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Creativity & Crime: A Psychological Analysis by David H. Cropley & Arthur J. Cropley

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Cropley, David H., and Arthur J. Cropley. *Creativity and Crime: A Psychological Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. vii + 250 pages. Hardcover, \$90.00.

Television shows such as *Leverage*, *Hustle*, and *White Collar* depict characters whose felonious styles share a common thread: creativity. These charismatic TV characters—and their real-life equals—are so compelling that we have coined terms like “evil genius” to describe many of their felonious acts. Psychologist Arthur J. Cropley and David H. Cropley, a measurement systems engineer, take us on a walk through the intersection of criminal law and psychology, exploring the “application of cunning and ingenuity, development of new methods or techniques, generation of surprising results, and similar properties” to define creative crime (p. 3).

The authors step away from the widely accepted classification of creativity as a quality that only a select group of people possess that vastly sets them apart from the rest of us, opting instead to apply creativity as something that even the most average person has the potential for on some level or another, through which a criminal becomes effective in solving the problem of how to commit the crime, avoid negative outcomes of committing the crime (i.e. imprisonment or death), or achieve better results from a crime. As such, the book expressly looks at creativity and resourceful criminals—namely the likes of Bernie Madoff, Jeffrey Skilling, or Osama Bin Laden—to expand the way we look at crime and gain more understanding into (1) the dark side of creativity, (2) how the dark side of creativity is used to create new ways to achieve negative results, (3) the creative aspects of crime, and (4) how this knowledge can enhance law enforcement’s response to crime.

Cropley and Cropley explain how the social sciences are key in relation to crime research and criminology, particularly in establishing how the ecology of preventive law enforcement or proactive policing contribute to criminal offenders’ activities and their effectiveness. They develop a framework that explains how geography (including crime data, patterns and trend analysis, geographic profiling, and crime mapping), sociology (studies of subcultural deviance and cultural disorganization), cultural and forensic anthropology, design (notably urban design, use of CCTV and other forms of surveillance, and shop fitting or interior design), ethnography, and forensic and clinical psychology are important to understanding how creativity and crime are linked. Given Cropley’s background in psychology, it is perhaps not surprising that the authors maintain particular emphasis on the psychological aspects.

In addressing how creativity relates to crime, Cropley and Cropley draw our attention to the utility of comparing both the bright side and dark side of creativity and discuss how criminal creativity evolves from a system of interlinking factors; some of which lie within the person, with others residing in the environment or within a set of knowledge and skills. They delineate a process that stresses the ways in which convergent and divergent thinking are used in creative problem solving. Moreover, they consider such personal properties as inner-directedness, flexibility, tolerance of complexity, ego strength, and self-confidence. Personal motivation also plays an important role, as the authors note research showing that motivation toward creativity is the result of desire to create order from chaos, take risks, ask unexpected questions, and be challenged. Finally, they point out that personal mood and feelings (whether positive or negative) enhance motivation and perseverance toward creativity.

Appealing to an interdisciplinary audience, with chapters dedicated to the creativity behind terrorism and the creativity of consumer and corporate fraud (identity theft, investment scams, insurance fraud, embezzlement, etc.), Cropley and Cropley show the significance of

expanding the view of creativity as applied to crime, in order to have an effective impact on preventing certain criminal acts.

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