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A Comprehensive Study of the Classical School of Criminology

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Abstract

The eighteenth century saw the development of the classical school of criminology. This theory of criminology was primarily influenced by Cesare de Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham. They are regarded as the most significant intellectuals of the Enlightenment. Are regarded as the founders of the classical school of criminology and are leaders in the field of "classical" thought.

Because he was a utilitarian and concerned with the happiness and well-being of the populace, Bentham's contribution to "classical" philosophy is predicated on his conviction that punishment, in the form of causing pain, should always be justified in terms of a larger benefit. Bentham's writings revolved around the notion of the pleasure-pain principle, which holds that human behaviour is intended to maximise pleasure and minimise pain. Beccaria thought that in order to make punishments fair and commensurate with the offence, laws had to be implemented. According to him, there are three key concepts that determine how effective crime prevention is: the likelihood of a crime occurring, its certainty, and the timing of the crime, the speed at which it is punished, the seriousness of the offence, and the extent of the suffering caused. According to Beccaria, the harshness of the punishments meted out should be commensurate with the offence committed and should not exceed what is required to dissuade the perpetrator and others from committing similar crimes in the future.

Because there would be no deterrent, classical philosophers like Jeremy Bentham and Beccaria believed that the death penalty was meaningless. But in the case of manslaughter, as Bentham also holds, the death penalty should unquestionably be applied if the severity of the penalty significantly outweighs the offence. Seeing another criminal eliminated as a result of their acts doesn't seem to be a more powerful deterrence to future criminals considering engaging in the same criminal behaviour. Though possibly not as much on criminal justice practice, classical philosophy has had a major influence on criminological thought generally. Since the advent of classical criminology and classical thought, the use of torture, corporal punishment, and the death penalty has decreased.

Keywords: utilitarianism, felicitous calculus, rational choice theory, routine activities theory (RAT), Beccaria, Cesare, Bentham, and Jeremy; classical school of criminology; criminology; deterrence; deterrence theory; economic model of crime

Introduction

The terms "crime" and "logy" are combined to form the term "criminology." The word "crime" comes from the Latin "Crime" refers to any social wrong or act that is illegal and subject to legal repercussions. The English suffix "logy" denotes a scientific study or a subset of a specific subject's research.



Three primary categories of problems are addressed in criminology:

- 1. The field of criminalistics, which is the detective, police officer, medical professional, and chemist's job when it comes to finding the lawbreaker.
- 2. The penologist's work, or the issue of what to do with an offender after they are found and found guilty by the law. Psychologists, social workers, psychiatrists, sociologists, and juvenile Probation and parole officials, court judges, and other professionals work in corrections in relation to the prevention and control of crime and delinquency.
- 3. The difficulty of providing a scientific explanation for the existence of crime and criminals in a community, or the problem of explaining crime and criminal behaviour. Both lawyers and sociologists researching the sociology of criminal law are interested in the legal side of crime.¹

Sociologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, anthropologists, and biologists are all interested in understanding criminal behaviour. Since crime is an unavoidable part of society, the study of criminology emerged as a means of re-establishing social order and putting the proverb "Live and Let Live" into practice. As a result of our propensity to attribute the causes of crime to a variety of sources, including sin, the spirit, illness, and other phenomena, criminology has six distinct schools: Pre- Classical School, Classical School, Neo-Classical School, Positive School, Sociological School, and Multi-Factor School.

Natural explanations for crime rely on things and happenings in the physical world to explain what takes place. Hippocrates (460 BC) offered the Greeks a physiological explanation of thought by contending that the mind's organ is the brain. The foundation of Democritus' (420 BC) theory of the universe was the idea of an indivisible unit of matter known as the atom. The concepts of unity and continuity gained prominence with Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle; nonetheless, the fundamental elements of all explanations remained physical and material. The Hebrew concept of heavenly approval for rule and order was combined with greed to form Roman law.

Naturalism to offer an explanation grounded on the "nature of things." This natural emphasis is maintained by modern social science, which looks for its explanations within the material and physical reality. Explanations for crime have been attempted for many ages in written history. People who committed crimes and other aberrant behaviours, for instance, were believed to be under the influence of demons or bad spirits in the 16 and seventeenth centuries. Banishment and exorcism were two methods used to combat crime. However, victims of crime may perceive their misfortune as divine vengeance for prior transgressions they or a family member had done.

The sciences, including philosophy, theology, medicine, and psychology, were popular throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the 20th and 21st century, consequently

Criminology evolved as a result. The main focus of writers from previous schools of criminologist thinking was not on drawing broad conclusions about criminal behaviour, crime, and the correlation between different crime rates and socioeconomic conditions. Rather, the majority of early researchers who created ideas regarding the causes of crime did so, as noted by criminologist Donald R. Crosse, "in an attempt to find a panacea for criminality [3]." Additionally, he pointed out that early writers made little to no attempts to "verify the many theological or moralistic assertions by actually investigating relevant situations; writers usually selected a general cause' of all criminality and then sought to convince their

¹ Clarence Ray Jeffery, the Historical Development of Criminology, 50 J Crim. L & Criminology 3, 1959 -1960.



readers of this assertion." Readers are informed that eliminating that cause would end crime by preventing future crimes as well as by reforming current offenders.²

Despite the fact that poets and philosophers have been interested in criminal behaviour for many centuries, criminologists have historically designated the start of the field of criminology with the founding of the classical school of criminology, which holds that criminal activities are the result of people's deliberate choices. The antiquated and harsh European legal system that prevailed before the French Revolution of 1789 prompted Cesare Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham to create the classical school of criminology.

About 200 years ago, leaders of the classical school put up a number of judicial and legislative reforms with the intention of reducing crime in their day. One of these innovations was the application of harsh enough punishments and deterrents to offset any pleasure gained from committing a crime. It was believed that once people determined that the consequences of committing a crime would outweigh the pleasure of the act, they would voluntarily abstain from it. However, suggestions like these had little impact on the crime problem since causes of crime extend far beyond human calculation and motive. Prior to discussing Beccaria's theories and contributions to the field of criminology, it is important to note that the classical school is based on the theory that individuals who commit crimes do so after considering the ramifications of their choices.

The following three presumptions form the foundation of classical theory:

- 1. Everyone has the ability to exercise "free will" to choose between obtaining their goals through legal and illicit methods
- 2. A person may be discouraged from committing a crime by their "fear of punishment."
- 3. "Pleasure and Pain," meaning that society or the community can By making the agony of punishment and sanctions greater than the enjoyment of criminal activity and its benefits, one can control both criminal and non-criminal behaviour.

Classical Theorists³

Beccaria Cesar (1738–1794)

On March 15, 1738, Cesare Beccaria, a significant figure in the classical school of criminology, was born in Milan, Italy. passed away in 1794. He was raised in an aristocratic family, attended Parma University, and earned his degree there.3. The essay that would eventually become "Dei delitti e delle pene" (the Essay on Crimes and Punishment) (1963, originally 1767), was given to Beccaria by Pietro Verri, the guardian of prisons, in 1763. It was translated into 22 languages and had a significant impact on legal thought in both Europe and the United States [5]. After completion in January 1764, it was initially published under pseudonym in July of the same year. Although the story created a stir, not everyone agreed with it. The reality that it was first anonymously stated that "it aroused the hostility and resistance of those who stood to gain by the perpetuation of the barbaric and archaic pomological institutions of the day... [It was] an attack on the prevailing systems for the administration of criminal justice... its contents were designed to undermine many, if not all, of the cherished beliefs of those in a position to determine the fate of those accused and convicted of crime."

² Beccaria C. First English edition 1767. On Crimes and Punishment, translated by H. Paolucci. Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs -Merrill Educational, 1963

³ Bentham J. An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation, Edited by J.H. Burns and H.L.A. Hart. London: Athlon Press, 1970.



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Like many of his contemporaries who were influenced by social contract theories, Beccaria was vehemently against the numerous contradictions that were present in His main work, which included government and public affairs, was essentially the first attempt to outline a logical, methodical, and uniform punitive system. Beccaria argued that sanctions should be properly proportionate to the nature of the crime since he believed that criminals owed society a "debt." It was believed that using torture in criminal investigations was both barbarous and pointless.⁴

Furthermore, it was decided that a life sentence of hard labour was a better punishment and deterrent than the death penalty. As a result, jail usage should be significantly increased, and prison facilities should be upgraded with superior physical care given and prisoners should be divided according to their gender, age, and level of criminality.

However, the law establishes the prerequisites for the social compact, and punishment serves only to uphold the individual liberties against those who would impede them. Based on the ideas of hedonism and free will, Beccaria's theory of criminal conduct postulates that every act of humanity is fundamentally purposeful and driven by the pleasure-pain principle.

18th-century criminal code

In response to the criminal legislation of the eighteenth century, Cesare Beccaria, a significant contributor to the classical school of criminology, this was harsh, ambiguous, and primitive. The eighteenth century's criminal code was harsh, ambiguous, and primitive.

Furthermore, it not only condoned but rather promoted harsh and capricious behaviours. The law granted public servants unrestricted authority to take away people's freedom, property, and lives without considering the ideals of "due process of law."

On the basis of the thinnest of evidence, people were imprisoned and secret allegations were common. Clever and horrifying torture was used to coerce the unwilling to make confessions. Judges have unrestricted authority to punish those found guilty of crimes. The imposed punishments were based on the status and power of the condemned, and they were arbitrary and inconsistent. In actuality, there was no separation of the guilty and the accused.

They were both held in the same facility and exposed to the similar atrocities of prison. Regarding the guilty, both young and old, the murderer and the bankrupt, first-time offenders and seasoned criminals, men and women, the same system was in place. These individuals were put together in a promiscuous manner, allowing them to freely mingle and communicate.

When Beccaria wrote his thesis on crime, the criminal law system was as described above. It clarifies why his writing was seen as kind and revolutionary in nature. According to Beccaria, the cause of the crime problem was not terrible individuals, but rather faulty laws. He recognized that the outdated criminal justice system of his day needed to give way to a more progressive legal system that ensured everyone was treated equally⁵.

Theory of the social contract

Beccaria theories originated with the social contract hypothesis, which emphasizes the notion that humans were initially without authority. Then, by signing a "social contract," people gave up many of their "natural liberties" and established the state. People got the protection that the government could offer "against

⁵ Criminalisation and the eighteenth-century's 'Bloody Code' | Centre for Crime and Justice Studies



antisocial acts" in exchange. "Laws are the conditions under which independent and isolated men united to form a society," stated Beccaria in a letter. They gave up some of their liberty in order to enjoy the remainder in peace and safety because they were tired of living in a state of perpetual conflict and having their freedom rendered meaningless by the uncertainty of its preservation. The total of all these liberties given up by each person for their own benefit and the sovereign is their rightful custodian and administrator.

Pleasure, suffering, and penalty

Beccaria explained the "Pleasure and Pain" theory of punishment. The only "springs" in life for him were pleasure and misery. "If an equal punishment be ordained for two crimes that injure society in different degrees, there is nothing to deter men from committing the greater [crime] as often as it is attended with greater advantage," states a person with a sense of action.

He thought that the severity of the offence should be taken into account while determining the punishment and consequences that should be meted out to the guilty. for the community: "There might be a corresponding scale of punishments descending from the greatest to the least if mathematical calculation could be applied to the obscure and infinite combinations of human actions." People would be aware of which penalties were associated with which criminal activities if there was a precise list of crimes and their corresponding sanctions.

According to Beccaria, the goal of punishment is to keep a criminal from harming society or the community in the future and to deter others from committing the same acts. For these reasons, it was necessary to choose punishments that would leave a deep and enduring imprint on the people who would suffer the "least torment to the body of the criminal."

The severity of a punishment should not exceed what is considered essential to prevent people from committing crimes against the state or other people. Punishment that is swift, certain, and efficient will maximize the preventative, or deterrent, effect:⁶

"The more quickly and closely a crime is punished once it is committed, the more fair and beneficial the punishment will be.... As I've mentioned, the promptness of Penalties are more effective because, in the human mind, the association between crime and punishment is stronger and lasts longer when there is a shorter time lag between the offence and the punishment. This leads to the involuntary belief that punishment is the cause of crime and that it is its necessary, inevitable result [14]. Beccaria finished by suggesting that the wealthy should face the same punishment as the poor and that the death penalty and torture should both be eliminated in order to ensure that no one is unfairly punished When one person or many people commit an act of violence against another, it must be reported to the public, occur quickly, be necessary, have the least amount of severity conceivable given the circumstances, be proportionate to the offence, and follow the laws.⁷

Jeremy Bentham

Born in 1748, Jeremy Bentham was a British philosopher and renowned early classical thinker. He thought that individuals possess the capacity to distinguish between good and evil.

⁶ THE CODE OF CRIMINAL PROCEDURE, 1973

⁷ Rationale and Purposes of Criminal Law and Punishment in Transitional Contexts | Oxford Journal of Legal Studies | Oxford Academic



He elaborated on the notion that criminal behaviour stemmed from people's core hedonistic tendencies, which involve a strong desire for pleasure and a propensity to avoid pain. Individuals who decide to commit crimes believe they will benefit from the crime more than they will suffer from it. Bentham thought that people should be discouraged from making this decision via the criminal justice system.

Practicality

Bentham's views on human nature stemmed from the utilitarian theory, which holds that everything of a person's Acts are deliberate. The idea that the greatest happiness for the largest number of people should be the goal of all acts was explored as a result of the utilitarian doctrine. According to Bentham, people weigh their options based on how likely they are to cause them pain or pleasure. As per Bentham's statement, an action is considered useful if it has the potential to bring about benefits, advantages, pleasure, good, or happiness (which are all related to one another in this instance) or to stop mischief, pain, evil, or unhappiness from happening to the party whose interest is being considered. Bentham created a delightful Calculus, often known as moral calculus, is the study of determining the likelihood that an individual would act in a specific way. He elaborated that people assess the likelihood that a specific behaviour pattern or activity will provide pleasure in the present or the future in comparison to the potential for pain, either now or in the future. Bentham thought that people are motivated by the far higher pleasure they expected from the unlawful deed. Compared to the potential suffering that would follow from it.

Maximum contentment and social regulation

Bentham developed a thorough rule of ethics and gave special attention to the real-world issue of declining the issue of crime. His goal was to establish a social control system—a means of enforcing the utilitarian ethical precept on human behaviour. Instead of using a "irrational system of absolutes," he thought that an act should be evaluated based on a theoretically verifiable premise. "The greatest happiness for the greatest number," or just "the greatest happiness," was the guiding concept. For Bentham, the criminal behaviour required to have checks or punishments linked to it, which might be established by law. This would then help "to bring the individual's pursuit of his own happiness in line with in the greatest interests of society overall. Bentham thought that punishment was a necessary evil that kept society from suffering larger calamities that would have lowered happiness. Our current criminal justice system includes social control based on severity of punishment that both fits the crime and deters future offence. In the greatest interests of society from suffering larger calamities that would have lowered happiness. Our current criminal justice system includes social control based on severity of punishment that both fits the crime and deters future offence. In the greatest interests of society from suffering larger calamities that would have lowered happiness. Our current criminal justice system includes social control based on severity of punishment that both fits the crime and deters future offence.

The classical school's influences

- 1. One of the main sources of the U.S. Bill of Rights is Beccaria. Beccaria ground-breaking essay had a significant impact on the first ten amendments of the US Constitution, sometimes known as the Bill of Rights. "Paving the way for penal reform for approximately the last two centuries" was one of its main contributions.
- 2. Beccaria work had a significant impact on the 1791 French penal code, Catherine the Great's Russia law, and the Austrian law of Joseph II, the Emperor, and Prussian legislation under Frederick the Great.
- 3. Jeremy Bentham's utilitarian theories of free choice and hedonism were echoed by Beccaria when he explained that the purpose of punishment is to discourage criminal behaviour in individuals.



- 4. These traditional thinkers maintained that safeguarding society and its laws ought to be the right goal of punishment. According to their beliefs, the main goal of punishment ought to be the decrease or prevention of crime, not the exacting of revenge. They argued for the elimination of the incredibly cruel death and mutilation penalties as well as the introduction of criminal changes to make the sentence more appropriate for the offence.
- 5. Beccaria made a strong case for incarceration as a form of punishment, arguing that it would be the most practical and efficient way to deal with offence. Consequently, the traditional Theorists have an impact on the creation of the contemporary criminal justice system.⁸

Theories Derived from the Classical School:

Theory of rational choice: -

In the view of rational choice theorists, a criminal selects the crime to perpetrate and crime's intended victim. Rational choice theory is a more modern reworking and synthesis of prior positivist and classical theories. The situational elements of criminal conduct are the main emphasis of rational choice theory, which was developed by Derek Cornish and Ronald Clarke. The rational choice (or situational) hypothesis emphasises that by concentrating on the situational factors that drive specific forms of criminal conduct, society can accomplish a high degree of crime prevention. A criminal logically choose both the crime to commit and the victim of the crime, according to the rational choice theory. Stated differently, the offender does not choose his victims at random or her target.⁹

The Theory of Deterrence

According to the deterrence theory, a person's decision to do or not commit a crime is impacted by their fear of penalty. The act of stopping a criminal act before it starts by threatening punishment and consequences is known as deterrence. Deterrence theory is based on the classical viewpoint and emphasizes the following ideas:

- 1. Punishment needs to be certain, imposed quickly, and applied harshly in order to discourage criminal activity.
- 2. The severity must be such that any benefits that a criminal would receive from committing a crime are outweighed.

Because of the deterrent impact, crime rates should decrease if there is a rise in the rates of arrest, conviction, and harshness of punishment. One of the concepts of deterrence theory is that Crime rates should go down if a crime is punished with force.

The idea of retribution holds that the perpetrator ought to be made to "pay back" or make up for the wrongs they have committed. The justice paradigm underwent a resurgence of relativism in the 1970s and early 1980s. The justice model's central tenet is the idea of "just deserts." According to the fair desserts theory of justice, those who violate the rights of others should face consequences. Additionally, the importance of the offence should be reflected in the harshness of the punishment. Furthermore in the 1970s and 1980s, the United States switched back to a utilitarian punishment concept in order to address crime before going back to the justice model.

⁸ Theory & Principles - Lesson | Study.com



An economic framework for crime

The economic model of crime is predicated on the same principles as contemporary rational choice theory and earlier classical models.

Presumption that a criminal acts voluntarily. The economic model makes the assumption that people will always select the same course of action when presented with the same options. Put another way, criminal activity is the result of a calculation in which the offender considers the advantages, disadvantages, and perceived costs of several options.

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Routine Activities Theory of (RAT)

The notion of routine activities emphasizes that criminals weigh the advantages and disadvantages of committing crimes.

According to traditional theories, criminals commit crimes as a logical decision made by them in an effort to reduce suffering and increase pleasure. The theory of routine activities is an outcome of the classical method. Because they weigh the advantages and disadvantages of committing crimes, criminals are not impulsive or unexpected, according to routine activities theory (RAT) [20].

Lawrence E. Cohen and Marcus Felon analyse everyday activities and crime, taking into account the patterns in crime rates in in terms of how daily activities change on a regular basis. RAT explains why certain situations and locations are conducive to crime and delinquency. It achieves this by emphasizing the combination of available targets, driven criminals, and incompetent guardians to prevent a violation.

RAT makes the following assumptions:

1. Many people may be driven to breach the law;

2. Criminal offenders are motivated by self-interest to conduct crimes.

Valuable objects, such as jewellery, automobiles, or money, as well as persons who, when attacked, bring the attacker joy or positive reinforcement make good targets. Guardians are defined as things (such security cameras, gates, and car or burglar alarms) or people (like police officers or guards) who are able to keep potential victims or targets safe. For the transgressor, the existence of in terms of how daily activities change on a regular basis. RAT explains why specific locations experience higher rates of crime and delinquency. The presence of protective guardians lowers target appeal and increases crime costs. The focus of RAT research is on unlawful behaviour that include "someone definite and intentional taking or damaging the person or property of another," often known as direct-contact predatory violations. RAT studies how structural alterations in routine activity patterns impact crime rates by influencing the convergence in time and place of three necessary conditions for a crime to occur. It focuses on crime events rather than criminal criminals themselves. These three prerequisites consist.¹¹

1. An offender; 2. A victim or a piece of property (the likelihood of a criminal victimising someone increases when offenders are motivated and targets converge);

3. A connection or an opportunity (having competent guardians reduces the likelihood of being a victim of crime). Targets converge);

¹⁰: https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/faculty_scholarship/2576

¹¹ RAT studies how structural



3. A connection or an opportunity (having competent guardians reduces the likelihood of being a victim of crime).

The constraints of classicism

- 1. The Declaration of the Rights of Man (1789), which mirrored the philosophy of the classical philosophers, and the body of criminal law established in the wake of the French Revolution is known as the French Penal Code of 1791. The writings of the main Enlightenment philosophers, most notably Rousseau, had inspired the creators of these papers. Nevertheless, it was efforts like these to put the Classical School's theories into reality that revealed the flaws in its criminal justice philosophy.
- 2. Individual differences were purposefully and totally disregarded by the classical theorists.
- 3. First-time offenders and repeat offenders received the same treatment. And only in light of the specific act that had been carried out. It was assumed that children, the "feeble-minded," and the mad were all completely capable and logical.

The 1810 and 1819 revisions to the French post-revolutionary penal law gave judges more discretion in determining sentences. Thus, the rigid, formal, and philosophical elegance of the Classical paradigm was to be violated in this way.

5. As it became more widely acknowledged that not everyone bears equal responsibility for their acts, a variety of specialists were progressively welcomed into the courts' judgement of the level of rationality that the accused person should be expected to possess. Because judges may now modify punishments based on the level of personal responsibility presented by these expert witnesses, a modified criminologist approach known as the Neo-Classical School emerged as a result of this theoretical compromise.¹²

Conclusion

The eighteenth century saw the development of the classical school of criminology. It appeared as a reaction to the harsh forms of penalization that was prevalent at the time. It is believed that authors like Montesquieu and Voltaire may have contributed to the rise of this new "classical" way of thought by joining campaigns calling for more progressive responses to crime and the penalties meted out by the legal systems of the day. The two primary contributors to this philosophy of criminology were Cesare de Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham. They are regarded as the founding fathers of the classical school of criminology and as the most significant enlightenment intellectuals in the field of "classical" thought. Both of them aimed to lessen the severity of judicial systems of the eighteenth century, despite their divergent philosophical perspectives.

According to conventional wisdom, criminals make logical decisions, they decide to do crimes in order to have the most pleasure and the least amount of pain. According to the traditional school, offenders consider the pros and cons of expenses, thus we should build deterrents that somewhat offset any potential gains from crime. This is the rationale behind the death penalty's perceived futility by classical philosophers like Caribbean and Bentham—there would be no deterrent. When it comes to manslaughter, however, Bentham agrees that the death penalty should be applied if the severity of the punishment slightly outweighs the crime. This is because witnessing another person killed as a result of one's actions seems to be a more effective deterrent to future criminal activity.¹³

¹² https://www.bartleby.com/essay/Limitations-Of-Classicism-PJM9TWFA66

¹³ Criminology



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Ever since the launch of the use of the death penalty, torture, and corporal punishment has decreased in accordance with classical school of criminology and classical thought. Bentham contended that the death sentence should only be applied in cases of murder; Caribbean disagreed.

Numerous aspects of classical concepts are highly beneficial in contemporary culture, demonstrating the theory's merits. All legal systems continue to be based on deterrence, and in fact served as the foundation for the initial commissioners appointed by Sir Robert Peel to establish the Metropolitan Police. In addition, prisons serve as powerful deterrents and attempt to lower crime rates.

The judicial systems have developed together with modernity; these systems would not exist if positivism served as the primary criminologist theory. Because positivism approaches criminals with treatments in an attempt to solve crimes. This may be the reason behind the classical school of criminology's continued influence: it offers a solid theoretical foundation for more contemporary theories to be established, while also safeguarding diverse institutions working to eradicate crime.

"Crime is a choice...an investigation of criminal thinking and motivation," one could say.¹⁴

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¹⁴ classical concepts of criminology