

Chapter 2

The Evolution of Criminology and the Social Sharing of Emotion

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ABSTRACT

In the field of criminology, biographies or life stories should increasingly become the central moment of research aimed at that historical reconstruction which helps, for example, unravelling the tangle of responsibility at the time of a criminal offence. The life story orients and provides elements for the psychic examination and contributes, with the psycho-diagnostic tests, to the discussion on the case and the assertions that precede the conclusions of the expert's report. Placing value on the biographical approach in criminology effectively means abstracting as a guiding hypothesis the identification of the development of personality for the purposes of ascertaining the responsibility of an author and the prediction of future behaviour: reference is, therefore, to the life story understood not only as narration, but also as communication.

EMOTIONAL SPACE AND THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

The evolution of criminology deserves attentive reflection, above all at a time when attention to crime and its dynamics is highly topical.

The study of crime concerns the physical space in which it is carried out. Today, in a context that tends to unify spaces and multiply relations, the sense of fragmentation is on the increase. This sense is also reflected in the urban space where modern built-up areas at times astound by their unfinished and aggressive nature vis-à-vis the city and the landscapes in which they are inserted with damaging consequences not only on the level of the urban morphology and structure, but also on the social and human level.

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In the galaxy of ideas developed on these topics, there are those who have coined the term ‘urban suffering’ to highlight the entwining that exists, at a very deep and embedded level, between private stories, such as the suffering of households in conditions of poverty and vulnerability, and the stories of the city, those that can be found in the rundown areas of city outskirts, youth gangs or groups of immigrants excluded from all access to the opportunities offered by the city: this entwining has to be revealed, recognized and thematized as it is not possible to deal with the public dimension without considering the personal-affective implication and, on the other hand, it is not possible to deal with the personal-affective dimension without understanding their political implications (Saraceno, 2012).

In this sense, in criminology, biographies or life stories should increasingly become the central moment of research aimed at that historical reconstruction which helps, for example, to unravel the tangle of responsibility at the time of a crime. In the perspective of the prognosis of future behavior, i.e. of social dangerousness, the starting point is the indisputable assumption that crime is interaction, conflict or exchange so that when reference is made to the methods of biography, it is essential to dwell, as K. Jaspers suggested, on the following questions: collection of material, putting it in order and presenting it (Jaspers, 1914). The life story orients and provides elements for the psychic examination and contributes, with the psychodiagnostic tests, to the discussion of the case and the declarations that precede the conclusions of the expert witness’s report. Developing the biographical approach in criminology actually means abstracting as a guiding hypothesis the identification of the development of personality for the purposes of ascertaining the responsibility of an author and the prediction of future behavior: the reference is therefore of the life story understood not only as narration but also as communication.

The possibility of predicting criminal behavior pervades criminological studies and is connected with the decisions concerning people to place under security measures or to release. All this presents once again the concept of prediction and the reason why the judiciary places so much trust in prediction is not difficult to understand: it lies in the fact that we are led to believe that as far as criminal behavior can be predicted, it can also be prevented.

To reach these opinions, the instruments of investigation are the typical ones of psychiatry, sociology and psychology. The interview, as a method of investigation, appears fundamental, while finding important complements in the psychometric and projective methods for the exploration of the personality. The reference is clearly to article 133 of the Italian Criminal Code which concerns: “gravity of the offence: evaluations for the effects of the penalty” and which in the criminological evaluation can again single out, although in a broad and modified sense, the formula of K. Lewin, according to whom behavior, including criminal (Cb) depends on the person (P) and the environment (E) at a given time $Cb = f(P, E)$, involving in the environment and in the criminal dynamic the injury or the danger caused to the aggrieved person, i.e. the victim (Lewin, 1961; Lewin, 1972).

In this perspective, it becomes clear that all the observations coming from the different procedures of personality evaluations into relation with one another such as, for example, the interviews, the life story, the psychometric methods, the projective/reactive tests, through a process aimed at identifying the models, the general systems of action and the development of the personality have to be put into relation with one another.

The possibility of change can be outlined starting from the observation that the action or reaction always has to be considered as the product of an encounter, or a co-acting of two factors, the situation that acts as a stimulus, on the one hand, and the personality that acts as the matrix of the reaction, on the other. The former can take on an outstanding emotional and dynamic value precisely in reaction to the structure of the personality that is stimulated by it: the latter, even though intrinsically abnormal, is

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