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Review of the Psychology of Crime by David Abrahamsen

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Book Reviews


Dr. Abrahamsen has attempted in this book to examine the relationship between psychology and crime. Because the subject matter encompasses such a vast field, he has only been able to explore such relationship in a cursory manner. But for the layman and dilettante this work might be used as a textbook in a survey educational course in criminal psychology.

The author has attempted to devise a scientific series of mathematical formulae to explain the causative factors which result in criminal phenomena. For example, he cites the formula

\[ C = \frac{T + S}{R} \]

or a Criminal act is the sum of a person's criminalistic Tendencies plus his total Situation divided by the amount of his Resistance. He further declares that such mathematical formula may be used to understand all types of human behavior. But the author immediately, upon sharing this formula with us, admits that it may not "appear" to cover indirect types of anti-social and criminal acts. Perhaps this is a reluctant unconscious admission that psychology and psychiatry have not yet reached that stage of development in the field of science wherein the infinite complexities of human behavior can be described and measured within the confines of mathematical formulae.

This reviewer found of particular interest the factors relating to family tension and juvenile delinquency. The causative factor—family tension—may explain why juvenile delinquency is not limited to children residing in slums and poverty-ridden areas, but arises out of middle class and wealthy families as well.

To the law student, the discussion on criminal law and psychology is of particular importance. Dr. Abrahamsen describes the history of the various rules of criminal responsibility in questions of insanity, such as M'Naghten, Durham, and the American Law Institute Rule, the last of which has been adopted recently by Kentucky in the case of Terry v. Commonwealth, 371 S.W.2d 862 (Ky. 1963), in which the M'Naghten Rule was abandoned. Finally the author offers suggestions for the prevention of crime which should be carefully considered by those who create, interpret and administer our criminal statutes.
We recommend *The Psychology of Crime* to the members and aspirants of the bar as an instructive insight into the causative factors of crime and its relationship to prevention and cure. Whether the reader will agree with the author's conclusions or not, he will certainly be made aware of another facet of the ageless problem of crime and punishment.

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