

CHAPTER 27: THE SHORTFALL OF EMPATHY

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20. Hare's twenty-point list includes: superficial charm, a sense of the grandiose, a need for stimulation and a predisposition to boredom, pathological lying, the art of manipulating others and deceiving them, the absence of remorse and any guilt feeling, interpersonal coldness, lack of empathy, a parasitic lifestyle, weak emotional control, sexual promiscuity, behavioral problems at an early age (lying, theft, deception, vandalism, cruelty to animals), the absence of long-term realistic goals, impulsiveness, irresponsibility, inability to assume responsibility for one's own actions, a large number of short-term romantic relationships, juvenile delinquency, repeat offenses, and multiple, diverse criminal activities. For the most recent version of this list, see Hare, R. D., *Manual for the Revised Psychopathy Checklist*, 2nd ed., Multi-Health Systems, 2003.
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35. Aside from the orbitofrontal cortex and the amygdala, the paralimbic system includes the anterior cingulate cortex, which regulates emotional states and helps individuals control their impulses and regulate their behavior, as well as the insula, which plays an essential role in

recognizing a violation of social norms, as well as in feelings of anger, fear, empathy, or disgust. But we know that psychopaths don't care about social norms and have a particularly high threshold of disgust, calmly tolerating repugnant smells and images.

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46. Harmon-Jones and his collaborators evaluated the effect of empathy on anger by measuring by EEG the activity of the left frontal cortex, which we know is related to the intensity of anger. In the initial phase of the experiment, the experimenters influenced the degree of empathy of members of two groups of volunteer students (who took part in the experiment one at a time) by asking some to imagine the feelings of a female student suffering from multiple sclerosis, thus inducing increased empathy for her (she was actually an accomplice of the experimenters), and others to consider the sick person's situation in a detached, objective way, which induced only a weak amount of empathy. Soon after, the volunteer student supposedly suffering from MS gave the volunteers either a rude, insulting report, meant to give rise to an aggressive reaction, of an essay these volunteers had written, or a neutral evaluation. The EEG activity of the volunteers was recorded immediately after they received these evaluations. It turned out that the activity of the frontal cortex that normally increases when one is insulted and that accompanies aggression increased markedly among the subjects of the group who were asked to adopt a detached attitude, but was inhibited in those in whom empathy was induced. This experiment is one of those that show most clearly that empathy can directly inhibit the desire to attack. Harmon-Jones, E., Vaughn-Scott, K., Mohr, S., Sigelman, J., & Harmon-Jones, C. (2004). The effect of manipulated sympathy and anger on left and right frontal cortical activity. *Emotion*, 4(1), 95. Quoted in Batson, C. D. (2011). *Op. cit.*, p. 167.