

RECIDIVISM, THE COMPULSIVE CRIMINAL-MENTALITY,
AND AMERICA'S NEEDED SOLUTION. (Maybe, You'll
Really Understand This Time.)



Talib Y. Rasheed
(C. Anthony Taylor)

FOREWORD

2

When I began to write this piece, I was four months away from beginning my thirty-second (32nd) consecutive year of imprisonment. I began with the thought that it would be my last writing on recidivism while I was in prison. I have approached this tragic phenomenon from several angles under four or five different titles because one booklet/pamphlet may not have appealed to the mind and eye of everyone.

In general, prisoners nation-wide have commented to the distributor that my work has been eye opening and given them insights that nothing else has. I say to each of you that insight is only the beginning, and that you must strive with all your heart to understand and outgrow the forces of recidivism in you.

All that I have experienced and learned has led me to the conclusion that most recidivist are victims of a lack of self-understanding, self-knowledge, and self-determination. These deficits in character make them prone to be driven (seemingly helplessly) to continue to engage in crime and the creation of more and more victims in society. With this understanding, all that I have written is intended not only to reduce recidivism and criminalization, but just as importantly, victimization, because I always--with every stroke of the pen and tapping of a typewriter key--bear the suffering of victims in mind.

In April 2008, Congress and President George Bush legalized the Second Chance Act. I do believe that they see a true need to reduce recidivism and the revolving door syndrome of the State and Federal prison systems. However, I have read the Second Chance Act, and think it falls short of tactically and strategically doing what is necessary to achieve its intended goals. I do not criticize the intent, but merely point out its lack of insight and understanding of the real forces of recidivism. What we need, in addition to a Second Chance Act, is a Real Chance Act. People have to be offered insights, understanding, and knowledge that gives them a real chance to save themselves and redeem their lives from the compulsive criminal-mentality.

All that I have written on recidivism is geared toward giving prisoners a real chance to understand and change, i.e., (literally), free themselves and drop out of the ranks that violate and create more victims in society.

Every felon must realize that they must give themselves a real chance if the Second Chance Act is to have any true worth and value, and this, too, is what Politicians and the whole of America must realize. There is no Second Chance without a Real Chance attached to it. Let us all move forward with this awareness.

"The Second Chance Act has to be complimented by a Real Chance Consciousness, or it will become no more than the last chance failure of hundreds of thousands..."

Talib Y. Rasheed
(C. Anthony Taylor)

RECIDIVISM, THE COMPULSIVE CRIMINAL-MENTALITY, AND AMERICA'S NEEDED SOLUTION. (Maybe, You'll Really Understand This Time.)

3

The majority of recidivist in America's prisons today, as well as their victims in society, are casualties of a war that has taken place throughout the history of civilization and its social relationships. And when I say relationships I mean the primary-relationship also, that is, the relationship each individual has with him or herself.

This war, characterized by the realities of crime and punishment, has an unperceived and greatly misunderstood, therefore, unacknowledged aspect: The conflict between healthy, constructive human forces and unhealthy, socially destructive neurotic forces within the psyche of all recidivist.

The word recidivist that we get from the French word recidiviste is derived from the Latin term recidivus, recidere, and means to 'fall back', as we use it--to fall back into a life of sociopathic thinking and crime. The key word here is fall. It is defined as falling back, not choosing to go back. So if we, as a society, are interested in a genuine solution to this serious problem that plagues us, then we have to acknowledge a more realistic insight, understanding, and approach to combatting recidivism, and this we includes the recidivist as well. They have to be encouraged, as well as committed within themselves, to strengthening their healthy, constructive human forces and weakening the influence and grip of unconstructive, unhealthy, neurotic forces.

Crime, in its most basic definition, can be defined as an illegal method of goal achievement. Sometimes, it is not necessarily immoral just because it is illegal.⁴ But what we are dealing with here is what causes individuals to repeatedly fall back into the use of illegal methods that they are obviously unsuccessful at, and that obviously cause great harm to millions of undeserving victims. It is the pain and suffering of these victims that cries out for a more rational and effective approach to reducing the statistics and tragedy of human suffering. If society allows its pain, suffering, and loss to do no more than incarcerate and arouse feelings of anger and vindictiveness then it, too, has failed to live up to its constructive and healthy human potentials as a collective. The result will simply be more and more recidivist and more and more hopelessly imprisoned individuals who have no real idea of how to end the vicious cycle, or change their lives.

America entered the year 2008 with 2.3 million people physically incarcerated. It was reported in the Indianapolis Star Newspaper that States spent 50 billion on jails and prisons in 2007, and the Federal government spent 5 billion.

The idea that rehabilitation rest on the successful acquisition of job skills, basic education, drug treatment, and social support networks has long been a myth. Hundreds of thousands of incarcerated felons come from homes with well-trained, educated, decent parents and family backgrounds. Hundreds of thousands of others come from broken homes, uneducated, unskilled parents, and dysfunctional, non-supportive family backgrounds. So, what is the common element that puts both types on the path of criminal living and locked up within the confines of jails and prisons? How do people from different ends of a graphic line end up converging at the same unfortunate point?

Thousands of historically well-to-do people say they didn't need to commit crimes; their family wasn't poor. Thousands of poor felons say poverty led them into crime. We know, however, that crime is not a direct influence or outgrowth of poverty, because most poor people don't rob, kill, and steal. If, then, we eliminate the social backgrounds in terms of economics as the deciding factor in both individuals' criminal orientation, then where do we turn to get our answer as to how, from completely different angles, they converge at the same point on a line?

*smoking marijuana, for example

We find the answer by examining how their social backgrounds influenced their emotional development. Criminality is the egocentric expression of unhealthy and unproductive psycho-social conditions within the personality. So, we have to turn to the condition of one's personality to find a specific approach to solving their problem with crime and recidivism.

In the case of the well-to-do family background recidivists, thousands say they only committed crimes for the excitement. What they mean by this is that adrenaline rushes and heightened emotional states made them feel alive, and that feeling of aliveness became desirable to them in a sociopathically addictive way. The question then arises, "What about normalcy made them feel unalive or bored to death?"

First, we have to take a sudden leap into the depths of this reality. We need to imagine that at some point during the course of these type of recidivists' childhood growth and development their ability to freely express the emotional drives and passions within them were blocked or repressed by some type of self-doubt, threat, fear, or anxiety. The blocking of their natural emotional drives and passions resulted in the feeling of being separated from their own true spirit, i.e., the life-force within them. This created, symptomatically, a deadening of their souls. The reality, then, is that all the mental processes involved in crime gives them the emotional impulses and, unfortunately, compulsions that make them feel alive with energy and power. Because of their normally leadened emotional state, it is this aliveness that they irrationally and unproductively crave. They are only looking at it on the surface when they say excitement. In other, more acceptable and normal ways they may even be afraid to express their genuine emotions, for whatever reasons related to the past. However, and whatever, these past conditions may have been, in order to free themselves from their criminality and recidivism, they have to open up to normal, free channels of emotional expression within themselves. This will empower them to connect to the true spirit of their self, and that connection to the center of their own true being is what will restore their emotional intelligence and life's passions without the heightened and exaggerated need for sociopathic excitement.

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In the case of recidivism from the poor family background, similar internal conditions exist, but this type does not seek excitement as a superficial way to feel alive. He seeks glory, social-prestige, and material possessions as means of artificial self-value and feeling worthy of social acceptance. The condition of poverty, ignorance instead of family education, and poor social networks and relations have contributed mostly to his being robbed of the chance to acknowledge genuine self-esteem and, therefore, he has been unable to feel confident in himself regarding conventional goals and achievements in society. By the time he reaches early teenhood, the pain of having no self-esteem and confidence begin to weigh heavily on his mind and emotions. It has already undermined his performance in school and other pre-adolescent activities. He now sees himself approaching teenhood with no feeling of vibrant self-worth, no real confidence, no education, and no profitable working skills. In addition, there are already a number of criminal influences surrounding him in his environment. This exposes his vulnerable character to overwhelming temptations. The perceived pressures of mature teenhood begin to put pressures on his mind. He has to give himself a sense of self-worth and value. Since it has not been acknowledged naturally, he has to pursue artificial methods: Power, Prestige, and Material Possessions. It is unlikely that his parents or single mother with more children can afford expensive, name-brand shoes and clothing. The commercial, consumer society, however, has convinced him that he must have everything expensive and name-brand in order to be somebody, or to not be perceived as nobody. A dilemma grips his mind. Since he lacks the self-esteem, confidence, knowledge, education, and working skills to get a job that pays

a sufficient salary to meet his wants and needs, i.e., desires, the only other way he can earn or accumulate the adequate finances is through some form of illegitimate or criminal means. In his condition, no matter what or how he appears to be on the surface, and with the enticement of expediency, he sees no alternative other than crime. He cannot live with the feeling of being perceived as worthless to others, nor can he endure without some means of keeping his own negative feelings about himself repressed. He, therefore, is in a classic avoidance-avoidance dilemma, and has little freedom (what he feels as practically none) to choose the lesser of two evils. What he feels inside, despite others' tendency to not understand, is hell. And for him to choose to stay in that hell would be analogous to someone allowing themselves to drown when they believe they can reach safety by grabbing the leg of someone else who has already climbed to safety on the bank of an island.

* * *

Both types of recidivist have to work at the genuine, healthy fulfillment of basic human needs. Self-esteem, self-confidence, self-acceptance, self-determination, emotional freedom and emotional intelligence, as well as, conventional, but even more important, self-education.

It is the above fulfillments that empower the spirit, free the mind, and create a permanent sense of aliveness and self-worth and value. It is these fulfillments that will free the mind so that the body can remain free from jails and prisons.

The emotional and psychological conditions of influence described above apply to the mentality and lives of countless people, but there are still specific needs relative to each particular individual. That is where the personal work comes in, as well as the most serious work: unearthing the roots of one's sociopathology or criminality--so that the real cause of one's recidivism can be **acknowledged, understood, and finally outgrown.**

Scientific Psychological-Social Analysis

There are basically three (3) types of crime in society, and four major conditions of influence toward criminal activity. The three types are social, economic, and sexual. We will only deal with social and economic here.

The four major conditions of influence are poverty of character, sociopathology, psychopathology, and greed. In some cases, poverty of character, sociopathology, and greed are overlapping.

*(1) Poverty of Character can be linked to economic poverty, social poverty, or both. What is meant here is that the character of an individual lacks the basic fulfillment of human psychic needs. He or she may lack unconditional self-acceptance, self-esteem, and self-confidence and complacence with economic poverty and you have an increased potential for vulnerability to criminal orientation, especially in the latter years of teenhood where material possessions and money have taken on the perceived power to give or take away one's social prestige or social-esteem, two things that have an exaggerated value and disproportionate value when genuine self-esteem is absent from one's character.

It is this poverty of character in people who are economically poor that makes the difference between one poor person turning to crime and another not. A child or teen can still have a rich character in conditions of economic poverty if the social lessons in the home healthily nurture the character. Most poor people are not criminals because economic poverty, in and of itself, does not necessarily induce criminality. This doesn't mean it is never a contributing factor.

In order to overcome poverty of character, one has to uproot unproductive psychic conditions that perpetuate a poverty of character. This is a process that one can be helped to perceive and understand, but the real work is personal and requires a lot of courage and perseverance. It is not easy, for example, to admit to oneself: "I don't have any real self-confidence or self-esteem." These are painful, sometimes terrifying acknowledgements, because they undermine the pride-system and idealized-self image that one may have created to compensate for an alienation from the real self. However, it is this courageous acknowledgement that makes the prospect of genuine change, growth, and development possible. One has to face the reality of oneself, before the character of one's self can be meaningfully dealt with. With the decreasing of the conditions of poverty of character, genuine self-esteem can emerge and acknowledgement of one's worth and value. This promotes a desire and willingness to achieve goals and take on further constructive interest in one's own life. It is with the strengthening of constructive forces, constructive interest, and self-confidence -- that the prior influences toward criminal orientation and criminally oriented goal achievement are weakened and withstood as patterns of social expression. The individual develops the belief that he/she can achieve success through learning, hard work, and effort and begins to respect and appreciate these qualities in others.

Overcoming poverty of character through genuine self-acceptance, self-esteem, and the building of self-respect and self-determination creates the internal motivations for self-realization to develop. This leads to a desire for conventional social achievement, i.e., improved relationships, academic goals, vocational and job skills, and maybe even the expression of one's creative intelligence. All successes, step-by-step, build confidence, and confidence strengthens constructive energies, giving one the belief that there is a better and more genuinely rewarding way to achieve goals than crime.

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(2) Sociopathology

Sociopathology involves some of the conditions related to "poverty of character", but may have nothing at all to do with economic poverty. In this case, the poverty of one's character is relative to things such as sympathy, compassion, and empathy. The sociopath is usually the victim of inhumanities, brutal indifferences, and social and emotional abuses and deprivations himself or herself. He/she, as a desperate means of emotional and psychological relief, has had to become desensitized to his /her own pain and suffering. This undoubtedly has made it that much easier to become oblivious to the pain and suffering and losses of others. Simply put, if one is alienated from his own pain and suffering, then how is he/she going to be sensitive to that of others, even victims of crime? The sociopath has a conscience, but he/she is too weak to acknowledge that conscience, or to suspend the awareness of it, because of the inability to suspend the awareness of feelings of his or her own pain and suffering. The antagonism in the sociopath's psyche is too tormenting for him or her to face emotional conflicts with relentless perseverance. He/she is generally torn between two or more alternatives, and that which appears to offer the most expedient path to relief is what generally wins. For example, the alternative between being disciplined and determined toward constructive goal achievement and that of being compulsive, careless, and impatient about getting what one desires, often has the sociopath leaning toward the latter of the two. Under this form of thinking and emotional reasoning, even in the sociopath's mind--the end may not justify the means, but he/she condones it out of anxiety and desperation. This means we are referring to is crime. The sociopath is criminal oriented due to unfortunate social conditions, and relationships that have harmed his or her self-image, primary-relationship, and freedom to relate to and express constructive human potentials. He/she is not criminal oriented by calm and collective choice, but actually is and feels driven to give in to criminal compulsions and other not so healthy means of expediently relieving anxieties.

As a result of his compulsive-criminal mentality, the sociopath feels out of control and helpless. And these feelings deepen the internalization of the negative ideas, feelings, and beliefs about himself or herself. Sociopaths, in general, harbor a great deal of self-hatred and this mounts more and more after each additional crime and/or arrest. It is able to exist for so long and be so overwhelming because the sociopath's emotional weakness and self-hate drives him/her to effectively repress feelings of guilt and remorse. Unlike the psychopath, the sociopath does usually have feelings of guilt, shame, and remorse, he/she is just driven through automatic processes to repress awareness of them, lest the individual be severely tortured or even crushed by the weight of his or her own conscience.

Most sociopaths, meaning, most people whose healthy personality and character development were disrupted and negatively influenced by adverse social and early relationship conditions, want to grow, to change, to become productive, decent human beings and citizens; they are just too confused about themselves and their motivations and anxieties, because they lack depth knowledge and understanding about unconscious, neurotic forces, to effectively change the way they are. They need help, but this type of help is very hard to encounter, and even when it is encountered, it will still require an enormous amount of inner-strength and courage for the individual to remain committed to a long and challenging process.

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Excerpt

Excerpt
(3) Psychopathology

Modern psychology uses the words sociopath and psychopath interchangeably, as though they are the same human condition. In reality, they are not. One major difference is that of having and not having a conscience that engenders remorse. The sociopath has a conscience, he/she is just driven by other psychic conditions to keep it from operating on a conscious level. On the otherhand, the psychopath is void of a conscience consciously and unconsciously. His or her anti-social behaviors and criminality are rationalized through egocentrism and self-justified reasoning. He/she is not helplessly driven, but more often than not, chooses to find glory and selfish fulfillment of passions in criminality and the immoral abuses perpetrated against other human beings. The psychopath generally 'chooses' not to have a conscience. To him/her a conscience is a sign of weakness, as well as, a weakening thing in relation to character expression and toughness. To a psychopath, all ends desired justify whatever means is necessary. Sociopaths do not operate this way.

For example, a sociopath may be a compulsive robber because he equates his self-worth with the absolute possession of money. This individual, however, would never engage in home burglaries, rapes, or other types of crimes, because his conscience is actively resistant to harming other people in certain ways. That is, the end does not justify the means to him or her. With the psychopath it is different. He she rejects society's standards and mores completely. He she will not be subject to anyone's Ten Commandments, nor any system of morality that interferes with his or her wishes or desires. He/she is a law unto him or herself. Any of his or her wishes, economic, social, sexual...are capable of being pursued criminally, psychopathologically, and immorally. Absolute freedom and absolute self-gratification dominate the psychopath's social outlook. To him/her, crime is just as legitimate a method of achievement as hard work and study. He/she qualifies neither as more just or righteous than the other. It is the end that ultimately matters.

It should be noted that psychopathic reasoning and its ends are not always labelled as criminal in society, nor are all psychopaths classified as criminals in character. Many are perceived as productive, law-abiding citizens. This, however, makes them no less psychopathic than the average serial-killer.

When we hear about pharmaceutical companies that knowingly put drugs on the market that they know will kill hundreds of users, we are hearing about a form of culturally, legally, and politically tolerated psychopathology. These are the accepted psychopaths; the type that justify and rationalize their murderous actions through false philanthropic reasoning, e.g., "Our product helps millions of consumers, so the few hundred or thousands of lost lives are counter-balanced and, therefore, excusable."

The psychopath is a cold-hearted, insensitive, calculating criminal (whether legally sanctioned or labelled as such or not), and will never allow the possibility or expected reality of collateral consequences to deter him/her from reaching a desired end. The more profitable and/or glorifying that end, then the more extreme or far reaching the social destruction and loss of property and human life the psychopath is willing to condone.

You cannot appeal to a psychopath's moral conscience for one simple reason: he/she has none.

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Excerpt
 (4) Greed

Greed, like anger, jealousy, envy, etc., can be such a consuming mental/emotional force that it is capable of blindly driving almost anyone to unnecessary and irrational pursuit of material possessions, even those who have no immediate or life-sustaining need for the money and possessions they risk life, limb, and freedom for. Greed is an overlapping influence in criminal motivations. It can drive the actions of a sociopath, psychopath, or average citizen. There are many, many people in prison who were otherwise successful, law-abiding citizens--until they somehow became gripped by the blind driving force of greed.

The question is one of historical magnitude and eternal length: "How do people with so much going for themselves end up letting greed destroy them and become their tragic downfall?"

Greed is not inspired by the feeling, 'I need more:', but pushed by the overwhelming compulsion of: 'I must have more!' It is overwhelming because it makes one indifferent to their own reasonableness, intelligence, and rationality. It is compulsive because it seems to be forcing one to act against what he/she knows is in their best interest.

There are basically two conditions of mind that undergird the compelling force of greed in an individual. 1) the chronic anxiety of never having enough, or the fear of being deprived of an opportunity to acquire what one needs, or the anxiety of falling far below what one has become neurotically attached to possessing in terms of quantity.

2) A neurotic search for glory in having as much as one can, or more than everyone else around or in competition with oneself (even if this assumed competition only exist in one's mind.)

Greed becomes a motivation in criminal activity when, as in the case of poverty of personality or character, the level of one's material goals and desires outstrips the developed capacity of one's current ability to achieve, generally, economic/material success. We are only capable of legitimately accomplishing, at any given point in time, what we have the developed potential to express as forces acting on life. Sometimes, what one desires is achievable through expression of one's potential, but a lack of patience subverts that potential and gives expression to pathological motivations.

Sometimes, impatience reinforces greed, or greed becomes so intense that patience begins to feel like an unnecessary obstacle on the path to achieving one's goals or desires. When an individual lacks patience, then he/she tends to be hypersensitive to frustrations. This makes it easier than one thinks to become persuaded by illegitimate or illegal influences toward the expediency of achieving what is desired or hoped for.

Greed has long been categorized as one of the seven deadly sins. This is understandable, given its tendency to nullify a person's patience, reasoning, and rationalism. With the weakening of these qualities in the human character, crime becomes acceptable as an expedient means of satisfying the insatiable hunger of greed. But there are several causes of greed, and not all of them are related to fear of loss or deprivation. We need to understand much more, the connection between greed and repressed, basic psychic needs, i.e., needs that are not healthily satisfied, therefore, we are unconsciously compelled to compensate in pathological ways, greed being an expression of pathology.

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Excerpt

Examining the nature of social crimes

One of the most infamous social crimes in Western literature is the murder of Abel by his brother Cain. Cain killed Abel because he felt slighted and rejected by God. He also envied the relationship between God and Abel. Since there was no financial or material incentive in Cain's actions, his crime was a purely social crime in nature. What did he intend to gain, then, by brutally murdering his brother, who had done no direct or intentional harm to him? This case deals with some cause and effect issues that have not been given much examination in the past. For one, the cause of this sibling murder lay partly at the feet of God in this biblical story. It was God's act of discrimination, insensitivity, and rejection of Cain's offering that aroused anger, resentment, and vindictiveness in Cain. All of these emotional responses being an almost instant defensive eruption to hurt and humiliation.

Now, imagine an analogous situation and the tragic social affects that it would have on a human personality: Two children in a family spend the winter saving their allowance money and helping each other do extra chores around the neighborhood to earn a few more dollars a week. Their common goals are to buy their mother a couple of Mother's Day gifts this year, each child presenting its own one after the other. The first child gives the mother his gift and receives a hug and a kiss with several kind and appreciative words. When the second child presents his gift, the mother doesn't even reach for it. Instead, she says: "I don't care for that type of present, really. I like what your brother gave me. Why don't you take that back and get a refund, and think a little harder about what I might like the next time."

The second gift bringer is emotionally crushed by the mother's rejection. He turns away, hurting and feeling unloved; but beneath the hurt an anger smolders at the thought of how much work and faith he had equally invested in being able to offer his mother a gift.

The relationship between the two siblings changes. The second son is less cordial toward his brother now, and on occasion he exhibits hostility toward him. We need to understand and be aware that the hostility is actually toward the mother, but feeling powerless to act against her, the second child displaces it towards the first. The mother's act of rejection has set into motion the relationship conditions for a personality neurosis to develop, as well as, an emotionally estranged relationship between two brothers who once shared healthy affections. As they grow older now, they begin to get into fights, and eventually grow further and further apart because the older brother doesn't want the problems and has no understanding of how to resolve the issues between he and the other brother. If they were to continue associating regularly, one or the other could end up seriously hurt or even dead.

We can easily say that the second child should not have reacted so terribly to the mother's rejection, but let's be objective. The mother should have been more sensitive than to accept one's gift and not the other's. She should have at least made both sons feel successful in their efforts. Having done this would have not created the social conditions, i.e., relationship influences, for neurotic or sociopathic personality conditions to evolve. It is these conditions that are generally behind social crimes. Crimes that are motivated by anger, jealousy, vindictiveness, social ineptitudes, envy, covetousness, sexual deviancy, and vengeance.

As surely as the mother should not have chosen one child's gift over the other's, because of the potential for the effects that we have examined, the God of the Old Testament should have been more sensitive toward Cain. The Bible does not indicate that God instructed Cain and Abel on how to make an offering, nor that Adam and Eve taught them, so Cain's being rejected was not the result of an act of disobedience on his part. God's actions toward Cain, just as the actions of the mother toward the second son, had to make Cain feel disrespected and devalued. The murder of his brother, then, was an act of vengeance against God. What was the message in Cain's murderous actions? "I will have no brother that you can love and value over me. Only I am left now."

All social crimes tend to be rooted in a person's need to restore something operating pathologically in the character structure. These crimes are an attempt to restore a sense of pride, power, control, superiority, personal value, or respect that is perceived to have been lost or taken away. What makes these pseudo-restoration needs so compelling in pathological ways is, once again, their disingenuous development as healthy character achievements. Social crimes are the products of disturbed personalities, so the solutions to social crimes must involve reducing these relationship conditions that influence human beings to become disturbed, as well as, helping people become aware of how they are disturbed, and how they may overcome their personality problems.

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-THE HUMAN CONDITION- Excerpt

The potential to commit crimes exist in all human beings, it is not always a matter of whether or not someone is healthy or neurotic, sociopathic or psychopathic, modest or greedy. What deters one individual from committing crimes, and not another, is varied within the range of human personality and social conditions. It could be the strength of one's morality, or the depth of one's empathy. In any event something in the psyche of everyone that doesn't engage in criminality operates as an effective checking mechanism or device. Drawing from Karen Horney, M. D. again, if we viewed this from her perspective by transferring some aspect of her theory on neurosis, we would conclude that what restrains a lot of people is either Love, Fear, or Self-Preservation. Many people are deterred from committing social crimes by either love or fear; others, for the most part, may be deterred from committing economic crimes by fear and/or self-preservation. When these checking mechanisms are not working effectively, or strong enough to operate as deterrents, then the power of unconstructive forces have taken away. This is only possible when humanizing or constructive psychological and social forces have been temporarily or neurotically put out of operation by severely disturbed emotional conditions.

In the case of psychopathology, set apart from the above, the power or freedom to feel above the law, condoned by it because of profit incentives, or more intelligent than those entrusted to protect human rights and enforce the law--makes the three checking devices null and void.

How many millions more would do wrong or evil if they felt that they were incapable of being touched by the law? It calls to mind the story by Plato, Gyges And The Ring. Who among us would always do right if they were given the power to get away with doing anything wrong? If they could never be known or detected as having committed a crime? Or, in the case of corporations, never accused of having committed a crime, even the crime of virtually enslaving other human beings in poorer countries.

As we examine society and the world, it is hard not to conclude that the 'human condition' is a sad and troubling condition. We, as a collective, fall drastically short of our ability to do better, to influence positive and constructive changes in the lives of individuals and society as a whole. In this sense society is as much a part of recidivism as those who do nothing to change their patterns of criminal thought and behavior. When this becomes an acknowledged reality, then an acknowledged need will rise to the surface of social consciousness. The only question left to be answered then--by individuals as well as the collective--is are we going to or not going to address this vital need?

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To be a philosopher is not merely
to have subtle thoughts, nor even
to found a school... It is to solve
some of the problems of life,
not theoretically, but practically.
— Henry David Thoreau

A great human revolution in just a single
individual will help achieve a change
in the destiny of all humankind.
— Daisaku Ikeda

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