Book Reviews

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BOOK REVIEWS

WILLIAM F. BYRON [Ed.]


Dr. Plant, as director of the Essex County Juvenile Clinic, has achieved such national recognition as to justify a volume entirely about his work. However, although this book is based upon his experience in clinical work, it is of far greater importance than a mere recital of his successes and failures or a report of the techniques which he has used.

In the first place, one cannot say that this volume is only a psychiatric work. Instead of being strictly a psychiatric work, it should prove stimulating alike to the sociologist, psychologist, economist, educator, clergyman, psychiatric and penologist.

The outstanding characteristics of this volume are the erudition of the author in so many varied fields and his unusual insight and lack of prejudice in a realm where so many workers are disciples of one particular school of thought. This unusual broadmindedness can be easily seen in his statements regarding his own field. The following are excellent examples of his attitude:

"Because the psychiatrist's training involves a minimum knowledge of sociology and because the outstanding schools of psychiatry have been intensely individualistic in their formulations, psychiatrists have generally and somewhat boldly announced that they are little interested in altering the environment." (P. 29.)

"The psychiatrist has not forgotten the environmental influences about his patients—they serve well to shoulder the 'blame'." (P. 31.)

"Perhaps the psychiatrists are in error in maintaining that security is essential to mental health." (P. 109.)

His introductory section is devoted to a critical evaluation of various concepts of personality, particularly those theories which consider, either by stressing or denying it, the influence of the cultural environment. His discussion of methods used to obtain data for such theories is both challenging and enlightening.

His second section is devoted to a discussion of the interaction of the personality and the environment in which it has existed. His first chapter of this section, which he entitles "The Structure of Personality" contains his own theory of personality. It is probably the most vulnerable chapter of the book; however, a criticism would be based upon a challenge to the author's assumptions by postulating others or by questioning certain terms used to describe certain observed forms of behavior.
The contents of the next chapter in this section are implied in the title of the chapter, "Some Concepts of Classical Psychiatry in Relation to the Pressures of the Environment." From the point of view of the psychiatrist and the psychologist, it is probably the most challenging of this most thought-provoking book.

The remainder of this section is devoted to the interaction of the personality and the environment, particularly as it is found in the family pattern and in that particular type of environment which is called "urban."

The third part of the work is entitled, "Towards an Individual-Centered Culture." It contains chapters on such topics as the family, the school, law and order, social work, medicine, the church, and industry. Each of these contains the author's opinion of the part these institutions play in our society as reflected in the personality of the individual. In addition to these observations and conclusions at which the author has arrived as a result of his experience as a psychiatrist, we find a rich philosophy of society which will probably be of considerable interest to all specialists whose work is mainly concerned with understanding or guiding humans in the various milieux which make up what is called civilization. His philosophy, or perhaps better, his metaphysics (in the derivative sense of the term) is not an armchair system; it is a set of hypotheses toward the proof or disproof of which the author is interested. All of them are challenging and few of them are of the very narrow, specific type which serve so frequently as doctorate theses.

His point of view is eclectic but it is an eclecticism which tries to bring all of our knowledge of humans into one, rather than making a system out of selections from many schools of knowledge, a practice which too often results in many facts but no unity. He writes in a stimulating, condensed, and concise style that causes the reader to cerebrate actively rather than merely to absorb. If the reader is addicted to such practices, he may put an occasional, "Ouch!" in the margin or a few large question marks alongside some sentence or paragraph, as the reviewer has done, but the importance of these disagreements disappears after the book has been digested and one considers the work as a whole.

The format is such that reading is easy, the index is good and complete, and in most cases, references are given to the work of others which he mentions. The volume could be improved by doing this for all authors to whose work he refers.

FREDERICK J. GAUDET.
University of Newark.


The purpose of this voluminous book is clearly stated in these words of the preface: "It is a major task to gather highly scattered materials on theory and practice in such a form as to give the reader an opportunity to see for himself
the validity of the varying points of view and to enable him to further his own thinking on the basis of particular background, experience, and interests" (VIII). The materials are organized under four main headings which read as follows: I. The Social Case Study of Unadjusted Youth and Parents; II. Legal Aspects of Probation; III. Dynamics of Social Therapy in the Work with Unadjusted Youth and Parents; IV. Utilization of Community Resources in the Work with Unadjusted Youth and Parents.

A study of such scope and purpose has, by necessity, its grave handicaps. A most important shortcoming of this volume is the immense accumulation of materials—illustrative reports, citations, references—which, in spite of chapter titles and index, the novice can hardly perceive in their total extension and interrelation, and discern in their distinctive and specific items. A second shortcoming is the lack of a specified methodology and of basic discussions. Although the author emphasizes, that it is not her intention to discuss theory, the mere presentation of materials without some sort of a distinct conceptual and methodological order leads to bewilderment rather than to clarification. The non-experienced student finds himself in a maze of facts, statements, and opinions, and looks in vain for a clue of thread to guide him out of the labyrinth of theoretical and material fragments.

On the other hand, this diligently and laboriously written book has its merits in that it offers, to the experienced student and practitioner, a comprehensive demonstration of the field in its full width and length, in all its complexity and perplexity. Its rich store of information may well replace a whole library on juvenile delinquency, and will thereby answer a need which has grown with the threatening growth of some valid and much superfluous literature in this field.

WALTER BECK.

Boston, Mass.

Breslau, Germany.

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This book is a study of crime and punishment among the Australian aborigines, a contemporary hunting and wild-food collecting people who lack domesticated animals, cultivated plants and sedentary activities in general and whose material culture is reminiscent of Palaeolithic Europe. The author's investigation is motivated by an interest to bring together and organize the available evidence in the ethnographic literature in order that it may be of use to ethnologists and to those interested in philosophy of law and in the history of the development of legal institutions.

In order to arrive at an understanding of aboriginal concepts of law and its practical application the author attempts to determine purely aboriginal conditions by eliminating from consideration acts and attitudes engendered directly or indirectly by the near or distant presence of Europeans (mass trespass by expatriated hordes and families, prostitution, concepts of
private ownership of food animals, new diseases, disrespect for and disregard of sacred aboriginal institutions, such as marriage and ceremonies, by natives living in regions under white control where punishment is impossible, theft, etc., etc.). He thus finds that property law, law protecting physical safety, and marriage and family law are common components of all tribes of record although there is such variation from region to region that the full significance of the available data cannot be clearly discerned at the moment. Much of this confusion is attributable to the difficulty of securing satisfactory evidence. Most early writers, travellers, explorers, etc., who had the opportunity to observe the natives before European influences seriously disrupted aboriginal conditions of life, gave only passing attention to crime. They may have witnessed an act of punishment but often if not usually had no clear conception of aboriginal codes of behavior or of the motives which induced specific violations of them. Hence their testimony leaves much to be desired in any attempt to organize the evidence in scientific fashion. However, Dr. Harrasser has carefully exhausted the literature to 1931 and documents all sources no matter how brief or how ambiguous.

The author gives detailed attention to subjects such as sex and marriage regulations (which in the light of recent studies needs revision), murder, infanticide, and magic (which in aboriginal thought is of extreme importance as an agency of crime and as a means of punishment for wrongdoing). The book contains many findings of theoretical interest to several sciences. For instance, jurists, criminologists and psychiatrists will find food for thought in the evidence that Australian women do not commit murder (although they do practice infanticide which in Australian society is not a criminal act). Such a condition reveals the important influence of culture in molding behavior patterns, a significant consideration which many theorists still fail to recognize.

Ethnologists and students of comparative jurisprudence are indebted to Dr. Harrasser for organizing a vast amount of data on aboriginal Australian concepts of crime and punishment. His book furnishes an excellent comparative background for use with the more recent field studies on the aborigines.

D. S. DAVIDSON.
University of Pennsylvania.


In this book, the author, an acknowledged criminal, relates his experiences over a period of years in the world of crime. He writes with the egotism inherent in all criminals. Also with an underlying contempt for what he terms "The Law." This of course is a part of criminal psychology. However, this work which has been painstakingly checked over by Professor Sutherland of the Sociological Department of Indiana University tells nothing new.
Any number of books have treated this same subject. This seems to be the work of a small-time criminal. While apparently written in frank and candid form the topics discussed are factual without being really expository. There is little doubt as to the authenticity of this work, yet it can be stated positively that the reader will know very little more about the actual profession of thievery upon his completion of the book. The supplementary notes are far more illuminating than the work itself.

The chapters on "The Fix" and "The Thief and the Law" are the salient contributions this work offers. While the various incidents related in these chapters are widespread insofar as territory covered they do not attempt at any time, and rightfully so, to show that there is such a thing as a national hook-up of crime and politics. This is diametrically opposed to what so many of the more sensational newspapers at times would lead one to believe. However, they do prove the thorough rottenness of the law enforcing bodies and it takes little imagination to see where the work of stamping out crime should begin. They prove crime cannot be controlled by proceeding against or punishing a single individual. What should be done and how? The facts are here. It is the thoughts which these chapters bring into being that gives the complete book its value.

The book may prove of some value to students of criminology and sociology but cannot be accepted as complete in either description or explanation. As Professor Sutherland so aptly sums up in his chapter titled "Conclusion," "This study of the professional thief obviously raises more problems than it solves. Additional studies should be made on all the topics which have been discussed." This is practically as good a summation as one could make inasmuch as the work raises many questions which it fails to answer adequately. Viewed from this standpoint it may prove of value to the student in giving rise to further research.

The reviewer having perused some of professor Sutherland's previous work in this field feels that this entire effort is merely the opening chapter to a more detailed exposition of the various aspects and ramifications of the "profession;" something of real import to both science and society.*

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In this book the author includes enough of the historical background of the concept of mental disease and the treatment of the mentally ill to enable the reader to appreciate the trends in American thought and practice during the last decades in reference to mental disorders. Our source of its strong appeal to readers in our day is in the fact that the author never separates his subject from the culture pattern of the times. The recognition of mental disease and its treatment and rates of progress that

* The above review was written by a man whose criminal record indicates his right to call himself—were he so minded—a major rather than a minor thief.
vary from place to place are always associated with cultural backgrounds.

Chapter headings are as follows:

1. Prophets, Demons and Witches.
2. Colonial America: The Old World Heritage.
7. Retrogression: Over the Hill to the Poorhouse.
10. Mid-Century Psychiatrists.
11. Conflict of Theories: Restraint or Non-Restraint?
12. The Trend Toward State Care.
13. State Care: Exodus from the Poorhouse.
14. Psychiatry Emerges from Isolation.
15. The Mental Hygiene Movement and Its Founder.
16. Historical Backgrounds of Mental Defect.
18. Insanity and the Criminal Law.
19. Our Commitment Laws.
20. Modern Trends in Institutional Care and Treatment.

There is a Bibliography of approximately 380 titles.

"Of course, psychiatry can offer no panacea for the solution of fundamental problems in the criminal law. Truly basic solutions wait upon profound changes in the whole socio-economic structure of society. In the meantime the progressive psychiatrist and the criminologist can join forces in carrying forward a program bringing closer to fruition the idea of the criminal court as a clinic dedicated to the scientific solution of problems of social maladjustment replacing its present function as a blind, retributive tribunal."

ROBERT H. GAULT.
Northwestern University.