

Anthropology of Criminal Behavior in the European Philosophy in the 16th -19th centuries

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Abstract – The article focuses on the anthropology of criminal behavior in the European philosophy in the 16th - 19th centuries

Key words – anthropology, criminal, behavior, philosophy.

I. Introduction

Nowadays, to strengthen the fight against such a devastating inland factor as a steadily increasing level of crime and delinquency is a very important and difficult task for the European community. In this regard it is very urgent to determine the causes of criminal behavior of certain categories of people or specific individuals.

II. State of the problem

Understanding of modern criminal behavior in the context of European realities is not possible without a retrospective glance at this philosophic problem in the 16th -19th centuries. Without taking into account a detailed analysis of human virtues and their kinds, Francis Bacon tried to identify the key features of moral conduct of the individual and proclaimed the primacy of common good over the individual and an active life over a contemplative one [1]. The scientist insisted on the creation of a separate branch of science i.e. the study of personality, the subject of which would be the advantages and weaknesses of the human race. F. Bacon believed that the reasons for of criminal or any other antisocial behavior were consequences of the lack of education and training, resulting in the weakness of mind and decline of morality. The philosopher argues as the soul and body are interconnected, the individuality's traits (including criminal and vicious inclinations) could be diagnosed by the physiognomy methods using the analysis of the body structure and facial features.

Another English philosopher Thomas Hobbes was convinced that the nature created people with approximately the same physical and mental abilities and therefore they have equal rights. Like Machiavelli, he stressed that people got driven by motives of profit, pleasure, satisfaction of personal needs, thus, the philosopher considered different atrocities, wars, and crimes inevitable consequences of the human nature [2]. Th. Hobbes was among the first enlighteners who

began to emphasize the relativity of the interpretation of the honest and criminal behavior and its dependence on the specific socio-political circumstances, financial standing and more. At the same time, Th. Hobbes noted a theoretical possibility of recognition of moral virtues of other human qualities depending on the different types and forms of the state governing [3]. According to Th. Hobbes, the main causes of criminal behavior are rooted in passion, arrogance, hatred, lustfulness, excessive ambition, greed, and temporary defects in thinking (false opinions, findings, etc.).

Analyzing human behavior, the French philosopher Rene Descartes concludes that a particular inherited feature of the soul is conscience, whose role consists in regulation of moral behavior. While listening to the voice of their conscience and following its guidelines, people act honestly. R. Descartes believed that a dishonest behavior was caused by three reasons: firstly, by deliberate ignoring of inner moral objections; secondly, by insufficiency of mental and volitional control of the soul over the body, due to the lack of life experience, small amount of knowledge about good and evil; thirdly, by passion "caused, maintained and strengthened by some movement of the spirits, flowing out of the body move the little gland [i.e., the pineal gland] in the middle of the brain and excite the soul" [4]. Due to Descartes, passions are the main reasons for criminal behavior having various kinds such as fear, anger, vanity, lust, etc.; at the same time, the thinker stresses that the mind can fully control them, without allowing "to excite" the soul [4].

John Locke insisted on an exclusive role of the human mind, which he considered to be a special divine gift. In his works *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, *Essays on the Law of Nature*, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* he claims that during his life the man accumulates in his mind different concepts coming from sense organs, and any ideas, concepts, moral rules are acquired human phenomena. That is why J. Locke called them desirable, but not generally accepted, assuming that some individuals may not follow them [5].

François-Marie Voltaire believed that the human have certain innate features, namely goodwill to individuals like themselves, self-love, instinctive desire to activities. These "basic passions" unite people into the society, and self-love encourages people to actively meet their own needs and seek contacts with those whom they depend on. Studying the nature of moral norms, the philosopher emphasized their relativity and dependence on the features of the historical period, social system and government. He also tried to find some invariance of the concept of "morality" and urged that "just or unfair, virtue or vice, good or evil in all countries should be recognized as something that is helpful or harmful to this society" [6]. In other words, for F.-M. Voltaire not religious dogmas, but social relations between people were the source and criterion of moral human behavior.

The philosopher also pointed out the relativity of recognition of the conduct being criminal or virtuous, dependence of this recognition on a particular political

system and/or a dominant religion in the country. He claims that, in fact, criminal can only be called such a conduct which is harmful to the society, moreover, some harm for the religion or state, in his opinion, should not be considered as a crime and should not be condemned (for example, atheism, offense of nobles, etc.). He called some actions such as theft, robbery, murder, rape "ordinary crimes in any country" [6]. Due to the philosopher, criminals' exaggerated sense of self-love which overcomes inherited inclination to activities and goodwill causes their commitment.

Studying the relationship between people in the ethical context, Denis Diderot argues that people from their birth inherit the ability to distinguish virtue from vice, feel love for the former and disgust for the latter. This innate ability and coexistence help people firmly keep in their minds the difference between good and evil. Thus, according to the philosopher, that is the way moral imperatives are formed; they constitute "a natural law" of human relations, which in a general form can be considered as the need to pursue good [7].

Defining the nature of criminal behavior, D. Diderot argued that the individual acting criminally, along with positive moral features has also innate negative, immoral characteristics, namely, a tyrannical pride, ingratitude, betrayal, cruelty, propensity to violent sights and pleasures, tortures, etc. These features and passions suppress a "moral organization" and the mind of the human and cause distortion of the "natural law", making impossible its compliance. However, in his later works Diderot expressed a different thought, based on his views of innate ideas; he wrote about the formation of moral attitudes of people during their life under the influence of social, political, and domestic factors. In particular, the philosopher noted, "If the state wealth is distributed fairly, the people of that country are virtuous and not prone to a crime" [7].

In the theory of morality of Claude A. Helvetius there was the idea of dependence of moral principles of a human being on a particular environment. In his poem *Happiness* the thinker argues that the source of human activity is self-love (he calls this feeling "a powerful creative force," the source of virtue and viciousness) [8]. Thus, the philosopher emphasizes that the human mind affects decisively the person's choice of a particular type of behavior. C.A. Helvetius completely denied the ethic theory of innate ideas; he considered moral vices and virtues to be the product of a particular form of government, law and education, where the human mind is being formed.

It is significant to mention that the thinker argued the need to subordinate human activity to public interests. In his treatise *On Mind* he considered social usefulness to be

"the main principle of all human virtues and the basis of all laws" [8]. In other words, the criterion of morality of the deed is its coincidence with the public course, public interests. Due to Helvetius, this is the only condition when the person can be free and happy. According to the philosopher, the main task the human is to tame their feeling of self-love; and the human mind is being developed until the desire to satisfy their own needs has not co-ordinated with the needs of the other people" [8].

The philosopher saw the cause of criminal and any other antisocial behavior in the environment, under which he meant primarily the form of the state governance and the conditions of education that influence the mind of the man. Due to Helvetius, such behavior is amoral and unfair because it causes harm to the public. Because of this the personality of a criminal is endowed with certain characteristics.

Conclusion

Modern realities prove that at present the researchers need to take into consideration the retrospective of the philosophical and legal approach to the criminal behavior. This approach allows us to establish a productive dialogue between various scientific conceptions with the aim of a comprehensive solution of urgent problems of the modern European community.

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