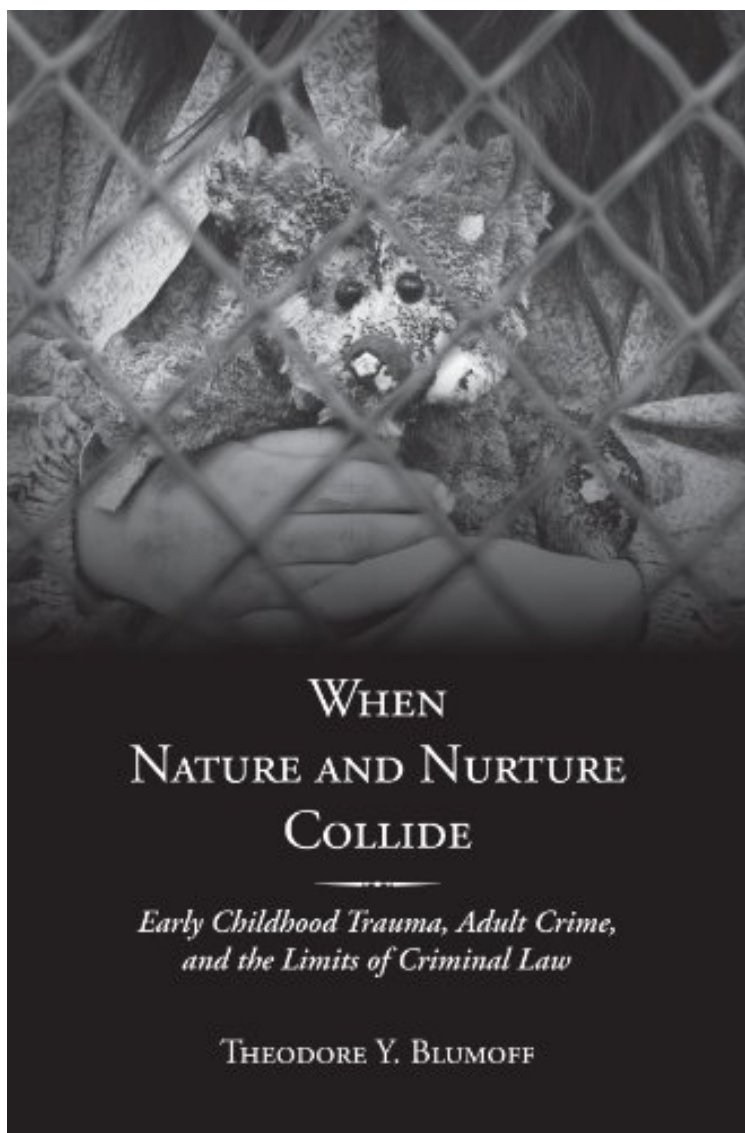


(Free pdf) When Nature and Nurture Collide: Early Childhood Trauma, Adult Crime, and the Limits of Criminal Law

When Nature and Nurture Collide: Early Childhood Trauma, Adult Crime, and the Limits of Criminal Law

Theodore Y. Blumoff

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Theodore Y. Blumoff : When Nature and Nurture Collide: Early Childhood Trauma, Adult Crime, and the Limits of Criminal Law before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised When Nature and Nurture Collide: Early Childhood Trauma, Adult Crime, and the Limits of Criminal Law:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars
By mdSuper interesting book. I used it to help with a psychology paper.
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. How do childhood wounds lead to adult criminal harms, and how can we prevent both?
By nathanTheodore Blumoff's book *When Nature and Nurture Collide* is a wise and compassionate essay that asks how we, as a society, should respond to persons who commit extremely abusive or harmful criminal acts, especially those persons whose brains have been scarred by the effects of severe abuse and neglect in their childhoods.
I was introduced to Theodore Blumoff's work through his excellent chapter "The problems with blaming" in the earlier book *Law, Mind, and Brain*. If you've never read his work before, I highly recommend reading that chapter, which can also be found in preprint form online. This book incorporates some of the arguments of that earlier chapter.
Dr. Blumoff combines brain science, behavioral science, social science, moral philosophy, and legal philosophy to criticize what he sees as outdated conceptions of human character and unhelpful responses to harmful criminal acts in our current criminal justice system (in the United States). The book emphasizes the need for two revisions to these outdated conceptions and unhelpful responses: "the first emphasizes neuropsychological interventions and testing at the earliest possible moment; the second focuses on trying to bring some healing to children who have been victimized by substantial and long-term abuse and neglect and who, in turn, subsequently might otherwise abuse and injure others."
In other words, this book examines the latest science on the fundamental mechanisms of human behavior and emphasizes the possibility of prevention and rehabilitation, asking "how we should interpret and apply the law in light of the avalanche of new information provided by the brain sciences in the past twenty years, and whether we are willing to tackle this problem as a chronic public health issue." By making some needed changes to our criminal justice and public health systems (bringing those systems closer together) we may more effectively reduce the causes and conditions that lead to criminal harms and human suffering.
The final chapter on "rediscovering compassion" reviews Dr. Blumoff's practical proposals and general philosophical approach (consequentialism). His principles are rooted in the Abrahamic religious traditions; he quotes Rabbi Hillel: "What is hateful unto you, do not do unto your neighbor. The rest is commentary--go and study." I think many other religious traditions would agree. Some Mahayana Buddhist traditions, for example, go even further by emphasizing that we are responsible not only for our own actions but for the actions of all others, an idea which radically resolves the problems of "free will" and "moral luck" that Dr. Blumoff explores in earlier chapters of this book.
The book is formatted like a long law review article, so legal scholars will feel right at home, but I think anyone with a strong liberal arts and sciences education will not have much difficulty following the argument. I could have done without the few fictional vignettes of "Boy I" and "Boy II" that appear in the book (replacing them with real case studies might have worked better), but they are mercifully brief. I hope this book finds a wide readership and contributes to an ongoing conversation on how to solve some of the more serious problems of our criminal justice systems.

Blumoff, who is trained in psychology and law, has spent the last decade trying to bring population-wide observations from the brain sciences to the jurisprudence of criminal law, thus producing a better model of human behavior for understanding criminal misconduct. This work examines the neuropsychological injuries suffered by seriously abused and neglected children, towards an explanation for why those children produce children who tend to abuse and neglect their own children and sometimes others. This is just a brute social fact. The book is structured in three parts, Part I engages the science of child development. Part II addresses the jurisprudence of substantive criminal law, which is still mired in the dualism and formalism of a much earlier era that largely neglects the actor's biography. Part III speaks to anticipated objections and proposals for change. The work ends by drawing on the work of the philosopher John Rawls's well known "Original Position," a thought experiment on the treatment of damaged children.
This book should be of interest to anyone who teaches criminal law and procedure or is involved in the administration of criminal justice, including those individuals who provide social services to the incarcerated. It could be an assigned text in a law and psychiatry course or a criminal law or jurisprudence seminar. This book is also useful for students and teachers in specialized post-graduate criminology programs, federal and state law enforcement agencies that profile offenders, specialists in the jurisprudence of punishment, and some upper-division courses in criminal justice.

About the Author
Theodore Y. Blumoff is a Professor of Law at the Walter F. George School of Law, Mercer University.