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**Book Reviews: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CRIME. By David  
Abrahamsen and BUREAUCRACY ON TRIAL, POLICY MAKING BY  
GOVERNMENT AGENCIES. By William W. Boyer**

Bradford N. Bunnell

Daniel L. Rotenberg

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## BOOK REVIEWS

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CRIME. By *David Abrahamsen*. Pp. 358. Wiley Science Editions, New York, 1964. \$1.95.

Dr. Abrahamsen is a psychiatrist who has studied and written extensively about crime and criminals.<sup>1</sup> In *The Psychology of Crime*, he develops the thesis that criminal behavior is the product of a complex, dynamic interaction between the criminal's personality and his social environment. The purpose is not only to identify and describe the causal elements which combine to produce criminal acts, but also to use the insights gained from such an analysis to specify the direction which prevention and rehabilitation procedures should follow.

For this review, the book may be divided into three sections, the first of which presents an overview of the factors and processes which produce criminal behavior. According to Abrahamsen, the fundamental principles which operate to produce criminal acts are identical with those which govern normal social conduct. The difference between the offender and the nonoffender is one of degree rather than kind, with the offender using different means for the expression of his basic needs and a different object for the expression of his aggressions.

Behavior, be it social, antisocial, or criminal, is determined by an interaction between the individual and the external pressures exerted by his society at large, his community and its subcultures, and his family. The author cites a number of examples of social pathology such as the heavy emphasis on competition and material success in the American culture, problems created by deteriorated neighborhoods, dislocations due to immigration and migration, and parental neglect of children. These factors may all contribute to an increased crime rate, but some individuals exposed to a given set of factors become criminal while others, exposed to the same conditions, do not. The reason for this must depend, in part, on differences between individuals. Further, it is proposed that a reciprocal relationship exists between the individual and the social field such that the individual and his environment constitute a functional unit. This complicates the causal analysis of a criminal act because it means that not only the contributing elements themselves, but also the nature of the interactive processes must be identified before an understanding of why the behavior occurred can be achieved.

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1. Dr. Abrahamsen is Director of Scientific Research for the Department of Mental Hygiene of the State of New York. He has served as Chairman of the U.S. Commission on Juvenile Delinquency Section on Childhood Disorders and as a member of the New York governor's commission to propose new legislation on the definition of legal insanity. His books include: *CRIME AND THE HUMAN MIND*; *MEN, MIND AND POWER*; and, *WHO ARE THE GUILTY?—A STUDY OF EDUCATION AND CRIME*.

There are innumerable ways in which sociological and individual factors can combine. This leads to Abrahamsen's first law for a science of criminology: "A multiplicity of causative factors go into the making of criminal behavior. Since these causative factors vary qualitatively and quantitatively with each case, the causation of criminal behavior is relative" (p. 30). A second law is then built upon the first: "A criminal act is the sum of a person's criminalistic tendencies plus his total situation, divided by the amount of his resistance" (p. 37).

In the second portion of the book are several chapters devoted to a detailed application of this theory to problem areas that are particularly salient for the field of criminology. Drawing extensively upon his own studies of criminals and of emotionally disturbed nonoffenders, Abrahamson uses both case histories and experimental data in discussing juvenile delinquency, the relationship between psychosomatic disorders and crime, differences between offenders and emotionally disturbed nonoffenders and between acute and chronic offenders, the sex offender, and the murderer.

The orientation to this material is Freudian, and the reader may find the going rather heavy despite the fact that most of the terms are defined in the text. In addition, there is the danger that the psychoanalytic interpretation falls short of a satisfactory explanation of the dynamics of behavior. Psychoanalytic theory makes a number of assumptions about the nature of man and the structure and development of his personality which may or may not be valid. When the psychiatrist makes inferences about personality from the behavior and the past history of an individual, and does so in terms of such concepts as *id*, *ego*, and *superego*, psychosexual development, etc., the net result often seems to border on the mystical. One is frequently forced to accept the assertions of the interpreter on faith; there is no way of confirming the interpretation and it remains a subjective judgment no matter how experienced the interpreter may be. Furthermore, because the assumptions upon which Freudian theory rests are accepted unquestionably by its practitioners, there is the possibility that areas of significance to the understanding of behavior may not be studied. For example, one may simply accept the statement: "All our tendencies—social, antisocial, or criminal—are linked to our needs and desires, which arise from our instincts (our libido, or life force) and which have been approved or disapproved by our ego and superego" (p. 36). In this case, the behavioral question becomes one of understanding the means by which the "instinctual" needs and desires are controlled or regulated. If, on the other hand, the instinctive basis of needs and desires is left as an open question, research may be directed toward achieving a fuller understanding of the origins and ontogeny of the needs themselves. The point is that classifying needs and desires as instinctive does not serve to explain them, and the use of the term instinct as an explanation may blind the investigator to areas which need more intensive investigation.

Although one may take issue with the details of a strict psychoanalytic interpretation of personality dynamics, there is much to be gained from approaching the material from this point of view. Part of our Freudian heritage is the deterministic philosophy which asserts that behavior is lawful and that cause and effect relationships can be found for every act of man. In this sense, then, there is no such thing as "senseless" crime and criminal behavior is always the resultant of factors which interact according to identifiable principles. If this is the case, then crime can be predicted, and if it can be predicted then, theoretically at least, it can be controlled. In addition Abrahamsen is able to utilize an existing theory of personality and its concepts to handle socially deviant behavior without finding it necessary to introduce new postulates or concepts. The implication is not only that criminal behavior is governed by a set of lawful relationships, but that the principles which operate are the same for criminal and noncriminal acts.

A second benefit to be derived from this approach is the emphasis it places on the importance of the early years in the development of the individual. Quite apart from whether or not one accepts the Freudian ideas about the stages of psychosexual development there is a substantial body of data from both psychology and biology which demonstrates the tremendous significance of early experience for the behavior of the adult.

Finally, consistent differences can be detected between offenders and nonoffenders, between acute and chronic offenders, and between certain types of offenders. Whether or not these differences need to be specified in terms of the jargon of psychoanalysis is not essential to the major issue. The approach which has been used is sensitive to the detection of individual differences and the data which it produces are real. They may be organized in terms of a psychoanalytic frame of reference, in terms of some other theory of personality, or simply taken at an empirical level.

The last chapters contain a description of the proper procedure and use of the psychiatric examination, a discussion of the relationship between criminal law and psychiatry, and comments on the effectiveness of various methods for the rehabilitation of criminals and the prevention of crime. Abrahamsen has had considerable experience in the field of criminal law and he provides an interesting discussion of the M'Naghten and Durham rulings and of the current status of the law with respect to youthful offenders, sexual offenders, and mentally abnormal offenders from the point of view of the psychiatrist.

He urges the passage of a law, similar to that of Norway where special treatment of mentally abnormal but not legally insane offenders is provided. This would place maximum emphasis upon prevention and rehabilitation as opposed to punishment, help to depopulate the prisons, and still protect society by providing differing degrees of custody during the

sentence depending upon the likelihood that a person will continue his criminal activities. The difficulty in differentiation between the abnormal offender and the offender in which there is no apparent mental pathology is acknowledged but Abrahamsen apparently feels that the problem can be largely overcome with the aid of adequate psychiatric examinations.

Abrahamsen does not believe in incarceration for the purpose of punishment or retaliation. Jailing an offender serves as a deterrent only while the offender is in jail—the personality of many criminals is such that: “The threat of punishment does not prevent a man from killing, robbing, raping, or committing any other crime. When a person commits a crime, he does not think of the consequences. The offender commits a crime because criminality is his outlet, just as the seriously mentally ill person’s outlet is a psychosis. This is why the argument for the maintenance of capital punishment on the grounds that fear of the death penalty will keep a potential murderer from committing his crime is invalid . . .” (p. 274).

Incarceration, then, may be necessary to protect society, but in and of itself it is not likely to attenuate a criminal’s activities once he is released from custody. Rehabilitation procedures must be implemented and the author emphasizes the employment of psychotherapeutic techniques in accomplishing this end. One wonders where the facilities and personnel needed to implement this program will come from, but the high cost of crime in terms of both economic and humanitarian considerations are a strong argument for accelerating the implementation of the type of program he suggests.

Since the development of criminal traits is seen to be closely related to the individual’s early experiences, Dr. Abrahamsen places considerable emphasis upon the elimination of juvenile delinquency and its causes as a necessary prerequisite for the prevention of crime. In his last chapter he presents his proposal for a mental health program and defines the sociological and psychological responsibilities which must be met by the family, the schools, the community, and state and national programs in crime prevention.

This book is an interesting statement about the nature of crime from the point of view of a psychiatrist who is highly experienced in dealing with problems of both criminal law and human behavior. Because he recognizes and accepts the dual nature of the responsibility of the psychiatrist who must uphold the law and protect society as well as concern himself with the motivation, treatment, and prognosis of the criminal, Abrahamsen is able to offer a reasonable approach to the resolution of the conflicts which exist between existing laws and his judgment of what constitutes optimal psychiatric practices.

One difficulty with the book is that there is an occasional lack of internal consistency in some of the discussions of personality dynamics which can

be disconcerting. For example, in one instance the psychopath is described as a person who has not developed any superego structure (conscience); this is the type of person who may become a profit murderer (pp. 143-144). Later, profit murderers are described as persons who ". . . act in accordance with their own special concept of life and the rules of society. As a result of this faulty concept, murder is condoned by their whole personality—by their ego and superego alike." (p. 205). The question of whether the profit murderer does or does not have a superego may be relatively unimportant for the main point at issue, but this sort of conceptual fuzziness does not enhance one's confidence in the author's assertions about the personality structure of the criminal. Nevertheless, the author's main points are expounded quite clearly, and *The Psychology of Crime* deserves to be read by those who are concerned with problems of criminal behavior.

*Bradford N. Bunnell\**

BUREAUCRACY ON TRIAL, POLICY MAKING BY GOVERNMENT AGENCIES.  
By *William W. Boyer*. Pp. 184. Bobbs-Merrill Company, Indianapolis, 1964. \$1.95.

This volume is one of a series of advanced studies in political science published by Bobbs-Merrill "designed to provide a needed outlet for research at the frontiers of social science." Although the book is an outgrowth of Professor Boyer's studies of the administrative process in Wisconsin, it is not limited either to Wisconsin or state administrative agencies but encompasses the administrative process as it exists at all levels of American government.

The book, as I read it, serves two separate purposes. At the descriptive level, it narrates the procedures of policy making; at the evaluation level, it cautions against omitting the "public" or "democratic" concept from policy making. The stress is on the second purpose. The book does not purport to be definitive. It is to be rather an incentive to further research and thought.

The author's specific caveat is that there are at least two nerve points in administrative policy making at which the voice of the public must be heard if administrative agencies are to function in conformity with the principles of American government. The first concerns the legislative delegation of policy-making authority to non-representative appointees—the bureaucrats.<sup>1</sup> He does not challenge the delegation but asks that the repre-

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\* Associate Professor of Psychology, University of Florida.

1. The author uses this word to refer to appointed administrative officials. In my opinion it should not be used. The word has too many meanings, and to some it is clearly a pejorative. Similarly, the title BUREAUCRACY ON TRIAL communicates nothing and is saved only by its subtitle.

sentatives of the people, the legislature, keep watch on the way this delegated power is exercised. To allow the bureaucrats to make legislative policy without supervision by the public or its vicars is unacceptable.

The second point concerns the formulation of policy by administrative agencies. Here he mandates that the public be heard on the substantive issue of what a given policy should be.

Will administrative agencies be flooded with the light of public supervision, public thought, public participation, or will they become autocratic institutions governing but not governed by the public? It is this type question that prompts the author to state in his title that "Bureaucracy [is] on Trial."

The book dissatisfies the reviewer in several respects. The author treats his subject for the most part in general terms, as he must if he is going to write a short book and discuss policy making as a concept and not limit the area to, for example, state administrative issues, or policy making by one or two agencies. The fact of generality weakens the author's contribution. The central problems of the author are inherent in the administrative process, and thus they seem to be at least twenty-five years old. Had he chosen to discuss "Administrative Policy Making *Still* on Trial" with emphasis upon recent policy-making efforts and innovations, the topic would be timely. The conclusion is that little new is contributed by the author.

There is another observation which this book prompts. If this work typifies "advanced studies" in political science, then that discipline, speaking generally, has little to offer the lawyer audience; by contrast, sociology, often ahead of the lawyer in isolating and theorizing about social problems, has a great deal to contribute if sociologists would try to communicate their ideas.<sup>2</sup> Certainly it is vital that the three disciplines of law, sociology, and political science, with their different perspectives, work toward cooperative efforts in the solving of social problems.

Notwithstanding these criticisms, the book does serve an important purpose in focusing on a current problem of great concern: the two-sided issue of privacy for private affairs and publicity for public matters. The process of drawing the line between these ideals is going on regularly today. The author calls our attention to the fact that administrative policy making is a public matter requiring publicity. This is true, but the difficult challenge is in carving out the respective areas of publicity and privacy in administrative policy making.

*Daniel L. Rotenberg\**

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2. In one instance (pp. 169-74) the author adopts an obfuscatory word from sociology: co-optation. In so doing he combines the weaknesses of both disciplines.

\* Associate Professor of Law, University of Houston, College of Law.