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Scientific Police

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THE SCIENTIFIC POLICE.¹

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the School of Scientific Police.

Every citizen who is interested in the progress of society acknowledges that, in civilized countries, the police is entrusted with a noble task, which fact is reflected by the science whose aim it is to raise the efficiency of this powerful weapon of social defense. Physicians by whose teaching of hygiene society had been enabled to prevent physical evils to a large extent, felt very much flattered when, having taken up the study of police problems they were asked to assume certain responsibilities in questions of moral hygiene.

Since 1894, when I first tried to introduce a really scientific system into the police by following the inspirations of my master, Cesare Lombroso, I have demonstrated the function of criminal anthropology in such a system. The school of scientific police, founded through my initiative by the secretary of the interior, took its inspiration mainly from the principles of criminal anthropology.²

Since then the works on scientific police have been increasing rapidly; other schools have been established and new departments of police have been created. We must admit, however, that many either have not understood, or have not followed the scientific biological direction essential to a scientific police. Let us, above all, agree on the program and the function of a scientific police.

The technical function of judicial police is an important part of it. It requires the application of scientific methods of describing individuals, taking their photographs and finger prints, reproducing criminal local inquests, and for picking up the tracks of criminals. It comprises the Bertillon system, numerous chapters of legal medicine, and judicial photography. This technical side is only a part of the police function. Bertillon, whose system already existed in 1834, did not think then that he had created the scientific police.

I have always considered it my duty to speak of scientific police as Lombroso conceived it in opposition to the empirical system which is

¹Translated by Dr. Victor von Borosini, Chicago.

²S. Ottolenghi: *L'insegnamento della Polizia scientifica*. 1895 Sienna. *La police scientifique en Italie*. (*Archive anthrop. Crimin.*, 1905). *Prospetti sinottici di Polizia scientifica*, Roma 1908, p. 250. *Trattato di Polizia scientifica*. I Vol. *Identificazione figura*. Milano Societa editrice libraria, 1910, pp. 410.

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in vogue at present. I not only wanted to apply certain new methods of identification, but, for three reasons, I urged the adoption of the new system; (1) to introduce a scientific method, based on investigation, in all the departments of the police. Every preventive and repressive measure ought to be based upon an actual and profound knowledge of normal, and of criminal men especially. Each branch of the police administration should adopt the method, founded upon investigation, i. e., nothing else but the application of Galilei's experimental, objective and rational method, which made experimental science possible. By extending this method to the study of moral evils, modern psychology, psychiatry and anthropology were created. This method, if applied to the police, would serve as a safeguard against errors of any kind. It is the most reliable way to discover the truth. (2) To seek the support of biology, psychology and criminal anthropology for investigations; i. e., to reckon with natural laws when we investigate, cross examine and report on facts. (3) To rest all police work on the thorough knowledge of man, especially of the criminal type, and to make use of the teachings of anthropology and psychology for the better prevention and suppression of crimes and for the discovery and more efficient supervision of criminals.

The knowledge of the nature of delinquent men will necessarily induce the police and society to adopt a more humane method for fighting criminality. This can be done by employing the best methods recognized by modern pedagogy in the treatment of minors: those methods which have triumphed in the treatment of the insane (Pinel) and have proved a marked success in animal breeding and even the taming of wild beasts.

By studying the individual in his relations to environment, criminal anthropology has taught us that a great many have become criminals through the surroundings in which they were obliged to live. If these conditions are considered and criminals are treated kindly, they may lose their dangerous characteristics. We have learned, besides, that if we treat a criminal humanely and as a friend, he can be better watched; his guilt, if he is guilty, can be more easily established, and his nature on the whole can be appreciated with greater precision. Criminal anthropology and sociology learned not from books, but from living beings, teach the official the rules to be observed for discovering the nature of the human mind, for appreciating the particular danger of a criminal to society, and for discovering the participants in the commission of criminal acts. Anthropology and psychology inform us about the nature of a criminal, enable his identification, and tell us how to

treat him. The psychology of the delinquent gives the officer a cue to his character, which renders him competent to introduce radical changes while enforcing the laws. The present method irritates rather than tames the human animal by developing ideas of persecution, thus increasing in an incredible way the world's cruelty. The knowledge of normal and criminal psychology must convince responsible superior police officers that the whole force ought to be inspired by humanitarian sentiments, by moderation, and by a certain kindness even towards the worst specimens of society, in order to do really efficient work.

The scientific method, with its rules adopted from experimental science, which in turn is inspired by the modern knowledge of mental phenomena must—and this is really the new pedagogy of scientific police—teach the officers and the judges how to observe, to reason, and to be absolutely impartial in investigations and reports. Besides it must teach the careful preparation of local inquests, investigations as to the accused's character, and the testimony of witnesses, all of which are useful means to discover the truth, rather than the opposite. The application of this method which means a real reform of the police, was first introduced in Italy, where Lombroso founded criminal anthropology, where the phenomena of the mind were examined by the most thorough methods, and where Galilei's method of investigation originated. The method can of course not be introduced by an order of a cabinet minister. Its effect is a remodeling of the whole department, not only in culture, but also in education. Our school, the only one in the world at present, accomplishes this high purpose.

Which method must we follow to obtain such results? The anthropological method of investigation studies the criminal type in prisons first, then in police stations. The method is not beyond the understanding of police officers of average education. It does not require thorough anthropological nor psychological studies. It is to Lombroso's everlasting credit that he applied the experimental method to the study of the delinquents in prison and in liberty in scientific laboratories. It is astonishing how the prisoner who serves his term, willingly submits to anthro-psycho-logical examinations, and how he discloses his nature. Some (Reiss in Lausanne e. g.) maintain that such conditions are not normal. Quite the contrary. The prisoner under a minute but courteous examination, questioned humanely and kindly even, as to his most secret psychological phenomena, reveals himself and his mental development and shows how great a menace he is to society. The examination takes place in the following way: It begins with the physical examination, similar to the one needed for a description, which is to

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ascertain anomalies and characteristics of the delinquent's nature, and the very interesting marks of his life, like certain traumatic scars (from falls or wounds) or certain tattoos. The examination of the wrinkles, and of the contractions of facial muscles, will disclose even the slightest mimic reaction and special mental manifestations. Next comes the psychological examination as to his intelligence, his senses, and his volitional attitude by appropriate questions suggested by the special case, which ought to furnish a good opportunity for the manifestation of desires, impressions and aspirations of the constantly observed subject, especially while telling the story of his life and during his self-defense. A systematic, biographical sketch with information about the behavior of the criminal in prison, and outside during military service, in school, and reformatories, as an apprentice, and in the family circle completes the information. Thus our dangerous criminals are studied in prison just as we study the sick in hospitals. By these means we transform the prison into a place of study and observation, in which the prisoner takes an active part, compensating society in this way for what is done for him. An official, who acts according to these rules, will get a real knowledge of criminals, which, once the method is acquired, will be completed by observing the delinquent at liberty, in his daily fight against society and the authority of the police. Observations made on delinquents in prison can immediately be used by the prison authorities, and later by the police, charged with watching the man, and preventing him from becoming a backslider. Long explanations are not needed to show the usefulness of applying the method by the police for watching and hunting up of criminals, for getting informations, for questioning and for local inquests. As an example, let me describe the biographical card for an accused person, introduced in Italy in 1903, which serves as the basis for every measure taken in criminal cases. It contains the personal, physical, and psychological description, how dangerous a man he is, his ability to work and the most important facts of his life. A complete card cannot, of course, be filled out during one examination, but later different officials who know the man, will furnish impartial additional information for the judge. Thus the card is a documentary index to the whole history of the person in the criminal records. In questioning the official again has an opportunity to apply to a large extent his knowledge of psychology, while he watches with keen interest the facial expression, in order to detect his most secret emotions, to discover the most cunning dissimulations. The anthropo-psychological method will be widely used in local inquests, where the official must not only be expert in the technic of photography and of taking and recogniz-

ing finger prints, but also a keen observer. Thus he will increase his usefulness. He should further be absolutely impartial and rigorous in his report, which ought to be complete, logical and true, so that they may serve as a most important document for judicial instruction.

What has Italy done so far? Italy is the only country with an official school of scientific police for all the departments connected with the police. My course on the scientific police, given at the University of Sienna from 1896 to 1901 was, by order of the Secretary of the Interior, given in Rome after 1902 for superior officers of the police. The course was part of the curriculum of a school started in 1903 with a complete number of studies for students designated to become chiefs of police. They must live for four months at the school, and give proof of having profited by their studies. Besides description (Bertillon system and dactyloscopy) and legal photography, the principal courses consist in judicial investigations and applied anthropology and psychology. Both of the latter are taught according to the above mentioned principles, resulting in a complete reform in police methods. The course is given with the help of convicts in the prison, in the proximity of which the school is located. The prisoners are introduced during the lecture, and are questioned and examined minutely in presence of the class. The delinquent almost invariably understands that he serves as object lesson, and voluntarily helps by giving all the more important information. He does not shrink from showing his mind and his desires to those who treat him kindly. The new officials learn above all in our school to treat the prisoners well; they see that kind treatment is the first step towards making the criminal less dangerous, towards winning his confidence, and thus being able to exercise a beneficent watch over him, which widely differs from persecution. Up to the present time we have given twelve courses, attended by 650 officials besides lawyers and graduates of the Technical Institute. A more elementary course of scientific police is given to pupils of the school of carabinieri. The police school has a laboratory for research work and demonstrations and a criminal museum. The laboratory, besides being used for school purposes, serves for investigations by the judicial police.

The penal and penitentiary functions in civilized countries are increasing and with the tendency towards transforming prisons into workhouses and reformatories, the reform of the police functions, according to the trend of things in Italy, is of importance in every country for the safety of its citizens and for humanity's sake.