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## Present Movement in Criminal Anthropology Apropos of a Biological Investigation in the English Prisons

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## II. THE PRESENT MOVEMENT IN CRIMINAL ANTHROPOLOGY APROPOS OF A BIOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION IN THE ENGLISH PRISONS.<sup>1</sup>

ENRICO FERRI.

The publication of the article under the above title was inspired by the appearance of "The English Convict; A Statistical Study," by Charles Goring, London, 1913. Professor Ferri here deals with the everlasting misunderstanding of the doctrines of the Positive School.

"The conclusion of Dr. Goring," says Ferri, is this: the criminal is not a creature *sui generis*, an abnormal man; he is simply an 'unusual' person, of normal humanity. It will be seen that here is much ado about nothing. Whether you call a person abnormal or unusual indicates simply a verbal preference. The fact that the investigation of Goring and his associates establishes, as they maintain, that 'criminals are generally persons more deficient than the average of the population; deficient in physical form, in stature, in weight, and in mental capacity,' shows that the contentions of the positive school are corroborated by persons who call themselves opponents. The opposition seems to be due to misunderstanding." Ferri attempts to explain once more, as lucidly as he can, what the positive school believes.

"It is advisable to note that the very fact that this investigation in the state prisons has been carried on—though it has been limited to only 3,000 convicts—is such a tribute to the Italian school, which Cesare Lombroso founded, as to make us grateful to the English government for having ordered such a compilation of biologic data on prisoners. Another reason for satisfaction lies in the fact that Goring's volume resembles even in the typographical disposition of the numerical tables and the diagrams, the principal Italian works on criminal anthropology written by Lombroso, by Marro, etc.—and especially my own volume on "Homicide" (including its maps), which volume Goring does not cite, but from which he reproduces arrangement and classifications, beginning with the method of series, which I then brought into criminal anthropology for the first time in substitution of and in complement to the method of means.

It is strange that now after trying many years to bring about a

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<sup>1</sup>From *La Scuola Positiva*, November, 1913. Translated and presented by Robert Ferrari, Associate Editor of this Journal, New York city.

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proper understanding of the phrase, "born criminal," I should have to repeat for the benefit of Dr. Goring, the same things that I have been saying for the last thirty years, and which I published in the first editions of *Criminal Sociology*, pp. 80-194, in the 4th edition, 1900, and in "Homicide," pp. 97-110. I must repeat for the thousandth time, what I said at the International Congress of Criminal Anthropology of Paris, 1899; and above all, in that of Geneva in 1896. If Lombroso had laid stress exclusively on the organic characters of the criminal—indeed the anatomical characters and almost solely the cranial ones—and had thought that crime was purely a biological phenomenon, he very quickly acceded to my views as to the bio-social origin of crime. Insanity, suicide, etc., are not the exclusive effects of anthropologic conditions, physical and psychical, of an individual, but are the resultant of personal conditions, that react in a given telluric and social environment. And so, at the Congress of Paris, and at that of Geneva, I openly explained the objections of the so-called French school to the doctrine of the born criminal as the result of a misunderstanding, in so far as they attributed to Lombroso and to the Italian school, the belief in a physical-criminal type; just as in these days Dr. Goring still attributes to our school, that is, such a type by virtue of which a man who presents certain stigmata of degeneration or of disease, without more and because of the stigmata, is compelled to commit crime. I explained how a man may have stigmata of abnormality, degeneration, and disease, and notwithstanding, not commit crime, if he has the fortune to live in surroundings and conditions which do not push him on to crime. Just as, on the contrary, there are criminals who do not present any degenerate or morbid stigmata, or, rather criminals in whom we cannot make stigmata out, during their life, and sometimes not even on the anatomical table, because of the imperfect state in which even today our researches and above all our microscopic and biologic researches are.

That between the two classes of criminals, the sanguinary and the fraudulent, or the thieves who are not violent, there are, in general, somatic differences, I also showed in these congresses. And this is deduced from the data of criminal anthropology. But it is also to be understood that these somatic and psychical stigmata must be taken in connection with the environment.

When it is said that certain criminals observed by Tom, Dick or Harry do not present anomalies, it is necessary to remember that the observations have a greatly problematic value, because they are subject to the question: did the person who observed the criminals have such notions and such practice in anthropologic observations as to discover the

anomalies which the individuals may really have had. But I say that even when physicians and psychiatrists examine criminals they do not have a sufficiently trained eye to detect stigmata of degeneration if they have not studied anthropological technique.

In order to confirm this statement I have but to bring forward an episode which occurred at the Congress of Criminal Anthropology at Paris in 1889. In one of the last sessions, the celebrated Magnan invited the members of the congress to visit his famous asylum of St. Ann; and he told us that he would show us boys and girls, amoral or immoral, but without organic stigmata of degeneration. Of course if an amoral person does not present visible anomalous characters, as for instance, assymetries, irregular forms of the cranium, of the face, etc., this would not destroy criminal anthropology as some believe it would, since the anomalies may be internal or not macroscopic. But when we were at the Asylum of St. Ann, and Magnan showed us those boys, whose portraits can be seen in the transactions of the congress at Paris, pp. 55 Seq., he repeated that they were innocent of physical characters of degeneration, anomaly or disease; and since, to look at them, they were boys whose faces were rather attractive, the members of the congress were much impressed. But see! Lombroso rises and walks toward these boys (I can see him yet, trembling all over with the tremor of a good bloodhound close to his quarry), and begins to examine them. He found in every one of them sundry and not trifling anomalies, although these anomalies were invisible to the inexpert— anomalies which other anthropologists present, like Manouvrier and Popinard, were forced with mortification to admit the presence of, upon their being pointed out by the master. Lombroso thus overthrew the opposition of Magnan, who was a celebrated alienist, but who was an incompetent anthropologist.

When, therefore, in the year of grace 1913, Dr. Goring, perhaps forgetting all that has been said in the international congresses and in the works on criminal anthropology about organic and psychical anomalies of criminals, repeats that the criminal is not an abnormal person, but an unusual person, he quarrels only with words, and knocks down men of straw, while he believes that he is demonstrating the non-existence of an organic anatomic type of criminal. When, however, Dr. Goring comes to the conclusion that criminals are "more deficient than the average of the population in organic form, in stature, in weight, and in mental capacity" (not questioning for the time being the exactness of these particular affirmations, concerning which I should make some reservations—especially as regards stature), crim-

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inal anthropology, evidently, instead of being destroyed, receives from his conclusions the most impressive and positive confirmation.

Criminal anthropology progresses, and there is no doubt that the future will see more improvements and further discoveries. But there is an abyss between this perfection of methods (as was the addition of the method of series to the method of means) and the pretended destruction or "vanishing" of the "born criminal," or better, of the fundamental data of criminal anthropology, a science which Lombroso founded but which cannot and ought not to be bound by every particular conclusion which Lombroso has announced on this or that problem of criminal biology.

The results of the English prison investigation come, then, in good time to give us new material, and that revision of the particular conclusions of criminal anthropology which is the inseparable condition of progress in every science. The study of criminal anthropology will continue. It cannot help but continue, since the existence of criminals with their organic and psychical characters of abnormality or atavism, or degeneration, or disease is a daily reality. The scientific study of the criminal, therefore, with the method of experiment and observation, cannot die. Instead, the science will become more vigorous, especially because in our universities the authorities are adding those schools of applied juridical-criminal sciences, which cannot help but make a clinical study of criminals.