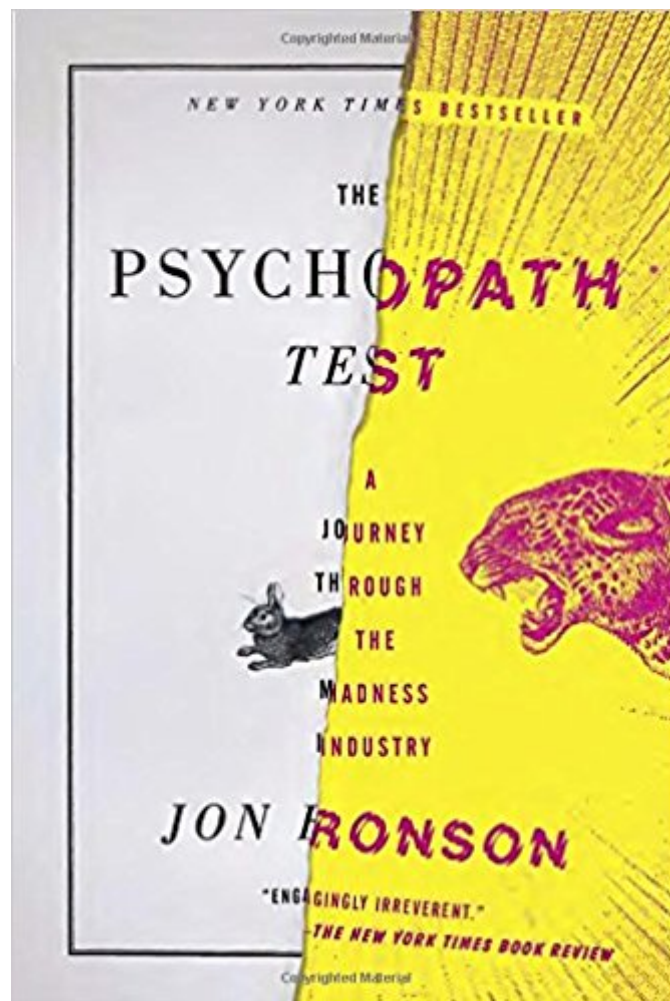




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The Psychopath Test: A Journey Through The Madness Industry



Synopsis

They say one out of every hundred people is a psychopath. You probably passed one on the street today. These are people who have no empathy, who are manipulative, deceitful, charming, seductive, and delusional. The Psychopath Test is the New York Times bestselling exploration of their world and the madness industry. When Jon Ronson is drawn into an elaborate hoax played on some of the world's top scientists, his investigation leads him, unexpectedly, to psychopaths. He meets an influential psychologist who is convinced that many important business leaders and politicians are in fact high-flying, high-functioning psychopaths, and teaches Ronson how to spot them. Armed with these new abilities, Ronson meets a patient inside an asylum for the criminally insane who insists that he's sane, a mere run-of-the-mill troubled youth, not a psychopath—a claim that might be only manipulation, and a sign of his psychopathy. He spends time with a death-squad leader institutionalized for mortgage fraud, and with a legendary CEO who took joy in shutting down factories and firing people. He delves into the fascinating history of psychopathy diagnosis and treatments, from LSD-fueled days-long naked therapy sessions in prisons to attempts to understand serial killers. Along the way, Ronson discovers that relatively ordinary people are, more and more, defined by their most insane edges. The Psychopath Test is a fascinating adventure through the minds of madness.

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Customer Reviews

'People who are psychopathic prey ruthlessly on others using charm, deceit, violence or other

methods that allow them to get what they want. The symptoms of psychopathy include: lack of a conscience or sense of guilt, lack of empathy, egocentricity, pathological lying, repeated violations of social norms, disregard for the law, shallow emotions, and a history of victimizing others.' - Robert Hare, Ph.D.I've been hooked on Jon Ronson's writing since 'The Men Who Stare at Goats' was first published. Ronson cuts right to the heart of important topics by having the guts to ask the difficult questions. His literary style is equal parts journalistic rigour, deep compassion and incisive observational humour that often shines the light of ridicule on darker human behaviours. 'The Psychopath Test' explores psychiatry, psychopathology, medication and incarceration of 'dangerous' individuals. The book reads like a mystery novel, which - driven by Ronson's compelling prose - makes it difficult to put down. The story begins with a meeting between Ronson and a history student who has received a cryptic book called 'Being or Nothingness' in the mail. The same book has been received by several individuals around the globe, most of whom work in the field of psychiatry. The book contains 42 pages, every second one blank. (This made me wonder...in 'The Hitch-hiker's Guide to the Galaxy', the ultimate answer to life, the Universe and Everything was 42. Was this relevant? Was the mysterious author of 'Being or Nothingness' implying that his cryptic messages, if decoded, could lead to enlightenment?

I was absolutely engaged by this book--kept me hoping for more from beginning to end, and though it's written with verve and enthusiasm, although perhaps a bit too breezy from time to time, it never quite lives up to its promise, or, in fact, the startling possibilities of its unsettling premise. That premise is stated succinctly on page 112 (of my Kindle edition). Drawing heavily on the pioneering work of Bob Hare, Ronson provides us with a tentative answer to some of the most perplexing we face in life: "Why is the world so unfair? Why all that savage economic injustice, those brutal wars, the everyday corporate cruelty? The answer: psychopaths. That part of the brain that doesn't function right....We aren't all good people just trying to do good. Some of us are psychopaths. And psychopaths are to blame for this brutal, misshapen society. They're the jagged rocks thrown into the still pond." I audibly gasped when I read that paragraph because it seemed like so much common sense. Our world is as screwed up as it is not because of global warming and corrupt political systems, but because the individuals running it, economically, politically, and socially, are irresponsible, self-absorbed, selfish, egotists who have a grandiose sense of themselves and care little or nothing about the impact of their decisions and actions on others. They have virtually no sense of empathy and are generally pathological liars. They are impulsive and refuse to accept responsibility for their actions. Usually, they demonstrated behavior problems early in their lives and

have conned and manipulated their way through it.

I think it's safe to say that British journalist Jon Ronson is obsessed with obsessives. Known for the book behind the film, *The Men Who Stare At Goats*, he turns his attention in this book to psychopaths—the rare, incredibly manipulative individuals who are devoid of normal human emotion and spend their days treating people as play things to manipulate for their own gain. In the book, Ronson takes us into the fascinating world of psychopaths by speaking to the experts and having amusing conversations with the psychopaths themselves. His conversations with psychopaths provide the book's best moments. Ronson comes across as anxious and easy to manipulate, which really gets the psychopaths to open up with him. He's also quite funny, which makes for some great interviews. One in a hundred people are psychopaths, and those who aren't locked up in prisons can be hard to identify if you don't know what you're looking for. The book includes the actual test developed by Canadian psychologist Robert Hare that determines whether a person is a psychopath. Thankfully, I passed the test and it's quite fun to take it and see how you score on the traits typically seen in psychopaths: a lack of remorse, pathological lying, superficial charm, sexual promiscuity and extreme, self-serving manipulation.

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