

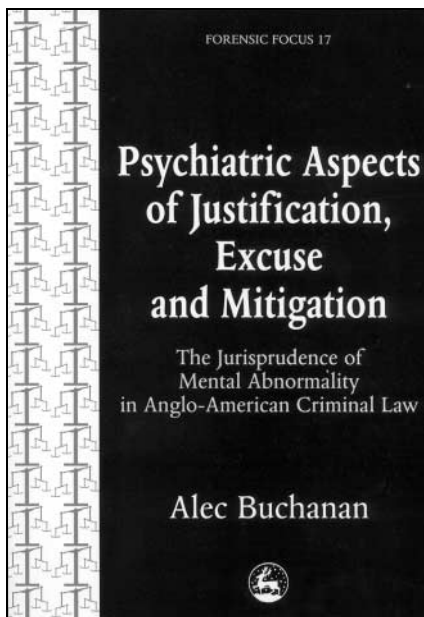
material from separate contributors might have been integrated across chapters to produce a more satisfying whole.

Overall, this is a useful and up-to-date volume, which anyone with an interest in schizophrenia would do well to possess, despite my caveats.

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Psychiatric Aspects of Justification, Excuse and Mitigation: The Jurisprudence of Mental Abnormality in Anglo-American Criminal Law

By Alec Buchanan. London: Jessica Kingsley, 2000. 160 pp (pb). ISBN 1 85302 797 9



This excellent study deals thoroughly with three of the most difficult aspects of the concepts of criminal responsibility. It is concerned principally with the mental states of the title and how the courts establish and deal with them.

As is well-known, the traditional legal background divides crimes into those that require *mens rea* (literally, a guilty mind) and those that merely require proof that the accused has committed the criminal act. That traditional distinction, like so much else in the legal system, is clear but by no means free of difficulty. The three mental states considered in this study are equally

liable to confuse, especially as they have differing impacts upon the establishment of guilt, as well as being relevant to the choice of the appropriate sentence to be determined by the court where guilt has been established.

Much of legal doctrine is more like the deck of an ocean liner than dry land – there is much beneath its shifting surface. Since the mental states that have to be considered deal with the mind of the accused they clearly are difficult to determine. Many cases rely on psychiatry to give important insights that may assist both in the determination of guilt and, where there is a conviction, the appropriate sentence.

The mental state of an accused is of particular importance to the question of guilt in serious crimes. There are, however, vast numbers of crimes and offences defined in statute law that do not require that mental element. But in such cases the mental state of the accused will, very often, be an important consideration when it comes to the determination of sentence. It may mitigate the crime (or on occasion, stress its wickedness) and so affect the sentence imposed by the court. Usually it will lead to a reduction of the usual tariff or to the use of other forms of disposal such as a period of probation or, where the mental state is appropriate, detention in hospital for the protection of both the individual concerned and society in general.

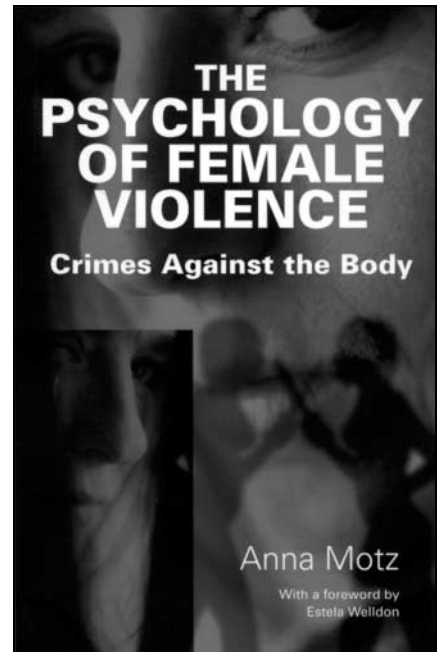
The mental element does not arise in absolute offences, which are defined by statute as solely requiring the prohibited act. This arises from common sense, since the admission of the concept of *mens rea* to minor motoring offences, even if sensible, would be a nightmare for the courts. In these offences, once the necessary acts are proved, the mind of the accused is not relevant to the question of guilt – the sole question is ‘Did he do it?’, as most motorists tend to find out at some time or another. Of course, it will be a factor in the determination of severity of sentence.

The text is plainly intended for the academic rather than the general reader, although the attention to detail is accompanied by an excellent clarity of style. Buchanan, a forensic psychologist at the Institute of Psychiatry in London, has written a comprehensive study on a topic of particular importance to forensic psychiatrists or those having fairly frequent contact with the courts.

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The Psychology of Female Violence: Crimes Against the Body

By Anna Motz. Hove: Brunner-Routledge, 2001. 290 pp. £15.99 (pb). ISBN 0 415 12675 4



This book will please many, not be understood by some and displease others. Written by a chartered clinical and forensic psychologist from a psychodynamic viewpoint, consideration is given to three areas of female violence: violence against children, violence against the self, and violence against others. Case illustrations are included throughout and, although some are useful, others are distracting and a small minority misleading. The inclusion of self-harm and anorexia nervosa as forms of violence (albeit self-directed) is controversial and allows for interesting debate. Other important aspects of female violence have been omitted, although the author acknowledges this.

Although reference is made to the literature, Motz does not seek to present a review of current theoretical perspectives. She draws heavily on the work of Estela Welldon, particularly for the first (and longest) section, and the book would be of most benefit to those with an awareness of Welldon's writing. Motz writes with clarity, and I found the book readable, although sometimes frustrating. As a forensic psychiatrist, I was particularly disappointed with the final section, which contained a number of errors and misleading statements in relation to battered

women who kill. The perspective offered is narrow in some parts, and the topics covered are limited. Those that are considered, however, are generally explored thoroughly.

Overall, I do not feel that this is a useful book for trainees, unless they have a particular interest in the psychodynamic understanding of violent, disturbed women. Even with that interest, the reader, particularly if a trainee, should be aware of the controversial nature of some of the views presented and the significance of material omitted.

Motz states that her aim had been to present a range of cases of female violence and to offer a model for understanding these cases. I believe that she has achieved this, and, if one is aware of the book's limitations, one will not be disappointed. Issues relating to female violence and allied service developments are extremely topical at this time, and there is increasing interest in the psychopathology of women who offend. To a certain extent, this book has missed the opportunity offered by such interest but it still gives a fascinating, although limited, insight into women's mental health.

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Prophets, Cults and Madness

By Anthony Stevens & John Price.
London: Duckworth. 2000. 246 pp. £18.00
(hb). ISBN 0 7156 2940 9

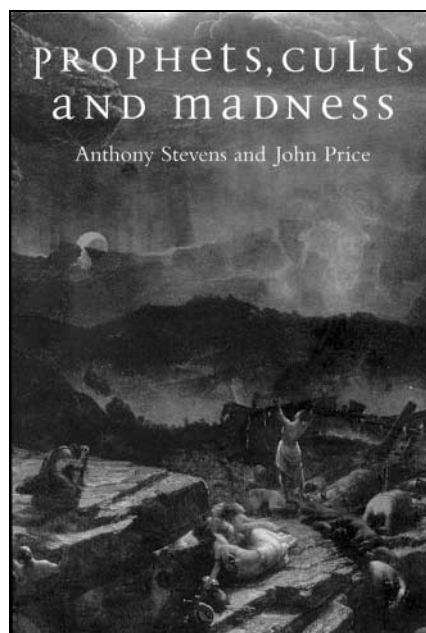
Ultra-Darwinists think that anything biological that exists must be advantageous to the survival of an organism or at least to the propagation of its genes, or at the very least must once have been so. And this, of course, includes anything 'psychobiological'. This Panglossian viewpoint none the less imposes a duty on its adherents to demonstrate the alleged advantage. And with a little ingenuity it can usually be done. Even if you do not believe, as Stevens & Price do, that psychology and psychiatry have been revolutionised in the past decade by the advent of evolutionism, and that as a result we now 'have a pretty good idea' why people become depressed, phobic, jealous and sadomasochistic, their attempt

to explain the 'survival' of schizophrenia is a *tour de force*.

Incomplete penetrance and phenotypic plasticity allow the existence of the famous *formes frustes* of schizophrenia. So the same nasty genes that determine the negative symptoms – lethargy, emotional blunting and suchlike – can, in certain circumstances (note the environment creeping in), turn the positive symptoms – hallucinations and delusions – into creative innovation and charismatic leadership.

Stevens & Price do not argue that biblical prophets or modern cult leaders such as David Koresh of the Branch Davidians had schizophrenia: only that they were 'schizophrenicish'. Such people often arise in situations of economic hardship or social instability and tend to attract the downcast and the disaffected. They preach with apocalyptic vision and succeed in commanding extraordinary loyalty from their followers, even to the point of sexual slavery and human self-sacrifice. Moreover, the force of their personal conviction, however bizarre, becomes the focus for a breakaway society to be formed. They may provide the impetus for a revitalisation of culture. Therefore, unlike those categorised as having schizophrenia, they have a higher than average chance of spreading their genes.

But if, as Stevens & Price tell us, the prophecies of cult leaders are rarely innovative and usually consist of an amalgam of preexisting religious clichés, it is difficult to see how they could revitalise anything. I begin to get lost. Certainly I have failed to

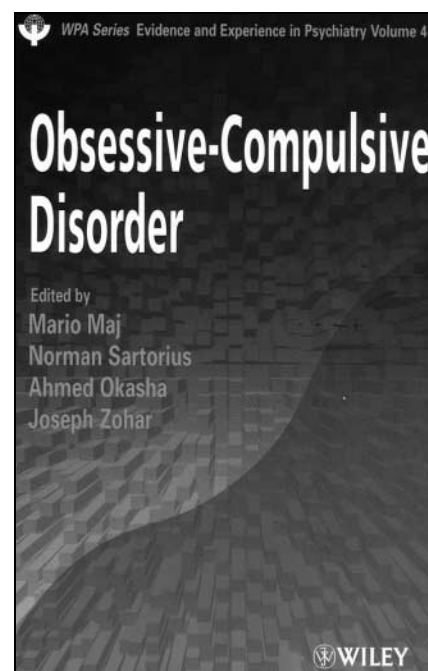


do justice to the authors' scholarship, their synthesis of the relevant literature and their nicely written text. I do recommend you read the book for yourself.

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Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

Edited by Mario Maj, Norman Sartorius, Ahmed Okasha & Joseph Zohar. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons. 2000. 308 pp. £60.00 (hb). ISBN 0 471 87163 X



This book is part of the World Psychiatric Association (WPA) series on *Evidence and Experience in Psychiatry*. Two years ago the WPA undertook to produce a review of areas of psychiatry in which there have been significant advances of knowledge, with the view that bringing together worldwide experts to review the current research evidence would result in further improvements in the provision of care. Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is one of the chosen areas. Over the past 20 years there has been a burgeoning interest in OCD, resulting from the recognition that it is not the extremely rare disorder it was once thought to be. Indeed, it has a worldwide prevalence of about 2% in the adult population, making it the fourth most common psychiatric disorder.