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## Criminal Anthropology

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### III. CRIMINAL ANTHROPOLOGY.

PAUL E. BOWERS.<sup>1</sup>

In using the term "criminals" Goring refers only to those anti-social individuals who have fallen into the meshes of the law and not to those who have been able to escape conviction and the legal penalty for their crimes.

The introduction to "the English Convict" contains a brief description of the origin and development of the three schools of criminology, the Classical School, the Correctionist School, and the Positive School. This chapter is chiefly devoted, however, to a vigorous and vicious attack on the Lombrosian philosophy of crime, and, while admitting that Lombroso was a philanthropist and humanitarian, he charges his work as being devoid of scientific spirit and "even dangerously marred by exaggeration and fallacy." He finally concludes that Lombroso's system will never be otherwise regarded than as the superstition of criminology.

In the second division of his introduction he states that the superstition of criminology is still dangerously alive and he therefore made a statistical survey of 4,000 English male convicts, and with the results of such study he has endeavored to repudiate the claims of the Positive School of Crime and to inaugurate and lay the foundation for the scientific study of the criminal.

Part I is an inquiry into the alleged existence of a physical criminal type. He here gives the results of detailed anthropological measurements of the head, eyes, ears, nose, lips, hair, right and left-handedness, etc., and then makes comparisons with similar measurements of college students, soldiers, and inmates of hospitals for the insane. His deduction from such data is that there is no physical criminal type.

Part II of his work is devoted to a most careful and minute study of the subjects indicated in the chapter titles.

#### PART II.

Chapter I.—The Physique of Criminals.

Chapter II.—Age as an Etiological Factor in Crime.

Chapter III.—The Criminal's Vital Statistics: Health, Disease, Mortality, Enumeration.

Chapter IV.—The Mental Differentiation of the Criminal.

Chapter V.—The Influence of the "Force of Circumstances."

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Chapter VI.—The Fertility of Criminals.

Chapter VII.—The Influence of "Heredity" on the Genesis of Crime.

Upon opening this volume one is immediately impressed with the profound and exhaustive character of this valuable contribution to criminology. The reader is also struck with the multitude of arithmetical and algebraic formulæ and it immediately becomes perfectly evident that Dr. Goring's study is purely a statistical one. The clinical and philosophical study of the criminal seems to have received much less attention than the statistical.

*Anthropology.—Heads*—Goring's measurements of heads lead him to the following conclusion: "It will be seen from examination of the differences recorded that in correlation there is no difference at all \* \* \* between criminals and university men."

It has been my observation that the heads of criminals when compared with persons living at liberty do not show a very marked difference in size—small heads and large heads have been observed with greater frequency among prisoners than are heads of medium size. Murderers seem to have, as a rule, larger heads than petty thieves—"a thief who is caught thieving has a smaller and narrower forehead than the man who arrests him." Asymmetry of the cranial vault is quite common and I believe it is more often seen in criminals than in equal numbers of civilians; these cranial anomalies, such as plagiocephaly, macrocephaly and microcephaly, are found among insane, epileptics and feeble-minded persons in about the same ratio.

*Ears*—I have noticed a great relative frequency of anomalous ears in the prisoners I have studied. The Morel ear is very common, as are the presence of Darwinian tubercles. I have noticed among negro criminals that the small shell ear is very common, but whether or not this is characteristic of the American negro I cannot say. Large ears, I believe, on the whole, are the more frequently observed among convicts.

*Eyes*—"It will be seen \* \* \* that fraudulent offenders have rather better, and thieves have rather worse, eyesight than offenders generally. The amount of this association, however, between the eyesight of criminals at constant age and the nature of their crime is very small, and for all practical purposes may be regarded as negligible."

Nothing particularly striking about the eyes has been noted except the great frequency of the arcus senilis and pupillary irregularities which indicate early degenerative morphological changes, the

results of luetic infection. About fifty per cent of the prisoners show at the time of their entrance examination some defect of vision. The defects can generally be classified under three heads: Congenital defect, such as myopia, astigmatism and hypermetropia; errors of refraction, due to acquired disease or traumatism; and various degrees of presbyopia, due to advance in years.

*Skin*—"Upon the evidence of the figures in the final table, offenders committing crimes of violence are, on the whole, rather less anaemic, and have a ruddier complexion, than criminals generally."

It has been a very popular practice of criminologists to refer to the anaemic and cachectic look of prisoners. While such conditions do exist in those prisons which lack an abundance of fresh air and sunshine, this pallor of the skin cannot be described as one belonging exclusively to criminals, for it is noted in those persons who are shut in from the air and sunshine by reason of their occupations.

I have noticed the irregular cardiac rhythm in many prisoners at the time of entrance. This condition is, no doubt, brought about by alcoholism, irregular hours of sleep, excitement and sexual excesses. The regime of prison life has a quieting influence on this functional tachycardia, as the prisoner is compelled to live a regular life, free from excitement and dissipation of all sorts.

*Left-handedness*—"Comparative statistics of left-handedness are remarkably few, and for Englishmen practically non-existent. \* \* \* Among 266,270 German recruits, 3.88 per cent. are left-handed—a proportion practically identical with our percentage of criminals with this peculiarity."

It has been the common assertion that large numbers of prisoners are left-handed, but I am of the opinion that this claim is somewhat of an exaggeration, though possibly the percentage of left-handedness is slightly higher among convicts than among free individuals.

*Nervous Sensibility*—I find that among a certain class of prisoners, such as hysterics and malingerers, there is a tendency to exaggeration of slight pain or any form of physical discomfort; this is especially noticeable among those who attempt to evade daily tasks and work assigned them. Indeed, the morning sick lines in penal institutions are full of prisoners pretending to be ill and furnishing only the most flimsy excuses for such claims. On the other hand, however, I have noticed an astonishing degree of sensory disturbances, especially those of anesthesia. I have performed many minor surgical operations on convicts without general or local anesthesia when no complaint was made of pain. In very severe injuries I have found

it necessary to exercise authority under the threat of demerit to keep injured patients in bed. I have known prisoners to amputate their fingers in machinery without apparently suffering pain; these self-inflicted mutilations were usually done for the purpose of avoiding labor. In one instance it required twenty-seven deep and superficial stitches to close a gaping wound made across the shoulder and arm of a prisoner, by a sharp knife, while in a fight with a fellow convict; the severed ends of the muscles were sewn together and the edges of the skin approximated without the slightest sign of pain on the part of the patient.

I have observed that the genitalia of prisoners are usually very well developed, and the reason for this is very apparent, since most of them are given to very frequent intercourse.

“The sexual sense of the youthful criminal is usually intense, and previous to apprehension was gratified physiologically unless it was preverse or exaggerated, in which case onanism or pederasty were resorted to.”

The life in penal institutions does not seem to suppress or diminish the genetic desires, and since the opportunities for physiological intercourse are lacking, inverse and perverse sexual habits are acquired in not a few instances. In those prisons where, for lack of room, it is necessary to put more than one prisoner in a cell, the practice of sodomy and other forms of homosexuality must be looked for.

*Tattooing*—“It is clear that the practice of tattooing cannot be such a peculiarly criminal characteristic as has been alleged.”

The practice of tattooing is very common among prisoners, but it is more or less limited to the members of the lower strata of criminal society. The forger and the convicts of his type are not given to this mode of adornment, since it makes identification more easy and certain. Young criminals may in a spirit of bravado submit to this painful form of decoration to display their nerve and ability to endure pain.

I have found all portions of the body tattooed, even including the genital organs, but the most common location for these “cutaneous embellishments” is the inner surface of the forearm. All manner of figures are found and common among them are initials and names, religious symbols, crucifix, nude female figures, dancing girls, ships, stars, geometrical designs, obscene legends, birds, insects, dragons and designs for good luck, such as horseshoes, etc. One reason offered for this practice is that the tattoo marks prevented blood poison in case of injury, another that they bring good luck. Burglars recog-

nizing the dangerous character of their hazardous occupation have been tattooed for means of identification should they meet a violent death.

It is extremely gratifying, no doubt, to the disciples of Lombroso to have such a worthy opponent as Goring to declare:

“The thief, who is caught thieving, has a smaller head and a narrower forehead than the man who arrests him; but this is the case not because, of the two, he is more markedly inferior in stature. The incendiary is more emotionally unstable, more lacking in control, more refractory in conduct, and more dirty in habits, etc., than the thief; and the thief is more distinguished by the above peculiarities than the forger; and all criminals display these qualities to more marked extent than does the law-abiding public, not because any of these classes is more criminal than the other, but because of their inter-differentiation in general intelligence. From our statistical evidence, one assertion can be dogmatically made: It is, that the criminal is differentiated by inferior stature, by defective intelligence, and, to some extent, by his anti-social proclivities. The following figures, however, may assist the imagination in realizing the nature and proportions of this differentiation. We may take it that one in thirteen persons of the general population are convicted at some time of life for indictable offences. If the total adult population were made to file by in groups of thirteen, and out of each group one person was selected who happened to be the smallest there in stature, or the most defective in intelligence, or who possessed volitional anti-social proclivities to a more marked degree than his fellows in the group, the band of individuals resulting from this selection would—in physical, mental and moral constitution—approximate more closely to our criminal population than the residue. We find, also, that crimes of violence are associated with the finer development, with the more marked degrees of ungovernable temper, obstinacy of purpose and inebriety, and with the greater amount of insane and suicidal proclivity, of persons convicted of these offences; and that tall persons are relatively immune from conviction of rape; and that fraudulent offenders are relatively free from the constitutional determinants which appear to conduce to other forms of crime.”

Goring's statement relative to the influence of prison life upon prisoners is indeed interesting.

“We find that imprisonment, on the whole, has no apparent effect upon physique, as measured by body weight, or upon mentality, as measured by intelligence; and that mortality from accidental negligence is pronouncedly diminished, and the prevalency of infectious fevers due to defective sanitation—taking enteric as a type—is lessened by prison environment. On the other hand, mortality from suicide, and from conditions involving major

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surgical interference among prisoners, greatly exceeds the general population standard; while, with regard to the prevalency of, and mortality from, tuberculosis in English prisons, criminals may be regarded as a random sample of the general population—one-fourth to one-fifth of all death in the general population, as well as amongst prisoners, being due to some form of tubercular disease.”

While these conclusions are in the main to be agreed with, I do not believe they can be accepted in their entirety. Under the regime of prison life, with its healthful food, daily wholesome employment, regular hours for sleep, medical care, we find that many prisoners, who were on the verge of mental and physical breakdowns at the time of admission, owing to their vicious habits of intoxication, prostitution and drug ingestion, are restored to health.

As to tuberculosis, this is the *bete noire* of the prison physician. Often our penal institutions are censured to an undue degree because of the spread of tuberculosis. Many cases of lung disease, no doubt, develop in prisons, but it is a regrettable fact that men are committed to prisons in the advanced stage of tuberculosis. As an illustration of this condition of affairs, one man died of pulmonary tuberculosis two days after being admitted to the Indiana State Prison. The fact bears testimony to an obvious fault of our legal system, which too much considers the crime and disregards the individual.

The total number of deaths occurring in the Indiana State Prison during the decade beginning July 1st, 1902, and ending June 30th, 1912, were 140. Tubercular infection was responsible for at least forty-five of these deaths.

*Conclusion*—It will only be by such laborious efforts as Goring's that the true worth and function of anthropology will become known to the criminological science. The result of his labor will further stimulate the efforts of criminologists to determine whether the “abnormalities,” “unusual conditions” or “anomalies” found in criminals are of such a character as to be remedied.

Goring's statements concerning the superstition of the Lombrosian idea seem at times to be somewhat embarrassed by the facts he has presented and the conclusions he has drawn. When he declares (1) that the criminal is mentally and physically defective; (2) that environment bears but an insignificant causal relationship to crime; (3) that criminalistic traits are inheritary in the same manner as is tuberculosis; (4) that classes of criminals may be differentiated one from another by physical and mental attributes, he becomes the defender of the Lombrosian doctrine concerning the criminal.