an inversion of moral concern...his ears are not deaf, but his heart is frozen." 225

Perhaps if one is a libertarian, one would expect that, irregardless of the nature

225 Watson 134.
of one’s [childhood] experiences, one always has the option to change one’s path for the “better” or to “thaw out one’s own heart.” Nevertheless, it remains to be the case that Robert Harris, and the likes thereof, functionally stand outside the moral community by virtue of their heart being frozen because of a lack of experiencing and embracing the warmth from caring and responsive relationships. Not surprisingly, such people are incapacitated in some or all respects for ordinary adult interpersonal relationships. Therefore, both psychopaths and “moral outlaws” like Robert Harris will cause the expression of our reactive attitudes to “be nothing more (or less) than a denunciation forlorn of the hope of an adequate reply.”

For this reason, we cannot hold psychopaths morally responsible for their actions any more than we can a young child because we cannot impose on them the duties or expectations we impose on normal adults. We therefore cannot allow them the same rights we allow others, or ever hope to share with them the types of relationships we share with others because they do not, and cannot, participate in a common life with us. They purely are outside the moral community because there is something crucial about morality (i.e., its significance) that they simply do not, and cannot, understand and that the rest of us do, and can, understand. Because of this, they are unable to understand and appreciate why moral concerns might outweigh other concerns (e.g., self-interested concerns) in some situations.

In closing, the basic question that underlies our reactive attitudes and attributions of moral responsibility is if the other person “is sufficiently like his fellows in certain relevant respects.” In order to answer this question, however, determinations must first be made concerning the ways in which people are similar and dissimilar with

226 Watson 134.
227 Duff 199.
228 Murphy 288.
respect to certain specific characteristics, such as moral motivation, moral emotions, practical reason and developmental history. These factors have been considered in this project and I have, accordingly, developed an argument concluding that psychopaths are outside the moral community because of their significant differences in these important factors. I have also established how the differences between psychopathic individuals and normal individuals relate to notions of control and moral responsibility. The essence of these differences revolve around the psychopath's inherent lack of moral feeling, and by his failure to be motivated by any indication of any moral demands, and to act in accordance to these demands expressed by the reactive attitudes of the moral community-at-large. Since a diversity of moral demands permeate normal human relationships, in order to function within this context of "normal human relationships", one must have the capacity to recognize, appreciate and appropriately respond to moral demands. It is this essential capacity that psychopaths lack. This is the primary argument that justifies excusing psychopaths from attributions of moral responsibility.

Since psychopaths are inherently unable to honour their duty to respect the interests and rights of others, they are in no position to claim rights for themselves on grounds of moral merit and desert. Some have therefore argued that it is very implausible to regard them as persons at all, for it is the possession of rights that morally distinguishes persons (objects of respect and dignity in Kant's sense) from animals. Thus, a psychopath is, according to this perspective, more profitably pictured, from the moral point of view, "as an animal."^229

In slight disagreement, I would assert that it is the possession of a moral sense, that gives rise to conscience, which facilitates the possession of rights (in the Kantian

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^229 Murphy 290.
sense) that morally distinguishes persons from animals. Psychopaths, therefore, by virtue of their failure to comprehend moral language, their inability to participate in normal relationships within the moral community, in inability to care about moral responsibilities, and their failure to accept them even if they do recognize them, are morally frozen and dead. In this sense, they certainly are more like animals than normal human beings. Even though psychopaths certainly “know” more about morality than animals, this so called “knowledge” is of no force or effect in the day-to-day practice of their lives. And, as we have seen, the essential aspect and value of moral knowledge is recognizing the significance of applying morality in our day-to-day practices and interactions. After all, what good is having a wealth of knowledge about morality if the recognition and understanding of this one essential aspect is not present when practice demands it?

In light of this, our only responsibility to psychopaths is to control, direct, manage, and manipulate them as to minimize the hurt and despair they can, and will ceaselessly strive to inflict upon the lives of normal people who are inherently able to, at least, try to get along with each other. In turn, when we, as normal people, do not exhibit enough of an effort in this sense, we are held accountable for our actions and are accordingly expected to learn so we can change, and do otherwise in the future by acting more considerately.

In sum, my effort to “get to the heart of psychopathy and moral responsibility” has proven to arrive at a barren destination. That is to say, there is no moral responsibility for psychopaths because there is no heart in psychopaths.
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