

can be highly recommended to professional scientists and to laymen who definitely wish to understand more of science and those who practise it. It could prove very attractive to senior school pupils in science who wish to acquire a clear picture of the breadth and depth of the fields ahead of them.

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## THE MIND OF THE CRIMINAL

### The Psychology of Crime

By David Abrahamsen. Pp. xii + 358. (New York: Columbia University Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1960.) 48s. net.

AFTER his first comprehensive study, *Crime and the Human Mind* (New York, Columbia University Press; 1944), Dr. Abrahamsen offers in his recent book a reappraisal and critical assessment of the dynamics of criminal behaviour and, based on this, on the treatment of offenders and the prevention of crime. The book is an American counterpart of Edward Glover's *Roots of Crime* (Imago Publishing Co., London, 1959). It is one more contribution to criminology from the point of view of psychoanalysis, discussed in the light of the author's practical experience in the clinical examination of criminals and his research project on sexual offenders in the New York prison of Sing Sing.

Dr. Abrahamsen reaffirms certain fundamental results of dynamic psychology, the importance of experience in early childhood, the part played by emotional disturbance in the origins of a social and anti-social behaviour, and the significance of the unconscious for the explanation of apparently motiveless crimes. The psychoanalytical doctrine of the development of the child's mental life through different distinct stages offers an explanation of the manifest immaturity of many criminals as a regression, a fixation of an earlier stage, especially in the sexual sphere.

The multiple and relative character of crime causation is clearly seen with the infinite combinations of inclinations, environmental conditions and the degree of personal resistance. In the author's experience, emotional deprivation with its damaging effect on future personal relationships is a frequent cause of deviant behaviour. The latter may be either neurotic or criminal, an important distinction with regard to the origin and forms of manifestation and to the choice of treatment. As a forensic expert on insanity, Dr. Abrahamsen is, at the present state of our knowledge, reluctant to say in accordance with the Durham-doctrine whether a particular crime is the outcome of a specific mental disturbance. He rather prefers to interpret the McNaghten rules liberally; 'knowing' the wrongful character of one's act means not only intellectual perceiving, but also emotional understanding (p. 254). Prisons, though indispensable for secure segregation of dangerous criminals, are failures so far as treatment is concerned (p. 273). Only a detailed knowledge of the offender's character development from early childhood onwards and of the personal influences around him provides a reliable prognosis of persistent dangerousness, or susceptibility to treatment which should bring to the surface any positive traits on which something constructive could be built.

It is the merit of this book that it is not a mere collection of facts and figures but an interpretation

of the empirical material. A psychoanalytical exploration of the unconscious relies on the interpretation by the examining psychiatrist. In an admirable chapter on the examination of offenders (p. 208 *seqq.*) the author rightly asserts that it requires intuition, if not art, to diagnose a human personality. At the same time, theoretical doctrines have to be adapted to the realities of present-day life. While traditional standards become unstable and relative, the treatment of deviant behaviour is less concerned with neurotic effects of suppression than with character disorders "reflecting a distorted ego and super-ego structure acting out" into crime (p. 64).

The lasting contribution of modern medical psychology to the study of crime is the insistence on intensive examinations of individual offenders. This is the keynote of the present book. Only when it comes to conclusions, certain generalizations and typified analytical conceptions are not always avoided. Guilt feeling is certainly often the basis of anxiety, but one likes to see more evidence of a craving for punishment as a frequent motivation of crime; the accident proneness of offenders may often be due to indifference, recklessness or, among certain personalities, to excessive day-dreaming. There are probably more and different motivations of shoplifting by women than the sexual interpretation offered by psychoanalysts. Perhaps the time will come when psychologists and sociologists join hands in a common effort to master the complex phenomena of crime.

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## PLANNING FOR EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

### The Year Book of Education, 1961

Concepts of Excellence in Education edited by Prof. George Z. F. Bereday and Prof. Joseph A. Lauwerys. Pp. x + 503. (London: Evans Brothers, Ltd., 1961. Published in association with the University of London Institute of Education, and Teachers College, Columbia University, New York.) 63s. net.

THE editors have chosen this year to concentrate on a field of study which is the scene of acute contemporary controversy. In doing so, they have performed a valuable public service, and if the *Year Book* suffers, as it always must, from the very varied degrees of excellence in its own contributions, it cannot be faulted in its main conception. America, Europe (including Britain) and the Soviet Block are all concerned to-day with concepts of excellence in education and with the practical question of how the education of those who excel should be planned. Debate on the subject has become heated, particularly in Britain, and this massive addition to our information should do something to weaken the force of arguments which are based on nothing but a combination of 'hunch' and ignorance. "It is really most astonishing", the general introduction points out, "that successes achieved in the U.S.S.R. with a common non-selective secondary school system should be used in Western European countries like Britain to justify the existence of a selective secondary system."

The first section of the book, which consists of a series of essays on different concepts of excellence, is the weakest. One gets, for example, an interesting account of the Yugoslav school system, a historical