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Introduction to Criminology

This chapter identifies key philosophies and debates in the development of criminology. Two key schools of thinking – the classical and the positive – arose in Europe and influenced later thinking; but modern criminology arises out of the Anglo-American tradition. A major paradigm shift within the Anglo-American tradition laid down the framework for thinking and research in criminology from the 1960s onwards.

What we are concerned with plotting in this chapter on criminology is what David Garland has called ‘a specific genre of discourse and inquiry about crime’ (Garland, 1997: 11). We will examine the notion of criminology as a specific kind of discourse by describing some of the key philosophical issues which, at various points in criminology’s development, have typified what criminology is or has been.

Current criminology is a study that emerged from a major paradigm shift in the 1960s – and that shift occurred in the Anglo-American tradition. But before the Anglo-American tradition developed and took centre stage in criminology, philosophical thinking in Europe laid down some foundations for that later debate. Strands emerging from the early European debate run throughout criminology, including the Anglo-American tradition. So it is to the contested philosophical roots of criminology that we first turn.

Two scriptural beginnings to the history of criminology

In his entry to *The Social Science Encyclopaedia* Cohen starts off by saying that ‘there are two scriptural beginnings to the history of criminology, each marking out a somewhat different fate for the study of crime and its control’ (1985: 173). If one can understand the basic differences between these two traditions, then one can understand many of the arguments and debates not only in criminology but also in law, psychiatry and penology. These two traditions are the classical school of the Enlightenment and the positivist revolution of the nineteenth century.

Cohen argues that the beginning dates from the mid-eighteenth century and is the outcome of the work of Enlightenment thinkers like Beccaria (1738–94) and Bentham (1748–1832) in breaking with what can be identified as a previously ‘archaic’, ‘barbaric’, ‘repressive’ or ‘arbitrary’ system of criminal law. This was the *classical school*. For these reformers, the crime question was predominantly the punishment question. Their programme was to prevent punishment from being, in Beccaria’s words, ‘an act of violence of one or many against a private citizen’; instead, it should be essentially ‘public, prompt, necessary, the least possible in given circumstances, proportionate to the crime, dictated by laws’. Classicism presented a model of rationality, with a limited liberal state imposing the fair and just punishment that must result if social harm has been perpetrated.

Almost a century after classicism, criminology was to claim for itself another beginning and another set of influences. This was the positivist revolution and popularly dates from the publication in 1876 of Lombroso’s (1836–1909) *L’Uomo delinquente*. The new positivist programme was to focus not on the *crime*, but on the *criminal*; it did not assume rationality, free will and choice (typical concepts within the classical debate); instead, determinism – with biological, psychological or social constraints – challenged the notion of individual choice. This new tradition began to identify the criminal as a special person or a member of a special class. The underlying aim of this new criminological agenda was to produce a general causal theory by which to explain criminality. This quest gave the subject its distinctive and collective self-definition – ‘the scientific study of the causes of crime’.

These two philosophical positions – often known as the classical and positivist standpoints – are usually set out as two totally separate traditions. The classical tradition was superseded by the positivistic

approach by the end of the nineteenth century and then made a dramatic comeback in a slightly revised form from the early 1970s onwards. While it may be easier to read history in these stark terms, it does not match reality. Judges, for example, have always had to juggle with the claims of lawyers – usually working within a more classicist tradition and insisting on free will and responsibility. Psychiatrists, on the other hand, tend to work within a positivist tradition, insisting on a more deterministic stance with internal and external factors compromising notions of free will. It has always been so.

There are few ‘pure’ classicists and few ‘pure’ positivists. Most of us, in fact, embrace notions from both traditions. However, some criminologists lean more in one direction than the other. These two traditions manifest themselves in three approaches that appear and reappear throughout the study of criminology:

- *A legal approach* emphasizes the classical tradition and notions of free will.
- *A biological approach* emphasizes the positivist tradition and links with psychological approaches.
- *A social approach* originally the positivist tradition – but with a major paradigm shift in the 1960s. There are considerable theoretical variations within this approach.

These three distinct strands currently co-exist and have run through the history of criminology. Sometimes they interweave, sometimes they conflict, and the spotlight shines brightly on one or more at given times. These philosophical underpinnings and their tensions need to be remembered as we now turn to consider some of the key moments and debates in the development of criminology.

The development of criminology

This book does not provide a traditional history of criminology, but criminologists from Britain and the United States of America tend to get very possessive when they talk about the development of criminology. As we consider the emerging battlefield for criminology we need to remember that the early skirmishes were fought on the continent of Europe – certainly not in the United States of America, where criminology had not yet secured a place, not in Britain, which took a rather detached view from things happening on the mainland of Europe.

Anyone averse to history can skip the next section without too much harm. However, it sometimes helps to know a bit of background when the current development of criminology suggests that history may be repeated. Overall, what we recognize as modern criminology arises out of the Anglo-American tradition (hence we give it most space); yet its roots lay in Europe. What follows are key moments that define and highlight important developments in criminology, grouped under three main headings:

- remember Europe;
- Anglo-American tradition;
- so where are we now?

Remember Europe

Few now recognize the importance of early European thinking for the new study of criminology. While it is still debated whether or not such thinking constitutes criminology as we now know it, these ideas provide an early introduction to systematic thinking about criminal justice and punishment. Certainly, theorizing about crime and punishment loomed larger in France (and on the Continent generally) in the nineteenth century. This points to an interesting distinction between mainland Europe and the Anglo-Saxon countries. The latter – and here we are talking about Britain and the United States of America – tend to attack their problems by pragmatic experimentation. Indeed, Gordon Wright has suggested that ‘the history of crime-control efforts in Britain or the United States can probably be written without much reference to theoretical disputes (though not without reference to mores and values)’ (1983: 110). In contrast, in France theorizing about crime is taken seriously and has evolved over time.

The classicists argued that excessive and brutal punishments were unworthy of civilized nations. They stressed that the essential purpose of punishment was utilitarian rather than vengeful: each penalty should be precisely calculated so that the pain imposed would just outweigh the pleasure of successful wrongdoing. A pure form of utilitarianism would have little use for the notion of retribution – often spoken of as the Old Testament’s ‘eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth’ justice. However, while the utilitarian views of Jeremy Bentham were particularly influential in Britain, Beccaria and his French followers mixed their utilitarianism with a continuing element of retributionism, and

this mixture of the two elements emerged in the thinking of the 1789 revolutionaries and in Napoleon's penal codes.

Hence, in France it was a particular blend of utilitarianism and retributionism that eventually came to be known as 'classical' theory (Wright, 1983). The sharp edges of classical theory soon began to be softened somewhat in France: the revision of the penal code in 1832 reflected this by authorizing judges and juries to reduce charges and penalties on the basis of extenuating circumstances. The advocates of change later came to be called the neoclassical school, combining utility and retribution in thinking about suitable punishments. Throughout the rest of the nineteenth century, the neoclassical school was to dominate criminological theory in France, and it retains a strong influence among jurists and penal authorities down to the present day. The challenge to the neoclassical doctrine began to emerge in the mid-nineteenth century and then, more concretely, in the form of the so-called positive school of criminology.

Important medical influences also had a relevance to the eventual growth of criminology. For example, Dr Philippe Pinel advanced the theory of 'moral insanity' as an explanation of some criminal behaviour and suggested that some criminals should be treated, not punished.

More importantly, the work of Dr Benedict Morel had great impact in the mid-nineteenth century when he put forward the concept of degeneracy (Pick, 1989). Both crime and madness, wrote Morel, were growing in epidemic fashion. In his terms they were traceable to a process of moral and physical decay, brought on among the working classes by disease, unwholesome living quarters, alcohol, drugs and adulterated foods; the consequent degeneracy was transmitted to the children and grew progressively worse (Morel, 1857). However, he recognized that criminals were different from insane persons; as they still had a choice, they should not be treated for a form of illness. Degeneracy theory had an immediate and lasting impact. It was widely accepted by the public, and by writers on crime, until well into the twentieth century.

The intense discussion in France in the third quarter of the nineteenth century was interrupted by the publication in Italy of Lombroso's startling book *L'Uomo delinquente* (1876), which forced them to grapple with his unorthodox theory. Lombroso (1835–1909) was a young army doctor who based his initial work on a study of army recruits. He claimed to have identified a category of 'born criminals', who were characterized by certain physical characteristics.

These included: an under- or over-sized brain, a receding forehead, high cheekbones, squinting eyes, bushy eyebrows, a twisted nose and big ears. (As late as the 1930s, judges were ordering Lombrosian analyses of defendants' physiques.) Lombroso's work, based on what seemed to be scientific observation, was a forthright manifesto of the new positivistic spirit.

Few books in the history of criminological theory have caused such a stir. Importantly, his work seemed to harmonize with the new scientific spirit of the age and appeared to open up a clearly marked path to the control of crime. The prevention of crime became a reasonable goal, for if potential criminals could be so accurately identified, then their crimes might be averted by surveillance or internment. It suddenly made the idea of punishment seem outmoded. If offenders were predestined to a life of crime, it would be meaningless to talk of punishment; the new alternatives would either be curative treatment or elimination of the criminal for the good of society.

In fact, the work of Morel and some other French doctors had already anticipated Lombroso's position in their theories of moral insanity, degeneracy and the inheritance of pathological tendencies. While those of the classical tradition were appalled at what they regarded as the new heresy, Wright explains how the French scene became more complex. In brief, the counter-attack was led not so much by those in the classical and neoclassical tradition, but rather by a group of French positivists who mobilized in opposition to the Italian positivists and, in turn, developed a rival French school of positivism that shifted the central emphasis from biological to social factors and so edged out the 'pure' Lombrosians from the centre of the stage.

While few would have known it at the time, this ideological battle between the Italian and French positivists became equivalent to a criminological Olympic Games, with the French and Italians pitted against each other for world supremacy. The initial encounter in this contest came in 1885, when the Italians convened the first international Congress of Criminal Anthropology in Rome. The new congress produced controversy and not a harmonious new orthodoxy. Dr Alexandre Lacassagne, a professor of legal medicine from Lyon, challenged the basic assumptions of the Lombroso school and charged that its practical consequences would be devastating; it would leave societies, he said, with no choice but to keep all deviants locked up in prisons or asylums. Lacassagne then put forward the basic premise of what was to emerge as the rival French school of criminal sociology,

namely that crime was mainly the product of social causes. At the end of his address he said that 'societies have the criminals they deserve'.

In these early controversies in Rome we can see the three important approaches to studying crime and criminals that we have already mentioned: a legal approach; a biological approach; a social approach.

Such controversy did not destroy the development of criminology but it influenced its subsequent profile by laying down its 'fault lines' – the fissures along which dispute erupts. In fact, current criminology is a study that emerged from a major paradigm shift in the 1960s – and that shift occurred in the Anglo-American tradition. So, to make sense of that shift we need now to examine the development of criminology in Britain and in the United States of America.

Anglo-American tradition

Britain and early criminology

David Garland's broad historical argument is that the social and intellectual rationale for modern criminology grew out of the convergence of two quite separate enterprises: what he calls 'the governmental project' and 'the Lombrosian project'. Garland's use of the term 'project' is important to grasp: he uses it 'to characterize an emergent tradition of inquiry which, despite a degree of variation, shares a cluster of aims and objectives' (1997: 12). The 'governmental' project refers to those inquiries that direct attention to the problems of *governing* crime and criminals. Studies within this tradition need not necessarily be official, state-sponsored studies but, certainly from the nineteenth century onwards, the state has come to dominate work of this kind. The 'Lombrosian' project, on the other hand, refers to that tradition of inquiry, begun by Lombroso, which aims to differentiate the criminal individual from the non-criminal.

Garland's main argument is that the discipline continues to be structured by the sometimes competing, sometimes converging claims of these two programmes. So, of the two poles, there is one which pulls towards an ambitious (and according to Garland deeply flawed) theoretical project that seeks to build a science of causes. The other exerts the pull of a more pragmatic, policy-orientated, administrative project, seeking to use science in the service of management and control. It is the latter strand that was firmly established in Britain from the late 1950 onwards. However, we need to establish what

happened in Britain before this point. What was the British reaction to the gladiatorial contests between France and Italy in the late nineteenth century in relation to the embryonic science of criminology?

In fact, the attitude of Britain was rather like England's tepid attitude to the early football World Cups, in which it simply failed to participate. The 1896 Geneva Congress of Criminal Anthropology was the first occasion when Britain sent an official delegate – the prison inspector Major Arthur Griffiths – and Griffiths came back to file a rather sceptical report of developments on the Continent.

There were individual enthusiasts of Continental ideas in Britain, such as Havelock Ellis and William Douglas Morrison, and possible early precursors of Lombroso, such as the psychiatrist Henry Maudsley and the prison medical officer J. Bruce Thomson, but the official British position was one of a certain detachment. Generally, prison doctors and experienced psychiatrists recognized that the majority of criminals were more or less normal individuals and that only a minority required psychiatric treatment, which usually involved removing them from the penal system and putting them into institutions for the mentally ill or defective. Most of the major scientific works on crime written in Britain before the 1930s were by doctors with psychiatric training and positions within the prison service. The most significant was the work of Dr Charles Goring, *The English Convict: A Statistical Study*, published in 1913, which was essentially a challenge to Lombroso's claims. *The English Convict* had a considerable impact abroad, and especially in the USA, but in Britain it received a much more muted response. However, Goring's approach is important, for it inaugurated a new stream of statistical studies that has strongly influenced criminological work, especially in the post-war period in work done and commissioned by the Home Office.

Certainly Garland suggests that 'scientific research on individual criminals in Britain stemmed from a rather different root than did continental criminology, and inclined towards a more pragmatic institutionalised approach to its subject' (1997: 37).

However, as the positivist movement on the Continent became less extreme in its claims – influenced largely by the emerging French tradition – and indeed more pragmatic, the initial hostility of Britain's scientific and penological circles tended to fade.

Focusing on the research, writing and teaching in criminology that did take place up to the Second World War, Garland makes the useful point that it all came close to the concerns of the Lombrosian project in its focus on individuals and their differential classification.

But what needs to be recognized is that the British work essentially lacked the scientific ambition and theory-building of the Lombrosian project, being almost exclusively concerned with knowledge that was useful for administrative purposes.

Garland identifies Maurice Hamblin Smith as Britain's first authorized teacher of 'criminology' and as the first individual to use the title of 'criminologist'. Hamblin Smith was intensely interested in psychoanalysis, both to assess the personality of offenders and as a technique for treating the mental conflicts which, he claimed, lay behind the criminal act.

In the early 1930s there was sufficient interest in criminological matters in England to develop the Association for the Scientific Treatment of Criminals (1931) which, in 1932, became the Institute for the Scientific Treatment of Delinquency (ISTD). Most of those involved in this initiative were in private clinic work – at the Tavistock (1921), the Maudsley (1923), the new child guidance clinics and, in 1933, the ISTD's own Psychopathic Clinic (which in 1937 was moved and renamed as the Portman Clinic). As Garland stresses, this new field of practice gave rise to its own distinctive brand of criminological theory with an interest in the clinical exploration of the individual personality.

Another strand of British criminology prior to the Second World War can be identified and represented by the eclectic, multifactorial, social-psychological research of Cyril Burt. Interestingly, when later criminologists such as Radzinowicz and Mannheim look back upon the work of their predecessors, Garland notes that they do not talk of Charles Goring or Hamblin Smith; they focus on Burt's 1925 study, *The Young Delinquent*, as the first major work of modern British criminology. So Radzinowicz states (1961: 173–6): 'it may be said that modern criminological research in England dates only from Sir Cyril Burt's study of *The Young Delinquent*, first published in 1925. Its excellence in method and interpretation was at once recognised and it has stood the test of rapidly advancing knowledge' – a fascinating statement in the light of subsequent doubts, expressed shortly after Burt's death, that he fudged his figures!

Garland sums up by emphasizing quite correctly that 'the scientific criminology which developed in Britain between the 1890s and the Second World War was thus heavily dominated by a medico-psychological approach, focused upon the individual offender and tied into a correctionalist penal-welfare policy' (1997: 44). In contrast, influence from *sociological* work – such as that developed from the

insights of Durkheim in France at the turn of the century or from the Chicago School, the influential group of sociologists from the United States in the inter-war years – was non-existent.

So up to the Second World War (1939–45) British criminology responded to problems which were thrown up by the system – by the courts, the prison and the Borstal system – such as mentally abnormal offenders, recidivists and especially juvenile delinquents. As Garland so eloquently emphasizes, ‘the central purpose of scientific research [that is, in Britain at least] was not the construction of explanatory theory but instead the more immediate end of aiding the policy-making process’ (1997: 44). In other words, in Garland’s terms, the ‘governmental project’ dominated in a narrowly defined way. This is not surprising as the researchers and teachers on criminology prior to the Second World War were largely practitioners working in prisons, clinics or hospitals. Criminology as a university-based, academic discipline simply did not exist.

The domination of American criminology

The situation was very different in the United States. Studying crime and deviance within a university setting became firmly entrenched well before the Second World War. The development of the University of Chicago sociology department was crucial. This department was constituted in 1892, but it began to become important in the study of crime and deviance when Robert Park, an ex-journalist, became its head.

Chicago sociology ranged widely in its work. As Downes and Rock point out, ‘it was not the express ambition of the Chicago sociologists to focus on crime and deviance’ (1998: 69); furthermore, criminology was not treated as a separate sub-discipline. The concern was a more general one – seeking solutions to *social problems*. ‘Social problems’ was the title of the relevant course in many American university departments – more familiarly known to generations of American students as ‘nuts and sluts’ courses.

The approaches of Chicago sociologists were diverse – as Downes and Rock have commented: ‘The Chicago sociologists had no binding commitment to the discovery of any single explanation or any single *kind* of explanation’ (1998: 76). Their strengths were as empirical sociologists (i.e. collected data as evidence), using a variety of methods – personal documents, anthropological fieldwork, the analysis of census and court records – to probe contemporary crime and deviance.

As interest in crime and deviance began to develop in Britain in the 1950s, ideas from America and the Chicago School started to percolate. Terence Morris's pioneering study, *The Criminal Area* (1958), was a replication of the ecological approach developed in Chicago in the 1920s and 1930s. Downes and Rock suggest that 'there seemed to be an affinity between the turbulent and expanding Chicago of the 1920s and the cities of England in the 1960s and 1970s' (1998: 81).

Influenced by theoretical and empirical work from the USA, particularly Chicago, crime began to be studied in much more earnest in Britain in the late 1950s and early 1960s, but the main development came with the massive expansion of the undergraduate teaching of sociology in the 1960s and early 1970s. In Britain criminology was becoming a postgraduate qualification. Two developments in the funding and organization of research took place in London and Cambridge in the late 1950s and was crucial to the subsequent development of criminology.

The development of 'administrative criminology' in Britain

Since the Criminal Justice Act 1948 the Home Secretary had been given power to spend money on research into criminological and penal matters, but a total of only £12,000 was spent in the next decade. Hence, Rab Butler has explained how, by the time he became Home Secretary early in 1957, 'the mood of Parliament and the country favoured a radical reappraisal of the penal system' (1974: 1). In May 1957 Butler announced the formation of the Home Office Research Unit, which at that time consisted of two research workers and four civil servants, and in June 1957 he was encouraged by the Howard League for Penal Reform to give support to a proposal to establish an Institute of Criminology by approaching the vice-chancellors of the universities. In July 1958 Butler announced to Parliament that Cambridge would establish the Institute if sufficient funds could be made available. Leon Radzinowicz became the first Wolfson professor and director in the summer of 1959. Butler states: 'In general the announcement of the Institute's establishment was well received with features and leading articles in the major newspapers, but in some quarters the response was lukewarm.' (1974: 8).

This coolness on the part of the academic criminologists and sociologists continued throughout the 1960s. It was a time of massive developments in the sociology of deviance, and there was a willingness to question and challenge the more traditional approaches

to criminology that were evident in the work of the Institute of Criminology at Cambridge and the Home Office Research Unit in London. Many sociologists of deviance became unhappy at the close links, perhaps more apparent than real, between the Institute at Cambridge and the Home Office in London.

John Martin, who worked at Cambridge in the 1960s, has reminisced: 'Ironically it was the function of giving of advice to government which never developed as an Institute activity, although Radzinowicz himself was a member of the Home Secretary's advisory council. The rest of the staff was too heavily engaged to have the time to offer advice on an intermittent basis even if asked' (1988: 174). Perhaps the Institute never really kept the close contacts with the Home Office which other academics suspected; however, it certainly lost contact with the mainstream developments in social science within universities. Martin reflects: 'Some of us said at the time, the Institute in its early days was a centre of criminological research but not of criminological thought' (1988: 173).

A paradigm shift

Meanwhile, criminological thought was becoming embroiled in a major debate within sociology that erupted in the 1960s and had its origins in some concerns about the most appropriate way to study crime and deviance. Its effect on criminology was to become most recognizable in the 1970s.

This shift in the mid-1960s both in Britain and, more importantly, in the USA arose as a challenge to the assumptions of a positivist model of thinking (called a 'paradigm shift', following the work of Thomas Kuhn – see box 1.1). Within criminology it is most often associated with the name and work of Howard Becker, but other important figures were also influenced by what became generally known as the labelling approach. The intellectual parentage of this approach was in the work of G. H. Mead in the 1930s relating to 'symbolic interactionism'.

However, it was certainly Howard Becker (see box 1.2) with his famous book, *Outsiders* (1963) who captured the mood of the moment so successfully. It is understandable that this book attracted attention for it was well written and its main focus was the interesting topic of marijuana smoking and the notion of becoming deviant. What was happening was the growth and development of a specifically *sociological* view of deviant phenomena, and many of the insights

BOX 1.1 CHANGING THE WORLD

At a New York cocktail party shortly after the Second World War, a young physics postgraduate blurted out to a woman he had met there: 'I just want to know what Truth is!' This was Thomas Kuhn. Soon afterwards he gave up physics for the history of science. The work that followed, especially *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, published in 1962 and now with sales of well over a million copies, was the most important contribution to the history and philosophy of science of the twentieth century.

Kuhn was struck by the consensus among those working in particular disciplines during periods of what he came to call 'normal science'. It isn't just that they accept the same theories and data, they also have a shared conception of how to proceed in their research, a tacit agreement of where to look next. There is agreement about which new problems to tackle, what techniques to try and what count as good solutions. It is rather as if new practitioners in a particular discipline are covertly given copies of a book of rules, the secret guide to research in their field.

What he found was that scientists learn to proceed by example rather than by rule. They are guided by what Kuhn called their *exemplars*, or certain shared solutions to problems in their speciality. Scientists will choose new problems that seem similar to the exemplary ones, will deploy techniques similar to those that worked in the exemplars, and will judge their success by the standards the exemplars exemplify.

Exemplars also create their own destruction, as they will eventually suggest problems that are not soluble by the exemplary techniques. This leads to a state of crisis and in some cases to a scientific revolution, where new exemplars replace the old ones and another period of normal science begins. This whole process is known as a paradigmatic shift. Kant claimed that, after a scientific revolution, 'the world changes'.

Source: Adapted from 'Kant on wheels' by Peter Lipton, *London Review of Books*, 19 July 2001, pp. 30–1

BOX 1.2 HOWARD S. BECKER

Becker's writings on the sociology of crime and deviance sparked considerable excitement and controversy in the 1960s. Their challenge lay in statements on the nature and importance for sociologists of partisanship and moral commitment – Becker's work is often described as a 'sociology of the underdog' – and in their rejection of the narrow, individualist explanations of traditional, positivist criminologies. The labelling approach to understanding deviance, an approach to which Becker's name is most closely linked, emphasizes deviance as a social process, a product of the interaction between the 'offender' and the wider social audience.

In his book *Outsiders*, first published in 1963, Becker outlined his basic position on deviance, saying that it 'is not a quality of the act that the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an "offender". The deviant is one to whom the label has been successfully applied; deviant behaviour is behaviour that people so label' (1963: 9).

These lines helped to fan a fierce debate inside and outside academic circles about the social construction of deviance and about social policy for dealing with deviant behaviour.

Source: Adapted from the article 'Howard S. Becker', *Social Studies Review*, November 1987, pp. 75–6

captured by this approach were then imported into mainstream criminology.

In his important book *Becoming Deviant* (1969) Matza identified three major phases in deviance work, which were developing concurrently rather than consecutively:

- 1 appreciation of the deviant;
- 2 human pathology being replaced by diversity;
- 3 the erosion of the divide between deviant and conventional.

We now focus on these phases to identify and explore the major paradigm shift that was occurring.

1 *Appreciation of the deviant* First of all, Matza identified the replacement of a correctional stance by an *appreciation* of the deviant subject. Roughly, the correctional view, at least from the standpoint of the sociologist, is that bad things result from bad conditions. Hence, the aim is to eradicate or correct those bad conditions, and from this follows the implication that there will be no more bad things. Certainly, in its original form, the correctional view did not entertain the possibility of evil arising from things deemed good – and vice versa. In fact, this was a contribution of the much-maligned functionalist school – associated mainly with Talcott Parsons – that many things deemed bad had latent functions that were good.

Matza felt that one of the basic difficulties with the correctional perspective is that it systematically interferes with the capacity to empathize and so really comprehend the subject of inquiry. By contrast, appreciative sentiments mean that we do not want to rid ourselves of deviant phenomena. Instead, we are intrigued by them.

These sentiments are regarded as an intrinsic, vital part of human society. In other words, we want to ‘appreciate’ the deviant’s own account. Equally, though, we should not regard the deviant’s account as the only story. For while the correctional stance may be inappropriate for a sociological approach, equally dangerous is the other end of the pendulum – the trap of romanticizing deviance. To appreciate is simply to estimate justly the deviant’s own account.

Closely associated with ‘appreciation’ is the concern to defend a conception of deviance as meaningful action. Stan Cohen’s example is vandalism (1971). Vandalism, unlike the property crime of theft, cannot be explained in terms of the easily understood motive of acquiring material gain, for the property is damaged, not revered. As a consequence, it is easily described as motiveless. One interest, then, was in restoring meaning to behaviour that could be so easily described as ‘meaningless’, ‘senseless’ or ‘irrational’. The argument was that doctors – and, in particular, psychiatrists – were much to blame for annihilating much of the meaning of deviant and criminal behaviour by writing off the person as ‘sick’ rather than recognizing that the people participate in *meaningful* activity.

2 *Human pathology replaced by diversity* This brings us indirectly to Matza’s second phase in the growth of a sociological view of deviant phenomena, namely the purging of a conception of pathology – that is, crime as a disease – by a new stress placed on human diversity. The idea of pathology has a long history. By the time of the

Chicago School there was ample evidence to reject an account of *personal* pathology, but the concept of pathology was quickly located at the *social* level in so far as social disorganization became the operative idea.

The most well-known questioning of social pathology is contained in the work of Goffman. What is considered pathological by those in white coats in a mental institution may seem normal enough in the client's subculture. Those administering the wards have a vested interest in order and in a career and may be motivated to regard behaviour that is troublesome to those running the ward as a symptom of the client's illness. Goffman opens up the world of the double-bind situation: if the patient says the food tastes like soap, he is crazy; if he says the food is OK, then he also must be crazy. In fact, the striking thing about Goffman's work is that he takes particularly bizarre human conduct and is still able to question the capacity to impute pathology.

3 Erosion of the deviant-conventional distinction The third aspect which Matza identified in the growth of the sociological view of deviant behaviour is the gradual erosion of the simple distinction between deviant and conventional phenomena. The gradual elimination of the simple distinction between the conventional world, on the one hand, and the deviant world, on the other, leads to a more sophisticated view stressing *complexity*.

Both implicit and explicit in this sociological view of deviant phenomena was an attack on positivism. Matza (in his earlier – and more influential – book *Delinquency and Drift*, 1964) summarized what he saw as the fatal legacy of positivist criminology against which the new paradigm was constructed. The three underlying assumptions he picked out had developed, he argued, in reaction – or rather, overreaction – to the assumptions of classical criminology associated in particular with Beccaria and Bentham. Matza regards the three fundamental assumptions underpinning positivist criminology to be:

- a stress on the importance of the criminal actor rather than on the law;
- a stress by the positivists on the quest for scientific status;
- the notion of the constrained delinquent.

So the positivist school explains crime by the motivational and behavioural systems of criminals. Hence, as a contribution to understanding

crime and deviance, the law and its administration are deemed simply secondary at best or totally irrelevant at worst.

Matza draws attention to the classic debate between the classical school and positivism: 'whereas the classical school accepted the doctrine of free will, the positive school based the study of criminal behaviour on scientific determinism' (Jeffrey, 1960: 379; cited in Matza, 1964: 5). In brief, it was suggested that the quest for scientific respectability resulted in some damaging philosophical assumptions being made. Matza maintained that positivists rejected the view that man exercised freedom, was possessed of reason and was thus capable of choice. For the positivist, the delinquent was fundamentally different from the law-abiding person.

Post-paradigm shift

So where did this paradigm shift take the study of criminology? The increasing focus on and appreciation of the deviant's account (and the rejection of the correctionalist stance), the recognition of the diversity and complexity of the situation made what was becoming mainstream criminology less attractive for government sponsors of research. In turn, some academics felt that they were supping with the devil if they accepted research commissioned by government. So, for around two decades, the split between much academic criminology and mainstream policy-making was perhaps greater than has been generally recognized.

With the rising popularity of sociology in the 1960s, a new generation of graduates found the medico-legal emphasis of much of British criminology very limited and limiting. The National Deviancy Conferences held at York in the late 1960s symbolized a deliberate break with what was seen as the stranglehold on the subject by the orthodox criminology of the south-east, represented by Cambridge and the Home Office. The collections *Images of Deviance* (edited by Stan Cohen, 1971) and *Politics and Deviance* (edited by Ian Taylor and Laurie Taylor, 1973) include a range of examples of this new work, mostly placed within the context of the sociology of deviance. Cohen and Taylor's book *Psychological Survival* (1972) produced a stir for several reasons. The study was on the experience of imprisonment under maximum security conditions in H Wing at Durham Prison. Cohen and Taylor published their work in defiance of the provisions of the Official Secrets Act governing research into penal and allied establishments and was a stand against even liberal forms of censorship.

There was a flood of publications in the deviance area in the 1970s. However, Downes usefully highlights the developing tensions within the National Deviancy Conferences, which eventually fissured or split in 1973. Downes suggests that 'the politics of the NDC pivoted around the tensions between those who primarily sought intellectual as distinct from those who emphasised political radicalism' (1988: 178). Downes correctly identifies how criminology was beginning to fragment in the 1970s or, more elegantly put, 'by 1974, several competing theoretical approaches were on offer' (p. 178). From the late 1970s to the present day criminological work has been conducted with a lower level of theoretical intensity but with a greater attentiveness to policy as well as to political issues.

Certainly the development of a Marxist, critical or radical criminology, particularly identified with the publication of *The New Criminology* (Taylor and Taylor, 1973) and of *Critical Criminology* (Taylor et al., 1975) attempted to continue to move the mainstream of criminology away from the administrative centres of power. However, while very influential in a variety of ways, one needs to recognize that Marxist approaches were never mainstream criminology. In contrast, some of the insights loosely associated with the interactionist or labelling perspective were taken on board more broadly in the increasing fragmentation of criminology in the 1970s and early 1980s.

So where are we now?

Since the 1960s some of the assumptions underpinning mainstream or conventional criminology have shifted quite dramatically. Having said that, there is a dispute about what can be regarded as 'mainstream' or 'conventional' criminology. What is undoubtedly true is that the psychiatric and psychological approaches were increasingly taking the back seat, although both these disciplines were themselves experiencing changes. Certainly the dominant theme of the first half of the twentieth century – that of the criminal being conceptualized as a particular type of person, understandable and, where it is considered appropriate, treatable apart from society – had been successfully challenged.

Of course, there are periodic flurries that still feed this old tradition. So, for example, in the early 1970s there was the discovery of chromosomal abnormalities among patients at special hospitals, such as Broadmoor and Rampton. In fact, there is a small proportion of these patients who have committed (or were alleged to have committed,

for many of their cases did not go to trial) some very bizarre crimes and for whom a chromosome abnormality has been detected. However, such numbers would certainly have very little impact on the major questions of crime causation. The crucial point to remember is that offenders are not fundamentally different, in this sort of way, from the rest of us.

Criminology is more complicated than such a simple divide between offenders and the rest of the world allows. Since the 1970s the discourse of criminology has become more fragmented, extending its reach to allow detailed examination of its conceptual base. Important issues and concepts such as race and gender, whose meanings and impact may in the past have been assumed, became themselves the focus for study and exploration. Hence, theoretical vantage points (e.g. Marxist, feminist, Marxist-feminist) became both more fundamental and more varied. At the same time, crime became a key social and political concern which demands practical answers and applications from researchers. New Left Realism (which we look at in more detail in chapter 5) was one major response to this cocktail of pressures shaping criminological debate, and it looked for practical outcomes to crime problems in combination with theoretical exploration. Crime has become a central concern in election campaigns and in newspaper and television reporting; hence there is continuing pressure to recognize and prioritize the practical outcomes of research and how they relate to the problem of crime control.

Conclusion

This chapter is not a traditional history of criminology; instead it has identified key debates to illustrate important shifts in thinking within the criminological discourse over time. Underpinning these debates are assumptions about the purposes and uses of criminology. We have suggested two different sets of beginnings to criminology (both arising from Europe):

- the classical school;
- nineteenth-century positivism.

Modern criminology, while it draws on those roots, is more usually understood as the result of the major paradigm shift of the 1960s within the Anglo-American tradition. However, not all commentators have been moved by the paradigm shift, and it is noteworthy that

some of the earliest ideas informing criminology remain influential today. For example, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) draw on insights from the classical tradition in outlining their theory of self-control (which is discussed further in chapter 5).

Criminology is still seen as a relatively new study, indeed many still regard criminology as an infant that cannot stand on its own feet. However, we have seen that criminology has a longer history than is sometimes realized. It is always difficult to identify a beginning to a subject that has always been talked about; people will always have held a view – a theory – as to why some steal and others do not. In 1721 Daniel Defoe in his novel *Moll Flanders*, would not have been the first to say words to the effect, ‘Give me not poverty lest I steal’. The greater likelihood of someone stealing if they are in poverty is not a modern insight and does not need the discipline of criminology to suggest it. Which of such discussions does one declare to be the beginning of a specialist study?

Perhaps one of the ways of recognizing the arrival of an autonomous subject comes when the discourse becomes typified by tension and rebellion. Certainly there was tension and rebellion in the 1960s in plenty – civil unrest in the USA, student rebellion in Britain and a clearer link between student and worker concerns in continental Europe. Most particularly, there was dissension within the ranks of sociologists. Over the years criminology has certainly strengthened its claim to exist as an autonomous, multidisciplinary subject but, as Stan Cohen argues, ‘somewhat like a parasite, criminology attached itself to its host subjects (notably law, psychology, psychiatry, and sociology) and drew from them methods, theories and academic credibility’ (1988: 2). However, most subjects have done the same in drawing away from parent disciplines. Anyway, unlike many ‘bastards’ whose parentage is not always claimed, with criminology there are several parents – as well as grandparents – of this infant that need to be recognized.

Rather than concerning ourselves too much with the semantics of the words ‘discipline’, ‘field of study’ or even ‘field study’, we have presented criminology here as a discourse because this best represents the idea that there are processes of reasoning which underpin criminological knowledge. The reasoning and arguments implicit in the dialogues described in this chapter have something to say about what constitutes knowledge in criminology and how we should interpret it. And it is to the subject of ‘information’ that we turn in chapter 2: what do we know about crime and how do we know it?