

Classical Theory

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The Classical Theory of Criminology came about during the Enlightenment, offering a way to understand and deal with crime through logical thinking. It was based on the idea that folks have free will and *choose* to commit crimes after weighing the possible good against the bad. This was a big change from old beliefs rooted in superstition.

This way of thinking really took off in the 1700s, thanks to shifts in society and politics, including the rise of non-religious governments and a bigger focus on individual rights. Thinkers like Cesare Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham came up with key ideas about fair punishment and crime prevention. They pushed for justice based on reason, not just revenge or the whims of those in charge. Their work laid the foundation for rational choice theory, which says criminals make calculated choices, looking at risks and rewards. This idea has had a huge effect on how we police, sentence, and correct people, with crime prevention as the main goal.

Of course, classical criminology has its critics. Some say it relies too much on the idea that people are rational and don't pay enough attention to social, psychological, and situational things that lead to crime. Even with these points, its impact is clear in our modern legal systems. We still aim for fair treatment, open processes, and punishments that fit the crime. The ongoing debates about crime prevention and policy changes – trying to balance personal responsibility with keeping everyone safe – show just how much this old theory still matters. Knowing the history and basic ideas of criminology is key to understanding where we've been and where we're going.

Classical criminology popped up in the 1700s right when the Enlightenment was changing everything. This was a time when people started valuing reason, individual rights, and questioning old ways. This created an environment that asked people to rethink the way law and the way criminal justice systems were run.

Before all this, criminal justice was pretty rough. It was often random, unfair, and based on superstition, religious ideas, or whoever held the power. Punishments were way too harsh for the crimes committed, trials were done in secret, and torture was normal to get people to confess. There was no consistency or fairness, and people were fed up with it.

Classical theory came along as a way to fix these wrongs, pushing for reason and kinder treatment within the legal system. Thinkers wanted to turn the legal system from a mess into a set of clear laws that applied to everyone equally. Enlightenment thinkers like John Locke and Montesquieu were gaining influence, talking about natural rights and social contracts. The idea

was that people give up some freedom in exchange for fair protection under the law. This challenged the idea that leaders could just do whatever they wanted without being held responsible.

Economic and social changes also helped shape classical criminology. Capitalism and growing cities changed social life. People moved around more, cities became anonymous, and old community rules didn't work as well anymore. This called for new ideas based on fair, universal principles instead of local customs or random decisions.

In this situation, classical criminologists stressed that people have free will. This means people make choices when they decide to commit crimes. Crime was no longer seen as just evil or weird. It was viewed as decisions made by people who weighed the possible rewards against the risks. This was a big change from old punishment systems that just wanted revenge and to scare people.

So, classical criminology was a mix of Enlightenment ideas about reason meeting the everyday problems of a changing society. This led to modern ideas about humane ways to deal with those who commit crimes, such as seeing that they get fair treatment and like how the punishment fits the crime and making sure people get treated with some human dignity.

Classical criminology rests on the work of some important thinkers who came up with the basic ideas we still use today when we talk about criminal behavior and how to punish and correct people. Cesare Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham are two of the biggest names. Their ideas have shaped things in legal systems, both in theory and action.

Cesare Beccaria's writings, especially his book **On Crimes and Punishments** (1764), are a huge step away from the old, random justice systems. Beccaria said we should have a logical legal system based on fairness and crime prevention. He thought laws should be clear and public so people can make smart choices about how they act. He backed the social contract theory which says people give up some freedoms for protection, and showed how laws should be seen as agreements, not just ways for leaders to boss people around. He fought against torture and the death penalty, pushing for reforms.

Jeremy Bentham built on classical criminology by adding his utilitarianism idea to it. This basically said that people do things to gain pleasure and avoid pain. Bentham wanted to create a system to measure happiness and pain to guide moral choices. When he looked at criminal justice, he said punishments should try to prevent crime but also minimize avoidable suffering to get the most overall happiness. Bentham's core ideas stressed that punishments should be quick, certain, and appropriate – ideas that still influence deterrence strategies.

John Howard is another important figure whose work on prison reform showed classical principles in action. He stood up for humane treatment in prisons. Later thinkers, like James Mill, applied utilitarianism to making laws. Together, these thinkers came up with core concepts like

free will, using reason, deterring through punishment, and equal justice. These are the cornerstones of classical criminology.

The ideas of these thinkers continue to shape current conversations about justice, influencing us to use intelligent thought instead of revenge when dealing with criminal behavior.

Rational Choice Theory is based on the idea that people can choose freely, allowing them to think about what something will cost them and what they can get out of it. The main idea here is that criminals think about potential gains vs. harms. The fact they make decisions suggests that crimes come about as intentional acts by people who measure personal costs and benefits, and don't just do bad things out of impulse. The theory says that folks act out of self-interest to get pleasure, while not experiencing pain and loss. This can be attributed to classical criminology's outlook that people make decisions through reason.

Rational Choice Theory argues that crime happens when someone thinks the good outweighs the bad. The downsides can range from getting arrested, going to court, or getting some kind of social stigma. The best way for this to be stopped is to make these costs known and high enough so people won't do those things in the first place. How likely someone is to get caught, the degree of which one is punished, and how fast that happens are very important: how likely it is that someone will get caught becomes more important than any punishment, simply because if people know they will get caught, they likely won't commit that crime.

Rational Choice Theory also acknowledges other forces around, that impact decision-making, suggesting contexts around like where the crime happens and how easy it is to do play a role in someone's choice. This has prompted crime prevention to focus on stopping crime, instead of focusing on why someone does it.

While Rational Choice Theory is aware of outside influences like how people are raised or their psychology, it nonetheless sees these as part of a person's own evaluation, instead of it impacting someone's decision. This theory argues that crime comes about due to choice, instead of an inborn thing in people or systemic pressuring. It suggests thinking about crimes by looking at incentives and restraints.

The core of Rational Choice Theory promotes each person's process of deciding what they want to do by weighing the good against the bad before they commit crimes. This foundation in deciding for one's self through thought becomes a core element in classical crime theory.

Punishment and crime stop efforts are foundational to classical criminology, being a deeply enmeshed belief in personal choice. Classic thinkers state individuals evaluate different outcomes before committing offenses, resulting in crime being something that can be deterred if the cost outweighs the rewards. If penalties are stern and swiftly handed out, then crime can be prevented because a person will elect not to commit crimes. This thought argues for punishment fitting the violations that occur.

Punishments in this way have dual purposes, working to protect people by deterring them through harsh activities, but also to act as a moral center. Cesare Beccaria strongly argued measures should be based in thinking, instead of harsh emotional thoughts, to protect people more. The degree to which someone faces punishment becomes clear: If there appears to be a potential and unavoidable consequence for acts, then crimes have a higher probability of failing to happen. This clashes with severe penalties because theorists argue that inconsistent actions of the past fail to stop acts from taking place.

Classical theory requires the law to be clear. That way, prior to the act, one can understand and have penalties understood. When there is clarity around the law, one can measure the potential outcome instead of some person's emotional thoughts. The goal of stopping crimes extends beyond actors, and makes the larger whole see that they should not act against the law because it goes against social norms.

Crime deterrence continues to impact justice methods like mandatory sentencing; but it does depend heavily on empirical thoughts like how certain one will get punished. The core principles around stopping actors from committing violations through punishment establish thinking from the judicial system and how someone should be sentenced.

Classical ideas are a foundation to justice, but they are not without fault. These critiques largely bring into question certain understandings and concepts within classical ideas. A core counter point is that its view of behavior is too simple. Classical ideas suggest people are acting through decision, and therefore only analyze harms compared to gains. Critics suggest that one's mindset can come from multiple places, and is more often than not a mix of social and economic factors that factor into making choices. Classical criminology then struggles to work in situations where a choice may be based on mental or emotional issues.

Another key issue is the act of not providing everyone with the necessary consideration. The premise of classical criminology lies in the assumption that all people approach decisions with similar thinking. However, some individuals struggle more or are less equipped to conduct rational evaluation due to their individual capabilities to understand laws or have an understanding of other legal activities. The consequence of not being fair in the first place means that some actors are not facing what is equitable consideration.

Classical criminology faces criticism for only depending on the act of punishment to stop violations from happening. Most collection of evidence shows harsh treatment alone fails to have a reliable result to deter, and may negatively impact populations and actors disproportionately. Emphasis in fast and direct punishment also struggles to work with a system that can discriminate against certain social stratifications which can negatively influence how things are enforced.

Another criticism is that the work does not do a good job of acknowledging structural violations that can be undertaken by those in positions of power. The focus rests largely on street crime

instead of systemic violations, which may be calculated differently depending on political capital and safeguards to entities.

Therefore, classical criminology, regardless of standing from a period of reasoned and equal legal justice, may fail to account for psychological understanding of social concepts when considering different types of crime. This has prompted criminology to expand and bring more elements from psychology that bring to bear social implications.

The underpinnings of law continue to be affected and molded by classical theory, and also continue to maintain crime control through method and frameworks. These frameworks largely are influenced by thinking, free will, as well as how action can be based on a person's own actions and their calculations. Contemporary legal structures embrace potential harms over rewards that support proportionate punishment. The support serves as the foundation to how one should be sentenced, in that a violation requires a severe punishment to sustain fairness and social expectations.

The framework relies on legal statute, coupled with expectations. It creates protections, and tries to reduce disproportionate penalties. Doing all of this leads to being aware of any repercussions, and allows one to try and not trigger those potential risks. Contemporary approach and theory can therefore act as a deterrent and also preserve personal freedom. Efforts today have looked more to work as being rehabilitative instead of just negative effects on the actor committing the violation, to shift how the cost and benefit of a bad evaluation can play out.

Influences of classical criminology happen around policing, like trying to showcase dangers from the actor side like surveillance with quick actions from law enforcement when seeing things. These support expectations in a violation that are swift.

The theory influences even more today by acting in reasoned processes to foster accountability. This can promote the actor and their return to participate in the world.

The system relies heavily on theories which are influenced and derived historically from classical ideas. But it needs to also acknowledge that social elements need to be more heavily factored into the process and psychological ones too. The influences are within the framework, and prompt a debate about finding a way forward when it comes to sentencing reforms, and the requirement to balance equality with public safety which have an essential outcome.

Core principles within classical criminology still remain strongly present within law, but also the theoretical building blocks understood on a system. Even though it started a long time ago, in the 1700s, it still holds key parts that play in the current landscape. Focusing specifically on rationality, with the thought that one has choice and the social contract, supports our modern views and understandings. It made human conduct to be something decided and understood from one's mind. This clashes with assigning just causes like biological elements.

The core theory here and how punishment should be in proportion plays internationally. It also has promoted having those expectations occur promptly because of severity within the violation. The goal has been that punishment needs to also match that crime that occurred to stop different situations from arising. There are legal standards, with clear treatment playing a role that works from transparency as a base.

This plays into discussion of human rights, and provides thought on how things should be done. The demand is with how law is delivered which is aligned with worries when thinking about the past. However, we also know that the theory is too limited, and does not account for society always, or show smaller structural influences too either.

Latest actions persistently see philosophical elements as well as psychology social views, and bring economics to blend it. The blend makes this something that demonstrates the theory still holds strong and still is relevant today.

The theory continues to remain even though codes, procedures and understandings today are still relevant in understanding actions within the society, and continue to be built on today.

Classical theory has always influenced and dictated action legally for those who could be committing different criminal actions. Principles as well as a strong rational sense served at its foundation; it marked a big shift away with how we approach it today. People like Cesare Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham are there as fundamental parts today. People look at the costs and commit the potential violation and then they measure it all from within that action from a strategic aspect.

Today this theory remains something of merit. The framework has helped with moving actions towards a more fair sense. Yet the theory as stated relies on basic items. And it can also minimize a lot of psychological factors. Due to past restrictions and theories they brought advancements from it after.