

BOOK REVIEWS—cont.

due. Nor should praise be grudged for this book as a whole. It is well written, excellently observed, and gives a vivid picture of what it feels like to be a prisoner at Holloway. Small evocative details bring the very sights and sounds of the prison before the reader and Jane Buxton's illustrations are both restrained and moving.

M. E. G. STOCKER

THE EXPLANATION OF CRIMINALITY

Gordon Trasler

International Library of Sociology & Social Reconstruction.

Routledge & Kegan Paul.

20s. 0d.

THIS BOOK is not easy reading. Its style varies from a rigorous exposition of scientific method to a somewhat polemical survey of the problems encountered by psychologists working in penal institutions.

That is a pity, because the core of Dr. Trasler's argument is important and cogently presented. He is concerned with the lack of a scientifically based theory of criminality within which research and methods of treatment can be developed and evaluated. He suggests that the modern theory of learning as a conditioning process may provide the necessary basis. This defines social training as the efficient conditioning of anxiety to produce "passive avoidance" behaviour in the face of anti-social temptations, opportunities and even of anti-social thoughts. Its mechanism, the context of the latest sociological findings and the theory's use in indicating profitable lines of

enquiry are discussed in some detail. Criminal behaviour, on this view, is the result of ineffective social training.

However, Dr. Trasler appears to miss-state the psychoanalytic position and consequently to undervalue the current contribution of prison psychologists to treatment. He dismisses analytic method as "intuitive" and unable to produce specific predictions of behaviour. Surely its basic tenets are that each individual seeks optimal satisfaction; that good social adjustment is part of such satisfaction (except where *deliberately* sacrificed for other reasons); that its achievement is often hindered by emotional attitudes carried over from childhood; and that hindrances can be removed by bringing them to consciousness. It is not the *analyst* who has to be convinced of their existence, but the patient who, finding himself liberated from old bonds, can proceed to a better adjustment to present reality. There seems no reason why treatment on these lines cannot be tested by follow-up studies. Specific predictions would seem to be unnecessary.

Dr. Trasler wants prison psychologists to make recommendations which are "the result of theoretical deductions based upon accurate observations, which will usually take the form of quantified test data". Instead, he says, we are given a general picture of such parts of a man's personality and abilities as can be measured by existing tests, which is not necessarily relevant to the *causes* of his criminality. He overlooks the

BOOK REVIEWS—cont.

usefulness of this information in estimating how a man uses his potentialities. In our training establishments we are in fact, groping towards analytic application of it, believing that if a man can be helped to use his potentialities in a socially acceptable way the satisfactions he will obtain will be greater than those hitherto obtained through criminal acts, and his behaviour will alter accordingly.

Also, Dr. Trasler seems to part company with good sense in asking that our establishments become laboratories until the psychologists eventually come up with a refined theory, embodying "quantified data" (implying that then our training problems will be solved by reference to a few principles and a table of psychological logarithms). It is when they approach human problems in such euphoric confidence that scientists seem not only simple-minded but often cold-bloodedly inhuman. For example, discussing child training, Dr. Trasler treats "affection" purely as a factor in creating a requisite dependant on the parents so that anxiety conditioning becomes possible. It is widely agreed that love is the essential element in child rearing; that good technique without it is as ineffective as the mere simulation of good man-management technique in promoting good industrial relations. But one can coolly "quantify" the giving of love without destroying its value to the recipient? And does not the same

hold for other emotionally derived attitudes?

I would like to see Dr. Trasler's researches pursued, but let us be very sure what recommendations for reformative action this Trojan horse of a theory produces before welcoming it unreservedly.

E.V.H.W.

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THE HOMOSEXUAL SOCIETY

Richard Hauser

The Bodley Head, 1962. pp. 166. Price 18s.

"EFFORTS should be made to destroy the myth which represents the homosexual life as something noble, artistic, superior. Instead it should be shown to be the result of social stress which has retarded a person socially and bodily and as such may be equated with enuresis."

Once Mr. Hauser has diagnosed the homosexual problem in this way he goes on to stress the need in society for advice centres readily available to youths and men who may be anxious and miserable and also to parents, teachers and others responsible for the young who may need help. If one such centre could be opened in the near future as a pilot scheme and be allowed to grow from small beginnings into a multi-purpose service then he feels that a great stride forward would have been made in helping such socially sick people.

At the outset the author indicates his method by taking to task "the Art which is called Social