



CSU
College of Law Library

Cleveland State Law Review

Volume 21 | Issue 1

Book Review

1972

Book Review

Francis L. Bremson

Follow this and additional works at: <https://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/clevstlrev>



Part of the [Law Commons](#)

[How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!](#)

Recommended Citation

Francis L. Bremson, *Book Review*, 21 Clev. St. L. Rev. 192 (1972)
available at <https://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/clevstlrev/vol21/iss1/22>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at EngagedScholarship@CSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Cleveland State Law Review by an authorized editor of EngagedScholarship@CSU. For more information, please contact library.es@csuohio.edu.

Book Reviews

*Reviewed by Francis L. Bremson**

SANCTIONS FOR EVIL by Nevitt Sanford, Craig Comstock and Associates, (Wright Institute, Berkeley, Cal. 1971).

Sanctions for Evil is a well-organized series of eighteen essays which collectively analyze the process of social destruction. Social destruction is defined as that process by which harm occurs among people who receive sanction for their behavior from other people; it involves a judgment of one group by another, and affects not only the victim but the society which sanctions it as well. Most of the destructiveness is done by the people who feel they have some kind of permission for what they do — what the authors term a “sanction for evil”.

Through a series of psychological, political and sociological analyses, the contributors reach a theoretical consensus on the causes and manifestations of social destruction, although their individual recommendations for change are limited, and their conclusions at times seem self-consciously the result of an admitted attempt to explain their respective theories in terms of My Lai.

The result, nonetheless, is a scientific appraisal of the factors which have led to acts of previously unexplainable social destruction. The authors have provided the lay reader with an understandable model for the comparison of otherwise seemingly unrelated events such as My Lai, the Spanish Inquisition, Dachau, Hiroshima, and the Salem witch trials, as well as racism, anti-Semitism, and the Pentagon Papers.

Part I analyzes the social and political processes through which destruction occurs: *legitimization* (a belief in an enemy at once evil, intelligent, and omnipotent, along with an inherent belief in one's own superiority); *authorization* (welfare of the State requires military and police strength); *mobilization* (illusion is seen as the behavioral norm to action); and *rationalization* (“It Never Happened and Besides They Deserved It”). The “group-think” process is the political decision-making process which is undermined by distortions, irrationality and personality.

Part II contains several essays dealing with the psychological factors which lead to social destructiveness: the excuses which are used by the participants (“The Superego in Uniform”), and the process of dehumanization whereby the target population is effectively seen as sub-human, thereby increasing the danger of mass destruction by ridding the participants of “survivors’ guilt”. Bernard Diamond, the chief psychiatrist for the defense at the trial of Sirhan Sirhan, treats

*Staff Associate, Administration of Justice Committee, Cleveland, Ohio (a private non-profit catalyst agency in criminal justice reform).

the sociopathic personality which emerges out of an inability to relate to people. Other essays deal with the authoritarian personality's attitude toward racism and anti-Semitism, and the psycho-cultural characteristics which tend to persist in a racist culture: religion, caste and heredity.

Part III then examines cultural evil as an interplay between the effects of institutions and knowledge clouded by the dominance of an obsolete ethic. Part IV contains several essays which deal with social-psychological resistance to evil, and the Epilogue provides certain strategies for continued research.

Thus, the document is primarily a research tool, and was, in fact, offered originally as a research symposium. The lawyer tends to seek logical, provable answers to acts of violence, while social research has traditionally had little applicability to courtroom techniques. Acts of violence which are attributed to individual acts of insanity aside, no grand jury, presidential commission, or other investigatory group has been able to explain with any certainty what caused the otherwise isolated acts of destructiveness at Jackson State and Son My. In documenting the conditions for social destruction and societal sanction, the authors have made it quite clear that the future offers more and better opportunities for the process of social destructiveness to re-occur.

*Reviewed by Salvatore J. LoPresti**

LAW AND THE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT, National Organization on Legal Problems of Education (W. H. Anderson Co., Cincinnati, Ohio, 1971), 295 pp.

The dictatorial schoolmaster, whose autonomy and control were sacrosanct in the isolated classroom, has passed into extinction with the red brick schoolhouse. With his passing came the birth of the professional administrator, the school superintendent, whose realm has been extended to many interdisciplinary fields, and whose responsibility has become subordinated to the laws and societal realities outside the ivory tower.

Conscious of increasing interrelations between schools and the law, the writers of *The Law and the School Superintendent* have set forth basic rules of school law for the benefit of school superintendents who may not fully understand the legal ramifications of their work.

Included within the book's scope are lay-oriented explanations and illustrations of the statutory bases of superintendents' offices, the superintendent's concern regarding the church-state relationship, various concepts of school integration and race relations, and problems of collective bargaining and teacher negotiations, along with realistic evaluations of the crises facing contemporary education.

*B.A., Kent State University; Fourth-year student, Cleveland State University College of Law; Teacher, Cleveland Public Schools.