

Of course it's funny I'm listening to Whitechapel while I go over this to make sure it's the proper lesson...

One of the things I've come across in my research on personality development for both my own knowledge and understanding, and that of my writer habits, ie this class, is the concept of the Extreme Altruist, often called the X-Altruist.

Let's define what that is first, and talk about why this is even a thing.

Using the definition provided by Behavioral Therapist Andrea Kuszewski, we have the following definition:

Someone who goes out of their way to help others, even at the expense of their own welfare, is actually more likely to break rules than the average person.

<http://blogs.scientificamerican.com/guest-blog/2011/03/31/walking-the-line-between-good-and-evil-the-common-thread-of-heroes-and-villains/>

Think about that for a moment. Does that sound familiar? It should. If you've ever seen a comic book, watched an action adventure film, or know who DC Comics is, you're familiar with this type of personality trait.

These are the obvious characters that take heroism to the extreme. Initially, both altruist and hero possess a greater sense of good, of moral obligation, and both tend to stay within the rules and confines society has created. But the hero takes bold action. The X-Altruist takes this to an extreme, with nary a concern for themselves. The question we must always ask is, why?

For both genders, why? What is the gain? Is it intrinsic value? Considering it's not feeding the ego to do selfless acts, it isn't ego. Since our focus is on men, let me put this out there in terms of looking at the successful men throughout history.

If I had to wager a guess, it would be ultimate procreation of species, and I wouldn't be far off from the truth. Napoleon Hill wrote an entire chapter in *Think and Grow Rich* on the use of

sex transmutation as one of the key powers in learning how to switch and shift our minds toward getting what we wanted out of life, and stated clearly that the only reason a man does anything is for love of a woman.

Now taking this deeper, he continues to say that the men who really made mountains move and found supreme wealth did so in their later years, between the ages of 40 and 50, which works for that time period and I believe is still applicable to a point today. But watching our technology explosion with people like Mark Zuckerberg, or the folks who started up SF company 36 Signals, we can conclude that the game has been changed.

The reason Hill gave, is that a man in that time period has his life together, has the family to think of, his status, and what happens to her and his legacy after he's gone. Men my age (as of this writing I'm 37) tend to be happier and content in long term relationships, and hell may even be married; but our impetus is still on growing and understanding that all-important focus. So, what shifted? Again, wagering a guess I'd say technology sped things up. Money could be attained faster without using the old Industrial Age methods

But you're probably thinking that the X-Altruist isn't concerned with family or propagation of the species, they're just extreme

do-gooders.

That's sadly my thought right now; but this is still a developmental part of the course I'm adding as I dig deeper.

Let's look at what I consider some examples of X-Altruists and examine them from an archetype perspective:

Batman: Definitely the bad boy, if we're talking about Bruce Wayne, because I think we can all see a little hint of mischief in him. But Batman by nature is in your opinion which archetype? Why? What one thing shook up his world to make him go on the journey to face his Shadow Self (a Jungian term) and develop his persona?

Superman: Again, mild mannered Clark Kent is one thing, Superman, another. Extreme tragedy in his case too. What archetype?

The Joker: Guess why I threw him in here?

Anakin Skywalker/Darth Vader: Again, take a guess. Vader actually relates more to our X-Altruist turning sociopath, because the various factors in his world never gave him the break to develop necessary flexible detachments. That is, in the midst of a high stress situation, we act because of emotional responses in the brain; but those emotional responses are shut down during the act of heroism and/or courage, and return to us when the crisis is over. To cope with his tragedies, Skywalker became permanently detached.

The point of all of this is that again, in reality, a man is the sum of his experiences, environment and the make-up of his character.

Does this sound like X-Altruists could be Sociopaths? Could the reverse be true?

Both, according to Behavioral Therapist Andrea Kuszewski, display very similar characteristics:

For the Sociopath:

- Low impulse control
- High novelty-seeking needs (desire to experience new things, high need for arousal)
- Shows no remorse for their actions (lack of conscience, no experienced guilt)
- Inability or unwillingness to see past own needs in order to understand how another feels (lack of exhibited empathy)
- Detached emotionally from situations, personal relationships
- Willing to break rules, defy authority
- Always acts in the interest of himself, in whatever fashion ultimately serves him best (selfish, self-protective)
- Extremely fragile or unstable ego, or self-identity
- Extreme emotional sensitivity

For the X-Altruist:

- Low impulse control
- High novelty-seeking needs (desire to experience new things, high need for arousal)

- Little remorse for their actions (while they may feel guilt over causing harm, they would still do the heroic act again "in a heartbeat")
- Inability to see past the needs of others and experience/ understand their pain (very high exhibited empathy)
- Able to emotionally detach from situations temporarily when necessary, such as during a crisis; engages in Flexible Detachment
- Willingness to break rules and defy authority (will redefine what the rule should be)
- Acts in the best interest of others, or to serve the common good, because it is "the right thing to do" (self-less, puts self in frequent danger during acts of heroism)
- Very resilient ego, or able to repair quickly after damage or threats to identity (Ego Resilience)
- Extreme emotional sensitivity

You can see the similarities here, and apply them to your characters, with obvious ease. But the difference in the two extremes of the same spectrum is that the X-Altruist has what Kuszewski calls two superpowers: Flexible Detachment and Ego Resilience.

One of the things I wanted to know, and this will come about in future versions of this workshop, is with our heroes, back to characters like Zsadi and Zarek, from Ward and Kenyon respectively, is if they've been through so much hardship, so much strife, why are they on the side of good?

Yes, they both operate in their own paradigms; but both operate on the perimeters of those paradigms. Zsadi obeys Wrath and the Brothers, even with his pissy attitude; and while Zarek could give a flying fuck, he still chooses to follow Acheron.

Another question that springs forth to my mind is, what is it about Wrath and Ash that make them such great leaders, that they can sway men who are on the verge of becoming a sociopath to follow them?

Is it because they've found a place? In the start of their novels, they're not with women. In fact, females are the last things on their minds. And what did each author do? She paired them with mates who would tone down, and make okay, some of the noise in their heads.

But neither knew those females were there for them. Does all of this go back to our earlier lesson on what that man's goal in life is? It does, and relates to what he believes he wants, from the perspective of our stories.