Tryptophan depletion as a potential “treatment” for psychopaths

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Psychopathy is a condition that used to be present in approximately 1% of the population¹ when first described, but which saw a rise² in recent years and is characterised by shallow affect, crime, mobbing³, and other devastating actions that can lead their targets or victims to death either by health deterioration, financial losses and homelessness, but even violence in the form of assault or rape. Like everything else, psychopathy can be predicted, but it is extremely difficult to sympathise or empathise with the psychopath, and rehabilitation is the main course of action when it comes to dealing with the aftermath of an encounter with a psychopath. Various theories tend to justify psychopathy whilst others tend to condemn psychopathy, as a serious moral issue for humanity. Due to both of these reasons, it is essential to prevent psychopathy to begin with, and this can only be achieved through medical treatment.

Main traits of the psychopathic “personality”

Psychopathy by definition is neither a mental nor personality disorder, and in fact the psychopath lacks a personality, hence cannot be managed as a mental illness, through therapy, and it is important not to confuse it with personality disorders, because these are in fact manageable with cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). An example lies in antisocial personality disorders, that are very treatable with CBT and other behavioural techniques, but all these fail in the psychopath, being that it is not a mental illness.

The main characteristic of the psychopath is an inability to think intelligently, which makes the actions of such population pretty predictable and yet inexplicable; another trait is the lack of morals, which although can be also observed in the antisocial personality, is more evident, and more highlighted in the psychopath, compared to the “minor” ways the antisocial personality demonstrates these traits, yet, it is important not to misdiagnose antisocial

personality disorders with the psychopath, as again, psychopathy is not a mental illness. The main difference between the psychopath and antisocial personality disorders is a demarcated lack of intelligence, and the inability to seek for win-win situations, psychopaths are very destructive compared to antisocial personalities who simply dislike human interaction and thus are innocuous when unprovoked. The psychopath is fearful and unable to think as a normal person does, due to the lack of intelligence, and in fact the neurobiology of the psychopath is unlike that of any other healthy or unhealthy individual. The individual with the condition is not able to suffer, unlike what the literature claims, and in fact feels a rush when inducing suffering in others and unlike the literature claims the psychopath is not intelligent, is not an effective communicator, but adopts disturbing communication means, communication from a psychopath induces exhaustion, because it is inconclusive and unintelligent. The psychopath adopts lose-lose mentality, due to its lack of intelligence, inability to cope with intelligent discourse, recognise mistakes, simply understand what a mistake is, admittance to one's or another's mistakes and think. On the upside, the psychopath can seem fun to be around, but it is always at the expense of others and has a tendency to suscite sympathy and empathy in others towards them, but it is dishonest, and thus unpleasant in the long term. The psychopath feels no pain, and in fact feels too much pleasure; likewise, the psychopath is not naturally psychotic, other than displaying narcissistic grandiosity, which however, is accompanied by malignancy and violence, yet these misdiagnoses are very common. The narcissistic personality is susceptible to behavioural therapy, as is any other mental health disorder characterised by disruptive habits, but not the psychopath, the psychopath has increased serotonin activity compared to any other subjects. Another typicity of the psychopath is pretending to suffer from schizophrenia, other mental disorders, and even neurological disorders. This doesn't exclude the fact that these conditions could occur comorbidly, but it is most likely an act of manipulation and dishonesty rather than actual occurrence, again to

suscitate empathy in its audience for wrongdoing which is again confirmed as a support to the grandiosity.

Serotonin excess in psychopathy and excessive grandiosity

A serotonin excess prevents the psychopath from feeling any guilt or remorse towards the irrational actions, however, is accompanied by a lack of intelligence. Although no treatment for empathy is available other than behavioural, treatment for excessive delusions of grandeur could be addressed with a serotonin depletion regime, particularly “tryptophan depletion”, in which the state of grandiose dreams could be reduced. Tryptophan depletion can be used to reduce these delusions, but not necessarily would treat the condition. The lack of intelligence still remains an incredible boundary that needs to be addressed and thus rehabilitation and reformation are important, particularly the lack of logic which is typical of the condition. Nevertheless, serotonin depletion could suscite sadness and a depressed-like state, which may favour empathisation towards others; therapy in psychopathy is not helpful particularly after the subject has reached a particular “mature” age, due to the dishonesty being present. Serotonin depletion is a very drastic emergency measure that could be employed in attacks of rage, i.e. in prevention, perhaps following a serious complaint of violent conduct, assault, rape, or damage to private property by a victim, instead of ignoring the complaints and allowing the presentation of negative outcomes.

Pharmacological therapy remains a danger in psychopathy

Pharmacological therapy remains a danger since psychopathy is undetected nor always diagnosed. Many psychopaths offend and are free, whilst as we noticed recently, a few of them even accessed jobs related to the law profession, the courtrooms, and policing which have rendered the job of psychologists and other practitioners pretty difficult, whilst many psychopaths infiltrate companies, businesses and sabotage them from the inside, some are even owners of businesses, although it’s difficult for that type of “entrepreneur” to see long term

success. Although this paper is not written to empathise with psychopathy, treatment of the psychopath, particularly the non-diagnosed one, can prevent crime. Of course, once the psychopath has committed a crime, it is no use to adopt pharmacological treatment, but it could help in preventing further victimisation. Avoidance by potential targets (the majority of the population) is always the best prophylaxis against individuals affected by psychopathy, whereby boundary setting may be ineffective in this case, being that the psychopath is affected by delusions of grandeur and greatness which simply are irrational and unrealistic. Due to their lack of intelligence, the dangers posed by the psychopath should not be underestimated and this is why prevention could help removing that harm. When a company is at loss due to the psychopath it is best to have measures in place to contain damages, instead of letting go of workers and not addressing the situation.

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