

**A Critical Study on**

**How the Psychopathological Construct of**

**Antisocial Personality and Psychopathy**

**Has Imploded.**

**The Implosion of the Construct.**

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## **INDEX**

<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>RATIONALE – BACKGROUND</b>	<b>4</b>
INTRODUCTION	4
<b>ANTISOCIAL PERSONALITY’S CONSTRUCT: BIRTH, DEVELOPMENT AND</b>	
<b>IMPLOSION</b>	<b>8</b>
BIRTH AND DEVELOPMENT	8
IMPLOSION	17
<b>BIBLIOGRAPY</b>	<b>19</b>

## ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the *construct* of *antisocial personality* and *behaviors*. It is proved (with: *empirical studies*; and, *logic arguments*) how this *construct* imploded.

Lilienfeld (1994) gave an example of this. The author, in fact, discovered a *positive correlation* **between** persons that were diagnosed *psychopaths* and/or *antisocial* **and** the frequency of *altruistic* and *pro-social behaviours*. Instead of inferring the *incoherence* of the *paradigm*, he elaborated an *illogical auxiliary assumption* to save it. He suggested to use, like *diagnostic criterion* for the *antisocial behaviour*, the *pro-social behavior*!!

In other words, this *psychopathological construct* arrived to have an ***incoherent*** logical structure: **P AND NOT P**. Thus, this construct is not possible to be **either** corroborated **or** refuted. It does not comply with the *scientific reasoning*.

This is a typical example of the *incoherent* and *illogical reasoning* that dominates inside *psychopathological constructs*.

## Rationale – Background

### *Introduction*

The *Paradigm of Antisocial Personality and Behaviour* has always been a very weak and misused *construct* since the beginning. It is a good example of *how* the *psychopathological constructs* became a “modern scientific” *form / manifestation* of the *Human Superstition*. Ordronaux (1873) was the first author, who became aware about this. Indeed, he stated that this concept is “... an attempt to return to belief in demon possession of the Middle Ages and a revision to superstition”<sup>1</sup>. From that time, the number of the researchers, who criticized this *construct* and “how” it is used, increased.

*Exempli gratia*, Kinberg (1946) said that the concept of psychopath “should be abrogated as theoretically unsatisfactory, practically misleading and destructive to scientific thinking”. Karpman (1948) stated that it is “a myth ... a nonexistent entity”. Vaillant regarded this *construct* to be a *misleading stereotype*.

Blackburn (1988) affirmed: “it must be concluded that the current concept of psychopathic or antisocial personality remains «a mythical entity» ...”<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> This quotation has also been done by McCord and McCord (1964).

<sup>2</sup> Blackburn’s critics were caused mainly by the heterogeneity of the *construct* of psychopathy. Indeed, the latter includes a large amount of different types!

Calvaldino (1998) suggested that this *construct* is nothing more than “a moralism masquerading as medical science”. He updated **both** the Blackburn’s critics **and** the Ordronaux’s critics. The *former*, indeed, admitted that: “such a concept is little more than a moral judgment masquerading as clinical diagnosis”. The *latter* argued<sup>3</sup> that: “the only disease to which the moral nature is subject is *sin*”.

Toch (1998) observed that the term was a form of negative counter-transference.

Shadish *et al.* (1999) underlined how the *process of validation* of the *psychopathological construct* has never been completed.

Cooke, Michie and Hat (2006), reported how this *construct* is quite controversial in the *academic literature*. In the same year, the present writer presented and illustrated “how” the *construct*: imploded on itself; was lacking in any scientific *criteria*; and, could be explained with a more *Empirical Theory* that was able to abandon these *modern forms of Superstitions*.

Although all these critics were well proved and based, they were neglected and refuted by the *establishment*. The latter, according to the Kuhn’s theory (1962; 1970), was committed to defend the *Paradigm*. The critical views were: denied; ridiculed; not taught. The researchers, who dared to show interest in them, were actively: dissuaded; discouraged; isolated. Their studies and works were hindered. They were also attacked

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<sup>3</sup> Against the *moral insanity*, which was the *antisocial personality*’s name that was used at his time.

with *argumenta ad personam*. The latter is a *strategy* that is largely used by *psychologists* to defend their *inconsistent constructs* (Epis, 2011/2015).

So, the *establishment*, instead of considering those critics and improving its *constructs*, has weakened and weakened them, meantime.

For instance, Hill, Murray and Thorley (1986) warned their colleagues that: "... psychopathic personality is an intriguing tale of confusion and inconsistency".

Blackburn (1988) made the same critics with "softer" and "more indirect" words. He advised clearly that the *construct* had a very weak point. According to him, "the taxonomic error of confounding different universes of discourse" was present in the *construct*. This error led to create "a diagnostic category that embraces a variety of deviant personalities. Such a category is not a meaningful focus for theory and research, nor can it facilitate clinical communication and prediction".

Nevertheless, as I told *supra* (above), the *establishment* refused to consider all those warnings. Instead of working for decreasing the heterogeneity of the *construct*, they increased it as much as they could!! At the end, the *construct* became so heterogeneous to include two *opposite* and *contradictory* types in the same *set*: the *criminal psychopath*; and, the *non-criminal psychopath*.

In other words, several psychologists put into the same *set*: *serial killers* (such as *Jack the Ripper*) committed to criminal activities; and, people (such as Mather Teresa of Calcutta) who, on the contrary, were committed to *pro-social* behaviours!! Some

criminologists attempted to reduce all the *violations* of the *Criminal Law* like a manifestation of *psychopathy*!!

Please, do not think that they were joking. I have also thought it (in first instance), but they were not joking at all. They were strongly “devoted” and convinced in *what* they were saying. All their career and social prestige came from that!!

So, the present writer had to recognize the self-evident *implosion* of the *psychopathological construct* for the reasons that you can read *infra* (below).

## Antisocial Personality's Construct: Birth, Development and Implosion

Before explaining the reasons of the *implosion* of the *construct*, a *brief résumé* (about the “lifespan” of the *antisocial personality's paradigm*) is given. It will be very useful to understand: **both**, the *biases* that work in the *creation* and in the *confirmation* of the *psychopathological paradigms*; **and**, how *superstitions* can even appear “scientific beliefs”, once they are masked to *psychopathological constructs*!!

### *Birth and Development*

The first *label*, which described the *antisocial personality and behaviours*, was: “*manie sans delire*” (Pinel, 1801). Then, this *construct* was called: “*moral derangement*” or “*derangement in the moral faculties*” (Rush, 1812); “*moral insanity*” (Pritchard, 1835). At the end, the label has become: *antisocial personality disorder* (e.g., DSM IV – R); *psychopathy* (e.g., Lange-Eichbaum, 1931; Henderson, 1939; English Mental Health Act, 1983; Cleckley, 1976; Hare, 1980); *sociopathic personality disorder* or *asocial personality disorder* (e.g., Gelder M., Gath D. and Mayou R., 1983); *dissocial personality disorder* (e.g., ICD-10<sup>4</sup>, F 60.2); and so on.

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<sup>4</sup> The aim of the International Classification Diseases (ICD) is to promote an international uniformity in the classification of the ailments. Its origin was in the work of Jacques Bertillon, who produced the *Bertillon Classification of Causes of Death* at the International Statistical Institute in Chicago. The latter became the *Manual of International Statistical*



If you want, you can invent another name!! We need it!!

This *construct* is a good example of *how* the *psychopathological discourse* is completely dominated by: plenty of *biases*; a lot of *fallacies*; trickeries such as that one of *nominalism*; and, an absent *epistemological awareness* and *reflection* (Epis, 2011/2015).

The first *label*, which described the *antisocial personality and behaviours*, was: “*manie sans delire*” (Pinel, 1801). Pinel wanted to explain the behaviour of some people who were: *violent* and *social dangerous*; committed to criminal activities; *cruel* and *callous*; inclined to kill the others. As he could not explain this *phenomenum*, he used the *ancient trickery* of the *nominalism*. He gave a *name* to *something* that he was not able to understand (at all). So, he created the *illusion* to have explained and understood *something* that he did not!! Bateson (1972) called this trickery: *explanatory principle*. Actually, *psychopathology* (... most of the times ...) is nothing more and nothing less than: an *explanatory principle*; and/or, the ancient trickery of *nominalism*.

This point is pretty important to understand: **both**, one of the *intellectual dishonesties* (*a là* Lakantos) that belong to the *clinical psychologists*; **and**, how *Psychopathology* became a new *set* for gathering different forms of the modern *Superstitions*.

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*Classification of Diseases, Injuries and Causes of Death (ICD)*. In the 1948, the World Health Organization (WHO / OMS) assumed the responsibility for revising the ICD every 10 years.

So ..., I will give you a brief example, ... before proceeding with our *discourse*.

Do you know *Treponema Pallidum*? It is a *micro-organism* that causes an *infection* to the *Central Nervous System*. Well ..., it happened that the *human beings* (before discovering this *microbe*) considered “mental ill” the people who were suffering from this *infection*!! This *micro-organism* (**alone**) was the responsible of the 15% of all the psychiatric population. This is how, *superstition* works. A *physical concrete problem* (the **real cause**) is neglected and transferred to an *inexistence dimension*: a “*thought’s illness*” (a **false** and **fabricated cause**)<sup>5</sup>!?!? There is **not** any difference **from** believing in *psychopathology* **to** believing in *demons’ possession*. The *psychosocial mechanisms*, which underlie and lead those *phenomena*, are exactly the same. They are used to explain *whatever* human beings are not able to explain, using the *trickery* of the *nominalism*!! So, nowadays, instead of calling a *Shaman* and/or a *Priest*, people call a more “modern and fashionable” psychologist!!!! But, there is **no** change, except (... maybe ...) that *Shamans* and *Priests* were better than Psychologists!!

Oh God ..., save us from psychologists!

So ..., now you know “what” *psychopathology* is and “how” *psychopathology* works and explains the *phenomena*. Therefore, we can proceed in our *speech*.

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<sup>5</sup> This happens also when the **real cause** is social.

Although Pinel used *psychopathology*, like an *explanatory principle*, for explaining the *violent and cruel behaviour*, soon this *construct* moved away **from** the *objective facts* (the *criminal activities*; the *social dangerousness*; and the *cruel behaviours*) **to** landing at “ghostly and eerie traits” that allows any kind of *abuse, misuse* and *interpretation*.

Indeed, this *construct* was re-baptized: *moral derangement* (Rush, 1812); *moral insanity* (Pritchard, 1835); ... and it ended to include *whoever* acted in a different manner from the others. It was immediately declined to wide *abuses* and *misuses*.

So, as you remember, Ordonaux (1873) had to report *how* it was an attempt to mask *superstitious ideas* for *science*.

According to Prichard (1835), *moral insanity* (at the end; and, behind the usual *doctrinal* and *technical words* and *jargon*) was just to perform: “the common actions of life in a different way from that usually practised” by the majority. So ..., *singular*, and/or *eccentric*, and/or *wayward* persons were all considered *moral insane*. Therefore, *moral insanity* showed clearly another aspect of the *true nature of psychopathology*: *to be an instrument of homologation and social control a là Foucault. To be an instrument to force everyone: to be an uncritical lemming; to follow the flock like a sheep. If you do not follow uncritically the flock, ... you are “insane”!!*

It is exactly *how* it happened in the Past: the *same substance* with *different forms*. People, who do not believe in the *superstitions/beliefs* of the *Majority*, nowadays are

accused to be *mentally insane*, whereas, in the Past, they were accused to be *heretics*, etc...!!

Do you remember Socrates? Actually, he is a very good example.

Oleson (1998) defines Socrates like an *eccentric* Sophist. Although he presented (in a very peaceful manner) *original ideas*, Socrates was considered “the most dangerous man in Athens” (Lindsay, 1918). He was accused of: corrupting the young people of Athens; introducing new Gods; etc... . At the end, he was executed for those false “irrelevant and untrue rumours”. If you think that he was an isolated case, you do not have any idea, how much you are wrong<sup>6</sup>!!

Indeed, most of the peaceful men of this World, who have dared to present a mere *original* and/or *different idea* from those that were wanted and supported by *establishment*, have been always persecuted. “Scientists and statesmen alike have been persecuted by established authority. Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Nelson Mandela ...” as they simply stood “against the powers of established orthodoxy when they disagreed with the existing order” (Eysenck, 1995)<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Other very famous similar cases are: Giordano Bruno; Thomas More; etc... .

<sup>7</sup> “Research funds are suddenly cut off, even though promised. Irrelevant and untrue rumours are spread to impugn the offender. He may lose his job, or at least fail to be promoted. He may be barred from the library and other facilities; privileges of all kinds may be withdrawn. In extreme cases, he may be suffering bodily attacks, his family may be threatened, bombs may be planted under his car, he may be burnt at the stake – it is difficult to list all the sanctions orthodoxy can muster to assert its right to be regarded as guardian of truth” (Eysenck, 1995).

Oleson (1998) supported the idea of Eysenck (1995) using the studies of Ellis (1927) who argued: “that society sought to imprison its great men at every opportunity”.

So..., this is *how* the majority of times, these *constructs* are used. Rarely, are they used against *serial killers* such as *Jack the Ripper*!! The latters are not as common as *media* attempt to make people believe!! Actually, they are pretty unusual. Those *few cases* are used by *Power* to create *social panic*. This is a good *mean* to: **both**, make people believe in the “rightness” of those *superstitions*; **and**, make people renounce their *rights* and *civil liberties* to “get” *security* (*a là* Bauman)!?!?

Although Milton (1981) stated that the notion of *moral insanity*, nowadays, has few in common with the *construct* of *antisocial personality* and *psychopathy*, he is right **only**, **and only if**, we compare *moral insanity* with the definitions that were given by: the DSM-IV-R; and, some National Acts such as the *English Mental Health Acts* 1983. On the contrary, he is hugely wrong if we compare it with the *everyday practice* that has been done by psychologists and clinicians.

Indeed, only the *formers* require the presence of *objective criminal activities*. The *latters*, on the contrary, have developed (in the *practice*; and, in the *literature*) a *construct* that is used wider and wider than Prichard’s *moral insanity*.

Whereas *moral insanity* was (... at least ...) connected with an *objective behaviour* (*to act in a different manner from majority*), the *construct* of *antisocial personality* and *psychopathy* has lost any link with: **both**, *objective facts*; **and**, *criminal behaviours*.

Psychologists and clinicians reduced it to be a mere *set of personality traits*. As *personality traits* are also very *arbitrary* and *weak* creations, the *construct* came back to be an *incongruent, contradictory, unfalsifiable* theory. In practice, *personality traits* allow any kind of *interpretation* and *misinterpretation* without any limit. So ..., the *construct* bended to any sort of *abuse* and *misuse*. It was not a case, indeed, that two *opposite* and *incompatible* types were originated by the same *construct*: the *criminal psychopaths*; and, the *non-criminal psychopaths*.

Whereas the *formers* are committed to *cruel* and *criminal activities*; the *latters* are *normal, pro-social* persons, who are well integrated in the society. Just to give an example, Mather Teresa of Calcutta was considered a *non-criminal psychopath* by several clinicians.

This led to a *construct* that was unable to satisfy any *principle of demarcation*<sup>8</sup>.

Indeed, it was unable to satisfy **both** the *test of validity* **and** the *principle of falsification*. Any kind of behaviour (**both** *antisocial*; **and** *pro-social*) was used to confirm the diagnoses, once they were done!! So, they could not be *verified* and *checked* with any *contra-factual evidence*. In other words, once an *arbitrary diagnosis*

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<sup>8</sup> The *problem of demarcation* focuses on the *method of scientific investigation*. In particular, it refers to the *criterion* that is used to mark the boundary **between** what *science* is **and** what *science* is not. *Exempli gratia*, this *criterion* was: the *induction* for the *Empiricism*; the *test of validity* per the *Logical Positivism*; and the *principle of falsification* for Popper.

is done by a psychologist, any behaviour is *retrospectively interpreted* to be a *confirmation* of the diagnosis itself!!

This was one of the reasons that made some researchers take critical positions on this *construct*, as I wrote in the introduction.

As Kanner said, at the end of the *circus* and *pseudo-scientific jargons* (which are used by psychologists to making their *superstitions* look like science): “a psychopath is somebody you don’t like”.

Please, note: I do not deny the existence of *crimes* and *criminals*. I believe: they must be punished. But, I *fight* the attempt to re-introduce a new “hunting to the witches” *à Malleus Maleficarum*<sup>9</sup>.

An evidence of how psychologists misuse this *construct* is given by the necessity, which most Parliaments had, to limit with *law* its application<sup>10</sup>. Nevertheless, psychologists did not care about *law*<sup>11</sup>!! So, they extended widely and widely the application of their *construct*. Therefore, more and more persons committed to *pro-social* behaviours were considered *psychopaths*.

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<sup>9</sup> The *Malleus Maleficarum* was the book, which was published by two Dominican Monks (Kraemer and Sprenger) in 1487 for “diagnosing” the “witches”. It was the “precursor” of DSM!!

<sup>10</sup> Some Nations (such as England) request an *objective criminal activity*. Other Nations (such as Scotland) deny the existence of this “mental illness”.

<sup>11</sup> There are plenty of examples that support this.

This led to the creation of a very *contradictory construct*. Some authors split the *paradigm* in two different *constructs*: the *antisocial personality* (which kept a connection with an *objective criminal activity*); and, the *psychopathy* (which was connected only with *personality traits*).

Other authors kept a unique *paradigm*. So, *antisocial personality* and *psychopathy* became two different degree of the same “mental illness”.

The increment of the number of the *diagnostic scales* increased the contradictions among the diagnoses. Most of the time, the diagnoses are made only on “sensations and feelings”, which *clinicians* have at the moment without using any *scale*. This phenomenon was proved during the *hearings* of the English *Mental Health Tribunal*. During the *contra-examination*, it was proved that the diagnoses were done without considering any *diagnostic scale* (e.g., DSM-IV-R; PCL-R). They were made only using a vague and unclear “clinical experience”. The *latter* is an “elegant word”, a jargon, which *clinicians* use, to say that they decided without following any criterion, but their feelings as they had in that moment!!!!

Most of the times, the *scales* are used only *ex post*. Before, *clinicians* decide if somebody is psychopath or not. Then, *clinicians* create, with a *retrospective interpretation* (*a là Weick*), a *connection* **between** the *factual elements* **and** the *theoretical items* of the *construct*, forcing the comparison and assessment.



Epis (2011/2015) used this *construct* to prove *how* the *functional fixation*, the absence of any *epistemological awareness* and *reflection*, the *confirmation bias*, and other *fallacies*, work within the *psychopathological constructs*.

### ***Implosion***

A very interesting example, of how the *paradigm* imploded, is given by Lilienfeld (1994). This is just an example. But, endless other examples can be given.

Lilienfeld (1994) arrived to formulate and to support a theory with an *incoherent logical structure*: **P AND NOT P**.

The author discovered a *positive correlation* **between** persons that were diagnosed *psychopaths* and/or *antisocial* with the existing *scales* **and** the frequency of *altruistic* and *pro-social behaviours*.

Instead of inferring *incoherence*, and/or a *contradiction*, inside the *Paradigm*, he elaborated a “wonderful” *auxiliary assumption* to save it.

He concluded that “the assessment of psychopathy might need to incorporate behaviors that are heroic or altruistic (e.g. helping individual ... )” as in their absence a “substantial subset of psychopaths (*who*) perform frequent pro social behaviors” could not be detected and they may result “false-negative”.

In other words, he suggested like *diagnostic criterion* for the *antisocial behaviour*, the *pro-social behaviour*!! He made an *incoherent* and *illogical reasoning* that can be synthesized with the *logical model*: **P AND NOT P**.

This is an example of how these constructs do not comply with: **both** the *scientific reasoning*; **and** an *epistemological examination and reflection*.

Although the strong *establishment's* blind effort to save the *Paradigm*, the *Paradigm* imploded.

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