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## psychopath, *n.*

**Pronunciation:** Brit. /'saɪkəpəθ/, U.S. /'saɪkə,pæθ/

**Frequency (in current use):**

**Origin:** Formed within English, by compounding. **Etymons:** PSYCHO- *comb. form*, -PATH *comb. form*.

**Etymology:** < PSYCHO- *comb. form* + -PATH *comb. form*, after PSYCHOPATHIC *adj.*, PSYCHOPATHY *n.* Compare Russian *psixopat* (1888 or earlier), French *psychopathe* (1894), German *Psychopath* (1898 or earlier). *N.E.D.* (1909) also gives the pronunciation (psəi·kəpəθ) /'psaɪkəpəθ/.

†1. A doctor or other practitioner specializing in the treatment of (or claiming to treat) disorders of the mind. Cf. PSYCHOPATHIST *n.* *Obs.*

- 1864 *Amer. Jrnl. Med. Sci.* 95 425 Psychopaths would object to an implication..that mental derangement may occur independently of cerebral textural change.
- 1874 C. M. DAVIES *Heterodox London* I. 199 Public opinion does not share the prejudices or the selfish exclusiveness of the medical profession; but we must not forget that the faculty is equally opposed to homœopaths, hydropaths, mesmerists, psychopaths, and every description of heterodox masculine practitioners.
- 1884 *Hahnemannian Monthly* Aug. 492 From the ætiological standpoint of the psychopaths, fortunately abandoned now, one would have concluded that, in this case, the melancholia, as a disorder of the mind, had developed from the previous mental depression.

2. A mentally ill person who is highly irresponsible and antisocial and also violent or aggressive; (*Psychiatry*) a person consistently exhibiting psychopathic behaviour. Occasionally also (esp. formerly): any mentally ill or emotionally unstable person.

- 1885 *Pall Mall Gaz.* 21 Jan. 3/2 For the benefit of those who are as yet ignorant of the meaning of psychopathy..we give M. Balinsky's [*sc.* a Russian psychiatrist] explanation of the new malady. 'The psychopath..is a type which has only recently come under the notice of medical science... Beside his own person and his own interests, nothing is sacred to the psychopath.'
- 1902 W. JAMES *Varieties Relig. Experience* 7 From the point of view of his nervous constitution, Fox was a psychopath or détraqué of the deepest dye.
- 1927 *New Republic* 21 Sept. 128/2 Terms not so long ago confined to specialists are handled familiarly by the laity: moron, inferiority complex, mental age,..paranoid delusions, psychopaths.
- 1955 D. J. WEST *Homosexuality* ix. 106 Psychopaths are the last people to try to battle against their instincts; they just obey first impulses regardless of social codes. Being incapable of prolonged or deep personal attachments, they seek only an immediate outlet for their lust.
- 1967 *Listener* 20 Apr. 529/3 The term psychopath is bandied about in such a way as to make it cover

almost any mental disorder... However the psychopath has now achieved legal status in the Mental Health Act of 1959 as having 'a persistent disorder or disability of mind..which results in abnormally aggressive or seriously irresponsible behaviour'.

- 1983 D. STAFFORD-CLARK & A. C. SMITH *Psychiatry for Students* (ed. 6) xi. 162 The psychopath can be regarded as falling between the insane and the criminal.
- 1993 *Time Out* 31 Mar. 109/1 When Macbeth allies himself with hit-men to kill Banquo, he has deteriorated into a frenzied psychopath, which deprives the role of its nobility and tragic stature.

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