

Are Dictators Psychopaths?

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Abstract: The term *psychopath* is often used to refer to any person who performs acts that are dangerous, volatile, aggressive, and violent. Therefore, are *dictators* like Adolph Hitler and Joseph Stalin necessarily psychopaths? This paper clearly answers that question by providing a summary of what a dictator is, what a psychopath is, and the differences between them.

Keywords: dictator, psychopath, tyranny, sociopath, Hitler, Stalin

I. INTRODUCTION

Are Dictators necessarily psychopaths? The answer is “No.” In most cases they are not. Generally, dictators emerge from family environments different to those that create psychopaths, with different family dynamics (although, as there are degrees of psychopathy, some dictators might exhibit certain psychopathic traits).

II. THE ESSENCE OF PSYCHOPATHY

Psychopathy is an emotional handicap [1]. From a young age, psychopaths grow up missing genuine emotional exchanges [2]. Typically, they are raised under one-way parental pressure, in which their feelings are oppressed and ignored. This is more likely to be perpetrated by the father, or father figure, who is not necessarily abusive but is often two-faced, and only outwardly friendly [3]. The other parent, typically the mother, or mother figure, is also either literally or emotionally unavailable [3]. This parent may be uninterested in mundane family life, pursuing their own interests, immersed in religion, emotionally closed by nature, emotionally unstable or unreliable, or present other issues of this type [4]. As psychopaths have suppressive and superficial communication available, they have no problem talking to others, but they do have difficulty talking about feelings. For when young they repress their true feelings, knowing that these will not be responded to in the ways that they wish. They also carry deeply rooted anger and hostility, developed as reactions to such oppression. Under such a suppressive environment, with no emotional support, they also develop into pathological liars in order to avoid constant pressures [5].

III. PSYCHOPATHY IS NOT THE ONLY CONDITION CAUSED BY THE LACK OF COMMUNICATION IN EARLY YEARS

Psychopathy is only one potential outcome of a lack of communication in early years. The latter could instead lead to the emergence of Asperger’s-like personality traits [6], especially when experienced during the critical period of early childhood, before the child is four years old [7]. Children affected at this stage tend to develop communication difficulties and become inorganic, machine-like characters. They develop obsessive compulsive disorders, fixating on something specific, rather than becoming well-adjusted people able to effectively communicate or to engage with their emotions. It is thought that this focus on a specific thing fills the void created by the lack of attachment [8]. In the case of psychopaths, they instead repress their feelings for themselves, either knowingly or unknowingly. They develop shallow emotions, in particular empathy and guilt, and a constant internal anger, though they are superficially communicative and appear perfectly normal. They are pathological liars who cannot control their inner anger once it is triggered [4] [9] [10].

IV. DICTATORS AND THE AUTHORITARIAN PERSONALITY TYPE

Dictators belong to the authoritarian personality type [11]. People of this type have an obsessive urge to rise in the world [12]. This is imprinted by their parent(s), who implant such seeds either by giving conditional love (proportionate to their child's success) or by exerting high top-down demands through verbal or non-verbal signals and teachings [13][14]. It becomes imperative for the subject to obey the parental expectations, either by following the successful steps of the parent(s) or by attaining a station in society that they were not capable of reaching themselves. In other words, a powerful urge to climb up the social ladder is introduced during the authoritarian individual's (therefore the dictator's) childhood. It is imprinted either by exertion of strict one-way parental control, or by giving and withdrawing love as a skillful means of mind control [12] [13] [14]. As a consequence, authoritarian individuals feel that their existence holds no value unless they live up to parental expectations [15] [16] [17]. They will do literally anything (including even something illegal) to elevate themselves, in order to survive under the dictatorial regime of their parents [18]. With no place to live other than with their families, they have no other choice.

V. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL BASIS OF AUTHORITARIAN UPWARD MOBILITY

Authoritarian individuals (and therefore dictators) are prone to defer to those in a position of higher authority, unconsciously superimposing the ideals of their parents on such people [19] [20]. They also act dominantly towards those of lower status, copying the behaviors of their parents [21]. Other than these urges, their basic personalities vary [22]. They could measure highly in psychopathy (*Putin, Amin, Mao*) [23][24], paranoia (*Pol Pot*) [25], be neglected (*Abe, Jinping, Mussolini*) [26][27][28], overprotected (Jong Un) [29], not express themselves under high demands (*Assad, Duterte, Bolsonaro, Trump*) [30][31][32][33][34], dogmatized and abused (*Stalin*) [35], overprotected and abused (Hitler) [35], and so forth. In general, those who become dictators tend to be raised under oppressive family conditions by parents who are strict and controlling. Though some do challenge this dynamic during their early years, most are quiet and obedient when young. It seems that as they grow older, entering their middle years, they start to manifest the aggression which has been repressed due to the oppressive environment, as Athens point out in his *Violentization Theory* [36]. At the same time, we must be aware that their pathological symptoms are difficult to confirm with conviction; they are obscured by the subject's social successes, the result of their upward mobility and paying of political lip service (while in truth they are concerned only with their own interests, not with other people's happiness).

VI. CONCLUSION: NOT ALL DICTATORS ARE PSYCHOPATHS

To sum up, psychopathic personalities develop under a regime of constant oppressive pressure combined with a lack of emotional support, while dictators represent the much larger category of the authoritarian personality type [37], which can occur in combination with various personality disorders [38]. Therefore, not all dictators are psychopaths. One interesting distinction is that, while psychopaths can be societal troublemakers by attacking others and lying, dictators tend to be successful and to function fairly well in society due to their upward mobility. Success in society is not generally seen in those with personality disorders, which makes it more difficult for the public to identify emerging dictators on this basis. As does dictators' tendency to hide their true nature until they are old enough to seize a position of sufficient power, at which point they can safely do as they please.

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