

# Psychiatry for Crime

## A Boon? A Curse?

Or a Blessing, Misused and Misunderstood

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I AM A SQUARE! An angry unrepentant square. Angry because it seems we are being urged to believe that psychiatry alone can "cure" all crime. Angry because psychiatry is in danger of being debased almost to the level of a magic cult; a cure-all for humanity's many misfits and misfortunes. I am angry because it seems to me, and to lots of other ordinary people, that some psychiatrists want to deny mankind the fundamental right, need and duty of choosing for himself between good and evil; to make up his mind whether he will resist temptation, or yield to it; the right to have to face, and feel, the consequences of his own actions.

These rights cannot be measured, nor weighed. Therefore to the "expert" and the "scientist" such imponderables are anathema. They are not statistical: so they are kept rigidly out of all calculations. They are tacitly ignored by all but the truest scientists.

To the understanding man or

woman who has had practical experience of human nature, these same imponderables are the vital, living core of all human values and relationships, whether happy or unhappy.

I shall be called old fashioned, behind the times, reactionary. "Hasn't he ever read any psychology?" "Does he know nothing at all of what psychiatry is supposed to be able to do—or explain?"

All right! Go for me! But! I maintain I have the right to say my say. I will even go so far as to claim the right, even the duty, to put the ordinary person's point of view. Though highbrows may well not agree with me, I am going to get this off my chest. Then you and they can weigh in, if you want to, and I'll try and listen to all the know-alls have to say.

The know-alls probably won't like it. I hope they don't; because, as I say, I and a lot of other ordinary people think they are terribly wrong. We feel this very

deeply, but it's not easy for ordinary people to get their views and feelings heard or read.

In our hearts we all know these imponderables. The most important are: The *facts* of rightness or wrongness, good or evil; the *fact* that man alone is trusted with the privilege of choosing between them; the *facts* of conscience and duty; the *fact* that a sense of shame or guilt at letting our ideals, ourselves or one another down is far from harmful as most do-gooders seem to think.

The *fact* of shame or guilt is, and always has been, the one essential element for the start of repentance and reclamation. I know a sense of guilt is unfashionable, uncomfortable, disturbing, harrowing even; who doesn't. But it is never harmful when in our hearts we know we have let our best selves down. Without a sense of guilt, and shame for that guilt, man is not man but lower than the animals.

"Experts" and most do-gooders seem to preach that offenders, young or old, must be "spared a sense of guilt". "That they must be shielded from suffering the natural effects of their actions." That they "should not be allowed to feel shame, in case it upsets them". And so delinquents and offenders are shielded from the only way they can possibly realize what they have really done. They come, therefore, to regard their offence as something they should be shielded from or excused from facing. They seem to be en-

couraged to think of themselves as being absolved from responsibility. This is a dangerous state of affairs. Dangerous to offenders and dangerous to the society tolerating it.

These same do-gooders also seem to preach that there must be some *cause* for hooliganism, some cause for vandalism; for bottle throwing at football matches; for deliberate destruction in football specials and other public transport; phone boxes, and public conveniences and all the other shocking behaviour and the noisy destructive exhibitionism of a minority that quite deliberately, makes itself so unpleasant, spoiling everyone else's enjoyment of public places, parks, cafes, dance halls, cinemas, sea fronts, beaches and so on. Are these places to be run for the public as a whole? Or have the ordinary people to surrender them to the hooligans and vandals who behave worse than if they owned them? Who behave as if the only thing they want to do is to gratify their lust for "showing off". That is what this behaviour amounts to; showing off for "kicks"; to look big in the eyes of youngsters as vain and degenerate as themselves; egging one another on to do things they'd never have the guts to do if they were not in a crowd.

Allowing one's self to be egged on is nothing less than letting false praise stir false pride until self respect and conscience are stifled.

Wouldn't it be simpler and far more honest to call it what it really

is: yielding to temptation? What right have they to think and behave as if they owned the world? What right have we for a mistaken sentimental ideal, to let everybody's world be run for a noisy minority? To let this rowdy, ignorant minority think they can get away with it? To let these hoodlums think they can blame anyone else but themselves for what they *choose* to do?

That is the main reason why I am angry. I am quite sure, and so are a lot of ordinary, common-sense people, that we have no right whatever to let the vast majority of offenders think there is any other *cause* for their behaviour than their own deliberate choice.

The know-alls say there must be some cause; that if this or that were done for them they "would not need to do it".

What nonsense, dangerous nonsense to give these youngsters, as this attitude does, the idea that they cannot choose the way they behave. Of course they can! What they do, they do quite deliberately. The only hope for them is that they should be held responsible for their actions; not have excuses made for them by well-meaning but mistaken do-gooders; who, after all, are only another minority with the gift of the gab and the facilities to make their voices heard; but all too little real practical experience. It is these do-gooders that make me angriest of all. I think they have done, and are doing almost

irreparable harm to the very youngsters they think they are helping.

The tragedy is they mis-quote true psychiatry to support their sadly mistaken ideas, and then have the nerve to blame psychiatry for what fundamentally is just bad character, which needs to be recognised as such, not evaded by sentimental pseudo-science.

These same people speak also of "treatment"! They never say "training". They seem to think such a word will frighten or upset these vandals and others. What humbug! Very, very few of these hooligans need treatment. They need *training*, with nothing mealy-mouthed about the word. Speaking of it as treatment, far from softening the effect, simply fosters their idea that they can blame some cause outside themselves and encourages them to avoid facing themselves.

We ordinary people are quite sure that there can be no reclamation without realization of responsibility for their own actions, whether the offender is a juvenile, a young person; grown up or middle-aged. They are human; not animals. Simple morality, the greatest of the imponderables, is just as real now as it always has been. We will get nowhere with the problem of reclamation and rehabilitation to a sense of self-discipline, if we kid ourselves into neglecting or ignoring this most fundamental of human issues.