

CONFESSIONS OF
A SOCIOPATH

A Life Spent Hiding in Plain Sight

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PAN BOOKS

man. My grandfather's heavily scarred face attested to his impulsiveness and penchant for risk taking and violence. He was literally a rocket scientist but fancied himself a cowboy. He spent all of his inherited wealth on a ranch that he ran into the ground, then lost to back taxes. He knocked up my grandmother and was forced into an unwanted marriage that ended quite suddenly just months after my father was born. He gave up parental rights and never saw my father again. I don't know anything about my paternal great-grandparents, although my guess is that the apple did not fall far from the tree.

My upbringing promoted my genetic propensities, but not in the ways that you would expect from watching television or movie depictions of a sociopath. I was not a victim of child abuse, and I am not a murderer or a criminal. I have never skulked behind prison walls; I prefer mine to be covered in ivy. I am an accomplished attorney and law professor. I am a typical well-respected, young academic, regularly writing for law journals and advancing various legal theories. I donate 10 percent of my income to charity and teach Sunday school every week. I have a close circle of family and friends whom I love and who very much love me.

Does any of this sound like you? Maybe you are a sociopath too. Recent estimates say that 1 percent to 4 percent of the population, or one in every twenty-five people, is a sociopath—that's higher than the percentage of people who have anorexia or autism. You're not a serial killer? Never imprisoned? Most of us aren't. Some of you may be surprised to find that it is no defense that you're not a criminal. Only 20 percent of male and female prison inmates are sociopaths, although we are probably responsible for about half of serious crimes committed. Nor are most sociopaths incarcerated. In fact, the silent majority of sociopaths lives freely and anonymously in society,

holding down jobs, getting married, having children—fitting in with varying degrees of success in a culture that easily considers sociopaths as monsters. Who then are sociopaths? We are legion and diverse. At least one of them looks like me. Does one of them look like you?

Do you have plenty of friends, paramours, or admirers? That doesn't disqualify you; in fact quite the opposite. Despite our bad reputation, sociopaths are categorically known for our exceptional, albeit superficial, charm. In a world filled with gloomy, mediocre nothings populating a go-nowhere rat race, people are attracted to the sociopath's exceptionalism like moths to a flame.

You would like me if you met me. I am quite confident about that because I have met a statistically significant sample size of the population and they were all susceptible to my charms. I have the kind of smile that is common among television show characters and rare in real life, perfect in its sparkly-teeth dimensions and ability to express pleasant invitation. I'm the sort of date you would love to bring to your ex's wedding. Fun, exciting, the perfect office escort—your boss's wife has never met anyone quite so charming. And I'm just the right amount of smart and successful so that your parents would be thrilled if you brought me home.

Do you have an inflated view of yourself? I certainly seem to, don't I? Sociopaths are known for having egos so full-bodied they could be considered Rubenesque. I exude confidence, much more than my looks or social stature would warrant. I am not very tall but present solidly with broad, strong shoulders and an angular jaw. My friends often remark on my toughness and swagger. But I am just as comfortable in summer dresses as I am in cowboy boots.

Perhaps the most noticeable aspect of my confidence is

the way I sustain eye contact. Some people have called it a "predator stare," and it appears that most sociopaths have it. Sustained eye contact can seem hostile, and so zoo visitors are frequently advised not to stare at gorillas, lest it be taken as a sign of aggression. Most humans seem to think so, too; otherwise, staring contests wouldn't present much of a challenge. Sociopaths are different. We are unfazed by uninterrupted eye contact. Our failure to look away politely is often perceived as being confident, aggressive, seductive, or predatory. It can throw people off balance, but often in an exciting way that intensifies the unsettling feeling of infatuation.

Ever find yourself using that charm and confidence to get people to do things for you that they otherwise wouldn't? Some might call it manipulation, but I like to consider it simply using what God gave me. And the word *manipulation* is so ugly. It's what people say to disavow their own choices. If they end up never regretting their decision, does that mean that no one has manipulated them?

Manipulation is where the traits of a sociopath take a distinct turn for the nefarious in a lot of people's minds, but I don't see why. It is just fulfilling an exchange. People want a particular thing—to please you, to feel wanted or needed, to be seen as a good person—and manipulation is just a quick and dirty way to get both people something they want. You might call it seduction. One of my sociopathic friends gave this example. One guy wants to sell a car for \$5,000, the second wants to buy it for \$10,000. I am aware of the two but neither is aware of the other. I buy the car for \$5,000, sell it to the second guy for \$10,000, and I make \$5,000. It's called arbitrage and happens on Wall Street (and a lot of other places) every day. We all get what we want, and we're all happy, as long as the two never connect the dots and never learn more than they

need to. I facilitate their ignorance for the benefit of all, especially myself.

Indeed, I believe that most people who interact with sociopaths are better off than they otherwise would be. Sociopaths are part of the grease making the world go round. We fulfill fantasies, or at least the appearance of fantasies. In fact, we are sometimes the only ones attentive to providing for your deepest wants and needs, the only ones so deeply attuned to them for no ulterior motive immediately discernible by you. We observe our target and strive to become a facsimile of whatever or whoever that person wants—a good employee or boss or lover. It's not always the case that the facsimile is malicious or ill intentioned. And it makes the target feel good for the course of the transaction and usually ends without harm. Of course everything comes at a price—we wouldn't be doing it if we weren't getting something from you, often money or power or simply even the enjoyment of your admiration and desire, but this certainly does not mean that you get nothing out of it. Maybe some might think the price is too high. But the truth is that if you've made a deal with the devil, it's probably because no one else has offered you more favorable terms.

What about morality? Do you approach questions of morality with ambivalence, finding it easy to justify your own or others' behavior with a reference to "survival of the fittest"? People sometimes say that we lack remorse or guilt like it's a bad thing. They are sure that remorse and guilt are necessary to being a "good" person. But there is probably no universal, and certainly no objective, morality. Despite millennia of arguments among theologians and philosophers, no one can really agree on the contours and parameters of morality. From where I stand, it's hard to put such faith in something so wildly elastic and changeable, something associated with horrors as

diverse as honor killings, "just" wars, and capital punishment. Like many people, I adhere to a religion that gives me moral guidance. The practice of it is just good sense—it keeps you out of prison and safely hidden in the crowd. But the heart of morality is something I have never understood.

My view of morality is instrumental. I abide by conventional dictates when it suits me, and otherwise, I follow my own course with little need for justification. Once I helped two elderly Holocaust survivors fill out forms for restitution funds from the German government. They were a couple: a lovely blond woman in her late seventies or early eighties who obviously spent money on her clothes and her face, and an even older man with a shock of white hair on top of his head and the sense of entitlement that you often see in Los Angeles among aging Hollywood stars. His papers seemed to be more or less in order. At one point he even belligerently rolled up his sleeve to reveal a numeric tattoo that matched his paperwork. The woman's papers were more confusing. She had dates from a previous restitution claim, but they didn't really make sense when compared with the story she told me. According to her paperwork she was in and out of camps, which seemed unusually inefficient for the Germans. I didn't really know what to put down on the form, so I stood and told her I would ask for help from the organizers sponsoring the event. She panicked, grabbed my arm, and sat me back down. What followed was a bit difficult to understand, given her old age, likely senility, and bad English. Pointing to one of the forms, she said, "This isn't me."

A story of fraud and survival rolled out before me, if not from her actual words then from my own tendency to infer deceit. With her blond hair and blue eyes, no one had suspected her of being Jewish. She was able to "pass" for the duration

of the war as a seamstress and then stole the documents that corroborated her story of time spent in camps from another young woman, who had died shortly after liberation. I think that was the gist, anyway; I made it a point not to ask any questions. I wonder if her husband even knew who she really was. I wonder if it was all a figment of her imagination, or mine.

In any case, I felt no moral compunction about helping her fill out the forms. It was not my job to question her story, only to help her tell it. I was glad to do it, actually. I admired her. In the course of my travels, I had visited several Holocaust sites and been through the Anne Frank Achterhuis more times than I would have preferred. Visiting these places, I was always struck by the enormous passivity of most of the people involved: the neighbors, the townspeople, the camp guards, the fellow prisoners.

Looking at the old woman, I could not help but recognize myself. A kindred spirit. She knew what it meant to be a survivor at all costs. An elaborate identity theft to rise from oppression. I could only hope to do so well in my own life.

She was probably lucky to have been assigned to me rather than some other volunteer. It's hard to know if someone else with a firmer moral compass might have asked more questions and availed themselves of more, and thus potentially incriminating, information. A compassionate person might think that she must have suffered during the war, if not in the same ways then for the same reasons as those the restitution was meant to help. She probably lived in constant fear of being discovered. Who knows whom she had to bribe, befriend, or seduce to maintain her freedom? But yet another might not want to help someone who helped herself by breaking the rules. Shouldn't we be disgusted with those who game the system, accept government money when they're not entitled to it, and

are opportunistic about social safety nets? There might even be some judgment about her choice to capitalize on her Aryan looks to avoid suffering alongside her kin. But luckily for her there was no moral conundrum for me, and I sent them both on their way in time to catch a nice lunch.

Are you good at making decisions on the fly, sometimes to the consternation of your friends and family? Sociopaths are known for being spontaneous. I get restless; I find it hard to focus on one project for a particular length of time or to keep a job for more than a few years. Sociopaths tend to crave stimulation and are easily bored, so we tend to make snap decisions. The darker side of impulsivity is that we can become fixated on an impulse to the exclusion of all else, unable to listen to reason. Whereas most people experience impulsivity as hot-headedness, I become coldhearted.

I have never killed anyone, but I have certainly wanted to, as I am sure most people have. I have rarely wanted to kill those close to me; more often it has been a chance encounter with someone who caused me consternation. Once while visiting Washington, DC, for a law conference, a metro worker tried to shame me about using an escalator that was closed. He asked in thickly accented English, "Didn't you see the yellow gate?"

ME: Yellow gate?

HIM: The gate! I just put the gate up and you had to walk around it!

Silence. My face is blank.

HIM: That's trespassing! Don't you know it is wrong to trespass! The escalator was closed, you broke the law!

I stare at him silently.

HIM: *[vibibly rattled at my lack of reaction]* Well, next time, you don't trespass, okay?

It was not okay. People often say, in explaining their horrible actions, that they "just snapped." I know that feeling well. I stood there for a moment, letting my rage reach that decision-making part of my brain, and I suddenly became filled with a sense of calm purpose. I blinked my eyes and set my jaw. I started following him. Adrenaline started flowing. My mouth tasted metallic. I fought to keep my peripheral vision in focus, hyperaware of everything around me, trying to predict the movement and behavior of the crowd. I was unfamiliar with the city, a new user of the metro, and it was just before rush hour. I was hoping that he would walk into some deserted hallway or sneak away through a hidden, unlocked door where I would find him alone, waiting. I felt so sure of myself, so focused on this one thing I felt I had to do. An image sprang to my mind of my hands wrapped around his neck, my thumbs digging deeply into his throat, his life slipping away from him under my unrelenting grasp. How right that would feel.

It seems odd thinking about this now. I weigh less than 130 pounds; he probably weighed 160. I have strong hands from being a musician, but I wonder if they would be strong enough to squeeze the breath out of him in his last moments of life. Is it truly so easy to extinguish a life? When it came down to it, I couldn't even manage to drown a baby opossum. I had been caught in a fit of megalomaniacal fantasy, but in the end it didn't matter anyway. I lost him in the crowd, and just as quickly as it had arisen in me, my murderous rage dissipated.

I have wondered since, what would have happened to me had I not lost sight of him? I'm sure I wouldn't have been able

Being a sociopath doesn't define me. In a lot of ways I am ordinary. These days I lead a quiet, middle-class life in a medium-size city that looks like any number of cities across America. I accomplish errands at various strip malls on the weekends. I work more than I should, and I have trouble sleeping.

When not acting impulsively, almost everything I do is done with purpose. Things like physical appearance are most easy to manipulate. My nails are immaculately manicured and my eyebrows perfectly groomed. These days I allow my dark hair to grow just past my shoulders. It is soft and unfussy in subtle compliance with the strictures of fashion. The pleasant ordinariness of my hair brushing lightly against my eyelashes functions to neutralize the intensity of my eyes, which are shiny and flecked by jagged-edged shards of amber, as if something shattered when they first opened to the world. They are probing and merciless.

I should say something about my intelligence, which I believe to be one of the most difficult topics to navigate. While people may be forced to acknowledge their inferior physical appearances, they rarely do so in regards to their intellect, the hidden and variable nature of which allows for rampant self-deception. Even your regular junior high dropout likes to think that he could have been Steve Jobs had he chosen computer programming over meth addiction.

I think I am pretty realistic about my intelligence. I am probably smarter than you, dear reader, but I know that in the rare instance this will not be true. I accept that there are many more kinds of intelligence than just raw brainpower (which

of course I have in spades), but I do not necessarily respect them all. Rather, I believe that true, worthwhile intelligence is characterized by an innate and superior awareness of surroundings and an ability and desire to learn. This type is rare in the general populace. I was very young when I realized I was smarter than most everyone else, and I felt at once victorious and isolated.

It is not always clear what sets people like me apart from other members of society. Sociopathy cannot be diagnosed based solely on a person's behavior but must focus on their internal motivations. Take for instance my story about drowning an opossum. It is not, in itself, a sociopathic act. Killing a small, cute animal might be cruel or sadistic, which is not necessarily sociopathic. In my case, it was merely expedient. It was an act of dispassion.

In letting the baby opossum die a slow and horrible death, I didn't feel morally justified. I didn't think about having to justify myself at all. I didn't feel sad or happy about it. I took no pleasure in its suffering; I did not give it a thought. I didn't feel anything other than a desire to solve my problem in the simplest way possible. I was concerned only for myself. There wasn't much chance that the baby would cause much harm if I saved it, but there was no upside for me if I did. And at some point, there was no point in finishing the job of killing it; the pool was probably already contaminated by the opossum releasing its bodily wastes in the throes of death. It was just easier to cancel my plans and wait for the inevitable approach of death.

Instead of acts, I believe that what really distinguish a sociopath conceptually from everyone else are our compulsions, our motivations, and the narratives we tell ourselves about our inner lives. Sociopaths don't include elements of guilt or moral

responsibility in their mental stories, only self-interest and self-preservation. I don't assign moral values to my choices, just cost-benefit. And indeed, sociopaths are without exception obsessed with power, playing and winning games, appealing their boredom, and seeking pleasure. My story lines focus on how smart I am or how well I play a situation.

Similarly, I like to imagine that I have "ruined people" or seduced someone to the point of being irreparably mine. The stories I tell myself to explain my actions are self-aggrandizing. I spend a lot of time spinning reality in my head to make me seem more clever and powerful than reality would suggest. (Sociopaths are highly immune to depression, and this ability to tell ourselves wonderful stories about how attractive, smart, and wily we are, and to believe them, surely helps.) The only situation in which I may feel shame or embarrassment is when I have been outplayed. I am never embarrassed that someone may be thinking something bad about me, as long as I have conceived of some gambit in which I have fooled or outmaneuvered them.

Normal people feel emotions that I simply don't. For them, emotions like guilt serve as convenient shortcuts, telling people when they're crossing societal or moral boundaries that they're better off observing. But guilt is not absolutely necessary to live within social acceptability. And it certainly isn't the only thing that prevents people from murdering, stealing, and lying. Indeed, guilt is often unsuccessful at preventing these actions. It follows, then, that the lack of guilt does not make sociopaths criminals. We have alternative means of keeping ourselves in line. In fact, because guilt does not drive our decision-making, we experience fewer emotional prejudices and more freedom of thought and action. For instance, I felt no need to insert myself and exercise my own moral

judgment regarding the old lady who may or may not have survived the internment camps. I would like to think I was better able to help her in her unique situation because of my emotional distance. Recent research suggests that emotions and gut reactions play a dominant role in forming moral judgments and that rationalization of those emotions only follows. The human brain is a belief factory, and part of its job is to rationally justify moral feelings. Rational decision-making is not fail-proof, but neither is guilt and remorse. Neither sociopaths nor the empathic—"empaths"—have a monopoly on bad behavior.

There seems to me to be something wrong with requiring people to pretend to feel remorse. Is it any wonder then that sociopaths are known as being liars? There is really no other option for them, when to show their true feelings (or lack thereof) or to express their true thoughts would get them extra jail time, cause them to be branded as an antisocial, or any number of other negative consequences, simply because they do not share the same worldview as the majority.

Living in a world of empaths makes me vividly aware of how I am different. In John Steinbeck's novel *East of Eden*, he describes a sociopathic character, Cathy:

Even as a child she had some quality that made people look at her, then look away, then look back at her, troubled at something foreign. Something looked out of her eyes, and was never there when one looked again. She moved quietly and talked little, but she could enter no room without causing everyone to turn toward her.

Like Cathy, there has always been something foreign seeming about me. As a sociopath friend of mine put it: "People, no

me. In reality, I had just lost the self-awareness that I had as a child and even as a teenager. Several things that I had come to believe were mirages, and when I inspected them closer they disappeared, leaving absolutely nothing. I quickly realized that, almost without exception, this was true about everything in my life. All of the stories I had recently been spinning about my life were illusions—gaps occupied by part of my brain to fill in a hole, the same way our brain will sometimes fill in gaps in an optical illusion. I had told myself that I was normal, perhaps just a little too smart, but that my feelings were genuine and typical of a young woman my age. Now I felt like I had woken up from a dream. Without actively spinning stories, I had no self. If I had been Buddhist on my path to seeking Nirvana, this lack of self would have been a huge breakthrough, but I didn't feel a sense of accomplishment at having achieved that state. Instead I felt the only way anyone can ever feel without a sense of self—free.

Of course I knew that there were things that I did when I was “engaged.” I laughed and plotted. I manipulated a lot, I realized. Manipulation was my default mode of relating with people. Every relationship felt like a dance of giving and taking that I was constantly trying to choreograph, gauging which dance partners would serve my interests best. I liked things like power and excitement. I had no real interest in the content of my activities, just the skill with which I did them. I loved to seduce, not just sexually, but to inhabit someone's mind so completely, and it was easy—easy to charm. I was a prolific liar, often for no real reason. I was a pleasure seeker, and although I had no real sense of what my self was, I still thought very well of myself. I didn't need a self to exist. I had a unique role in the world: I was like an enzyme among molecules, catalyzing reactions without being affected myself. Or

a virus, looking for a host. I was different from normal people, but I knew that I existed. I acted and interacted. I was largely an illusion, but even an illusion is real in its own way—people experience it, and more important, people respond to it.

I believe that a lot of the sociopath's traits such as charm, manipulation, lying, promiscuity, chameleonism, mask wearing, and lack of empathy are largely attributable to a very weak sense of self. I believe that all personality disorders share a distorted or abnormal sense of self. The concept of a sociopath having an extremely flexible sense of self is not entirely original to me, but it is not often clearly stated in the scientific literature. I compiled my information from piecing together seemingly disparate elements of the literature on sociopaths in a way that conformed with my own personal experience. Psychologists look at the list of sociopathic traits and think they understand the “what,” but they don't understand the “how.” I believe the “how,” the origin of many of our observed behaviors, is that we don't have a rigid sense of self. I believe that this is the predominant defining characteristic of a sociopath.

The person who has gotten closest to identifying this attribute of sociopaths is a professor at California State University-Northridge, Howard Kamler. He argues that “it is not just that [the sociopath] is lacking a strongly identified moral identity, he is likely lacking a strongly identified self identity almost altogether.” When the sociopath feels no sense of remorse, it's due less to a lack of conscience and more to the fact that the sociopath does not feel that he has betrayed himself: “If a person has no strong sense of self in general, then of course he will probably have no strong sense of lost integrity when he violates life projects which for the rest of us would be central parts of our self identities.” For example, I never get upset when I break up with someone, primarily because I

It was puzzling because she had seemed such a strong and confident person in doing her job, facing judges, juries, and some pretty tough lawyers with self-possession. Morgan had a social power at work of which I wanted to have a piece, and in particular, an outsider's hard-won respect that I in many ways wanted to emulate. At first, I really relished the power I had over her. I got sick from enjoyment every time I noticed a crack in her voice or a nonsensical sentence escape from her lips. In those moments my breath would catch, my eyes half-lidded. My pleasure in her discomfort was very visceral, my tongue instinctively running over the jagged edges of my teeth the same way one might salivate and even become overwhelmed a little at the smell of a succulent slab of meat. I think I ran away with it a little.

Morgan couldn't recover. I was winning by too great a margin for her to remain interested in playing the game. I tried to alleviate her nervousness in the same way you'd try to calm an overexcited animal or child—making slow movements, explaining what you are doing, assuring her that there's nothing to worry about and no harm will come. There was a certain amount of condescension in it, an active effort to shame her into seeing how ridiculous it was to be scared of little ole me. The whole thing was a lot of work. I made things worse by getting increasingly disgusted by how weak and afraid she was. One afternoon, she canceled her dinner plans with me, and I could see that it was for no other reason than that I made her nervous. I sat in her office, staring at her with motionless judgment, unable to let myself let her off the hook. It was too satisfying for me to feed her masochism. I pushed the shame tactic too hard, and she stopped speaking to me. I can't remember what in particular I did that ended it. Maybe I implied that she was worthless and teased her about the poor quality of her

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skin. I was genuinely surprised that she wanted to end things, but I shouldn't have been—I had inadvertently made it more appealing to forfeit than to surrender.

I knew I had only one chance to get her back, so I let things cool off for a couple of months before I sent her a seemingly heartfelt but factually insincere e-mail confessing my love and apologies. The apologies were profuse but vague, so that she could apply them to whatever thing she perceived I had done to wrong her. The love was dripping with honey-hued affirmation. I named all the things that I admired about her, or rather, the things that she hoped to have admired. I was sure to include confessions of my own "vulnerabilities," that I thought about her every day—though I thought about her almost every day as a lost object I needed to reclaim. In the e-mail, I said that I loved her several times and made sure to use the past tense, because I wanted her to feel regret for something she didn't even know she had. There isn't anything more crushing than lost love, and there are few more compelling motives than to recapture it. Because she never knew I loved her, and because I didn't, she never even got to savor it. At the end, I threw in a few mild recriminations disguised as insecurities (she made me feel abandoned and bereft) and suggestions that things would be different were we to reunite (though I claimed I had no reason to believe or hope that we would). It was an effective e-mail.

A few weeks later, I heard back from her. She had received my e-mail while on an island vacation with a new girlfriend, the arrival and discussion of which precipitated a minor spat and then a breakup. It gave me satisfaction to know that thoughts of me plagued her while she lay on the beach with her lover. When she came back, we took up again. Her self-devouring weakness hadn't gone away but seemed to have

grown exponentially. She wanted more and more hurt from me, and because I was sufficiently disgusted with her and wanted to oblige her wishes, I was happy to deliver.

After a few months we drifted apart. Morgan quit or was fired from her job and fell into an abyss of eating disorders and substance abuse. I was shocked by how quickly she fell from excelling in her career as a successful trial attorney to jobless dysfunction—it was really only a matter of months. It's a wonder that she's still alive. I cannot take all of the credit for this extreme decline. It was inevitable in her life, due to her desire to be abused. She has almost managed to kill herself so many times you would think she would have succeeded by now if she really set her mind to it. But I guess if she died she would lose any further opportunities to suffer, and the prospect of experiencing more vast and varying shades of pain is what keeps her alive. I guess that made our relationship mutually positive: She wanted to be hurt and I liked to hurt and watch her sink further into depravity. I was only sated when she hit absolute bottom.

I still see her sometimes, but the thrill of the chase disappeared a long time ago. I never loved her of course, but she loves me in her twisted way. I made her believe that I understood needs and desires that she had kept hidden from most everyone else out of fear and shame, that I looked at everything about her and wasn't scared of what I found. It's true that I did. People always say to be careful not to confuse sex and love, but I think they should be more wary of confusing love and understanding. I can read every word of your soul, become deeply engrossed in the study of it until I've comprehended every nuance and detail. But then when I'm done, I'll discard it as easily as if it were a newspaper, shaking my head at how

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the ink has stained my fingers gray. My desire to know every layer of you isn't feigned, but interest isn't love, and I make no promises of forever. Perhaps I do every so often, but you have no business believing me.

One of the manifestations of sociopathy in me is an ambivalence in regards to sex and sexual orientation. Sociopaths are unusually impressionable, very flexible with their own sense of self. Because we don't have a rigid self-image or worldview, we don't observe social norms, we don't have a moral compass, and we have a fluid definition of right and wrong. We can also be shape-shifters, smooth-talking and charming. We do not have an established default position on anything. We do not have anything that we would call conviction. This extends, at least in some degree, to our sexuality.

Indeed, the characteristic of asexuality or sexual ambiguity is noted as one of the symptoms of sociopathy under many of the diagnostic criteria. For example, Cleckley's criteria for psychopathy include sex lives that are "impersonal, trivial, and poorly integrated." I would say that this accurately describes mine. But I feel pretty okay about it.

A friend tells me that what she dislikes the most about my religious values is the ban on premarital sex. Of course I still manage to do a lot of things, but she worries that because sex is so much fun, it's a shame for me to be missing out on any of it. She's a deeply emotional person, though, and I am not at all. I can't help but think the emotional component of sex for her is what makes it so great, whereas the emotional connection I have from physical intimacy is roughly the same as I have while eating junk food (cheeseburgers are great, too!). This is