

What Is a Criminal?

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It is vital to recognize that there are a very few who are real bad guys out there. The vast majority of folks are doing the best they can to make ends meet and get through their day without stepping on the toes of their neighbors. But there are some really evil people out there too. They are hard at work to crush others for fun and profit. This is engrained in their natures.

Just as it is fairly easy to define Human Nature, it is also fairly easy to recognize bad behavior. Just look at kids – they are for the most part little darlings radiating purity and love. But none are perfect; all will from time to time do bad things. Since they are new on the playground of life, they are generally not so skilled in hiding their bad acts as are adults. They are often comically obvious in their attempts to cover what they have done. Poking someone in the eye and hurting them is universally understood to be bad. And folks – children included – recognize when they have done something bad, and are ashamed, and try to hide what they have done. This feeling of guilt in itself indicates that Man is basically good. Folks do know the difference between Right and Wrong. We are all basically on the same team – men and women, boys and girls – and we don't want to hurt our teammates.

And I will belabor this point for a moment. All these terms – *Good, Bad, Evil, Right* and *Wrong* – have meaning only in relation to Human Nature. Each Individual has his own take on what those things mean based on what is important to him or her. Whether the Individual arrives at those importances by reading a book, by acculturation, or by just knowing what he personally likes or dislikes – it is still the Individual who arrives at his or her decision.

Asserting that there are fixed standards of moral behavior is fine – many people are devotedly certain that that is the case. The problem with that position is that few people agree on the specifics, and if they are very strict in insisting that others do agree with them, and they meet up with others who don't agree and are also very strict – there can be trouble. I don't claim to know if there is a fixed definition of morality, but I do have a general idea of what seems to be universally agreed upon from culture to culture, religion to religion, philosophy to philosophy. While the specifics may change from time to time and locale to locale, I think the following *Thou-shall-not's* are enough for us to base our discussion on:

- 1) Lying
- 2) Theft
- 3) Injury
- 4) Enslavement
- 5) Murder

Nobody I've ever run into, or read about likes to be on the receiving end of these things (with the possible exception of Masochists, who most agree are just a little bit crazy). These five activities are generally agreed upon no-no's that most everybody understands. And because folks don't like to experience these things, they rightly figure that other folks are like them in not liking to experience them either. It is Human Nature to interact with ones fellows so as to arrive at accommodations in seeking one's goals without resorting to trickery or force. And because folks are on the same team – the Good Guys – they don't generally do these things. With one's fellows, it is not normal to use trickery or force to gain one's ends – that is outside Human Nature and therefore wrong.

But there are those few among us who do not seem to know the difference between Right and Wrong. They can do the most heinous of acts without the slightest feeling of guilt. They are categorized as *Sociopaths*, or *Psychopaths* by psychiatry. There is an excellent list of their characteristics at www.mcafee.cc/Bin/sb.html

based on work of H. Cleckley and R. Hare (both authorities in the field). I will restate them – reordered and slightly tweaked for my purposes:

- 1) They look normal.
- 2) They have a very high opinion of themselves, and are contemptuous of those who don't understand them.
- 3) They are incapable of feeling guilt or remorse, since they do not see anything wrong with what they do – no matter the damage to others.
- 4) They are very authoritarian.
- 5) They are paranoid and secretive.
- 6) They seek out situations where their tyrannical behavior will be tolerated, condoned, or admired – so they are rarely in trouble with the law themselves.
- 7) Their goal is to enslave their victims and exercise despotic control over every aspect of their victim's lives.
- 8) They are incapable of real human attachment to another, but they have an emotional need to justify their crimes, and therefore seek their victim's respect, gratitude and love.
- 9) Their ultimate goal is to create a willing victim.
- 10) They may state readily that their goal is to rule the world.

When their acts are discovered, they are rightly dealt with as Criminals by society. (As an aside – *Victimless Crime* is a misnomer. There are far too many people languishing in prison for activities which have no victims, other than perhaps themselves. It should not be against the law to be stupid, or make stupid decisions.) And I wish to make a differentiation between these Sociopaths, Psychopaths, or as they have also been termed, *Predators*, and common Criminals. These are very *uncommon* Criminals, in that their deviance from the norm and their reliance on Force to achieve their goals is as constant as it is not normal – it is almost against Human Nature. The average Criminal sitting in jail is not the predatory monster described in 1 to 10 above. There is a chance that the average Criminal might give up his reliance on Force to get what he wants; the Predator won't change – his activities are compulsive and continual.

Any of the institutions of Man, which by their stated purposes must use Force on others, will attract the Predator. It is within those publicly accepted institutions that the Predator can more freely operate. Therefore, force-based institutions should be closely monitored to avoid predatory methodologies from permeating the whole of the institution and infecting society as a whole.

So, once again, I define my terminology not based on local laws or customs, but based on my understanding of Human Nature. In this case criminal activities are those which use unprovoked hurtful trickery and force instead of agreement and accommodation to reach their ends. Those pernicious activities which are abhorrent to most people are criminal. All who use Lying, Theft, Injury, Enslavement, or Murder against their fellows are Criminals, and those few who act as habitual Predators, are the worst of the lot.