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PIONEERS IN CRIMINOLOGY

VIII. Willem Adriaan Bonger (1876–1940)

J. M. VAN BEMMELEN

The author of this article is Professor of Criminal Law and Criminology at the University of Leiden (Holland). He studied at the University of Groningen and was a pupil of Sir John Simon van der Aa, professor of criminal law in Groningen, later secretary general of the *Commission Internationale Penale et Penitentiare* (Berne, Switzerland). He wrote a doctors thesis in 1923 about the history of the Dutch Society for the moral improvement of prisoners and the Dutch penitentiary System in the 19th century and the first 20 years of the 20th century. After his doctors degree he became a lawyer in Rotterdam and in 1931 professor in Leiden. From 1932 to 1940 he was at the same time police-judge in the Hague. During the war he first took part in the opposition of the Leiden University against the Germans, and was a hostage-prisoner of the Germans. From 1943–1945 he was the juridical adviser of the commander in chief of the Dutch resistance. He wrote a textbook about Dutch Criminal procedure (1936), about Criminology (1942) and about the Special part of Criminal Law (1954). In 1951 as a visiting professor he taught criminology in Aberdeen (Scotland) and gave an inaugural lecture under the title: "Criminologists, Kings without a country". (SCOTTISH JURIDICAL REVIEW Vol. LXIII, No. 1.) The original of the picture above is in Bonger's *Verspreide Geschriften*



WILLEM ADRIAAN BONGER

—EDITOR.

Often criminologists have asked for, sought after, and perhaps found the causes which make men criminal. Seldom or never have these criminologists put the question of why a man becomes a criminologist. Nevertheless both questions are equally interesting. It is true that there are far fewer criminologists than criminals. In numbers, therefore, the criminals are of much greater importance. Further, there must be criminals before there can be criminologists. But without the criminologists we would have no scientific study of crime and its treatment.

Does the life of Willem Adriaan Bongers, the Dutch criminologist, or do his writings give an answer to the question: Why does a man become a criminologist? Hardly! Almost nothing in his youth or family circumstances gives any indication that he was to become a world-famous criminologist. His father, Hendrik C. Bongers, was active in an insurance firm in Amsterdam, and is described to us as a sound-minded, quiet, always equanimous and amiable man, who, notwithstanding his overcrowded business life and the care of a large family (Willem was the youngest of 10 children), found great pleasure in his music¹. In the Bongers household a rather liberal atmosphere reigned. Father Bongers was a Remonstrant-Protestant. There was harmony between the parents and the children. Mother Bongers, Hermine Louise Weissman, showed a mild humor and great solicitude for her children. She was nearly illiterate, without any special interests, but spiritual and original. Why then did a son of this family, that in itself was just like hundreds of other households of good citizens, become a criminologist? In the first place, there must have been some hidden hereditary factor that drove him to scientific work, instead of the practical work in the branch of insurance-law which his father had wished him to follow. This hereditary trait we find also in one of Bongers's sisters, "Jo," born in 1862, who became the wife of Theo van Gogh, the brother of the famous Dutch painter, Vincent. It was she who did so much to collect the correspondence between the van Gogh brothers, to get these letters translated and edited and who succeeded in bringing world-fame to Vincent after his death.²

An elder brother of Willem, Andries, was also a gifted man. He went as a young man of 19 to Paris without having studied at a University, but he had a great love of art, literature and painting and a rather universal knowledge.³ He was a great friend of Theo and Vincent van Gogh and of Odilon Redon. Andries was the fourth child of his parents and suffered from their rather poor circumstances during the first half of their married life. He became, though he had not studied law, a much sought-after specialist in maritime insurance law. In his biography his wife tells us that he had had a hard youth in which work played the most important role. If Willem had been the fourth child instead of the tenth he, like Andries, probably would have attended the *Handelsschool* (Mercantile School) and not the *Gymnasium* (Classical preparatory school). The *Handelsschool* did not lead to matriculation for the University. The "birth-number" of Willem played an important rôle, in that he would perhaps never have become a University man if he had not been the youngest of the ten children.

It is very probable that somewhere in the families of Bongers's parents there must

¹ Short sketch of the life of Prof. Dr. W. A. Bongers by his son H. Bongers, published in the COLLECTED PAPERS OF BONGERS, Amsterdam, N. V. De Arbeiderspers, 1950 (in Dutch). For details of the life of Bongers, I made ample use of parts of this sketch, as well as of the article which Prof. Dr. J. Valkhoff wrote about the works of Bongers which appears in these same Collected Papers. About the criminological work of Bongers Prof. B. V. A. Röling wrote an article in the Dutch *TÏDSCHRIFT VOOR STRAFRECHT*, L II (1942).

² A little biography of the life of JOHANNA GESINA VAN GOGH-BONGERS by her son V. W. VAN GOGH is published as part of the preface to the collection of the letters of Theo to Vincent, Wereldbibliotheek, 1932, and in the English edition of these same letters (London-Boston).

³ His biography was written by his second wife, MRS. F. W. M. BONGER-VAN DEN BORGH VAN VERWOLDE and published in the *JAARBOEK VAN DE MAATSCHAPPIJ DER NEDERLANDSE LETTERKUNDE* te, Leiden, 1936-1937, p. 112.

have been hereditary factors which gave to him and to his elder brother and sister a predisposition for art and science. But that does not explain why Willem Bonger became a criminologist. Why was his scientific interest directed to crime? Is it possible and probable that criminologists become interested in crime as a way of sublimating their own criminal tendencies?

At first sight, this does not seem to be true of Bonger. His son tells us that for Bonger, as well as for his brother Andries, the dark side of life had no attraction. They enjoyed spiritual pleasures much more and had a great sense of moral responsibility and moral norms. Nevertheless, it is not impossible that a certain antagonism for the somewhat stuffy religious atmosphere which reigned in the home of father Bonger caused Willem, even as a schoolboy, to have doubts about the origin of life and particularly about sin. It is not common for so young a boy to study the works of Darwin. In his later life he certainly shows a certain antagonism to religion and to the pretensions of religious people that they can solve the riddles of life and death by faith. He enjoyed, rather, making clear in his article, *Geloof en Misdaad* (Faith and Crime, 1913), that religion and religious conviction are not the panacea for crime, they were held to be by authors like Alexander von Oettingen,⁴ the Belgian Roman-Catholic author De Baets,⁵ the Protestant parson Dr. Jaeger⁶ and Cathrein.⁷ "Bonger himself was absolutely irreligious. He was religious in the Spinozistic sense: "Everything which exists is in God and God is nature." He was a Spinozistic pantheist and considered God as immanent and as non-transcendental. He was a Humanist. The Calvinistic creed had no attraction whatever for him and from the Catholic he did not expect much good, for he abhorred the authoritarian character of their church." Thus he is described by his pupil J. Valkhoff, now Professor in Amsterdam, who wrote a preface for the collected papers of Bonger.⁸

Such an irreligious attitude, and certainly in Holland round about 1900, was in opposition to the conviction of the majority. On the other hand, among the little group of intellectuals it was rather common. In a Remonstrant-Protestant family such as Bonger's, there was no reason for the parents to be alarmed at this attitude. The great difference between the Remonstrants and the Calvinists has been since the days of Arminius (1619), and even since the time of Dirk Volkertsz Coornhert (1522-1590), that the Arminians or Remonstrants did not believe that sin was something emanating from or created by God. It was something purely human. But for one who, like Bonger, following Spinoza, thought that God was in nature, this Remonstrant conviction was not wholly satisfying. The Remonstrants still recognised a free will, but for a Spinozist the human will is not a free cause, but determined by necessity. It is improbable that Willem Bonger was very much interested in these theological questions; on the contrary, even as a young man he must have seen them as insoluble, and therefore he tried to understand as much of human life as was possible through human methods, particularly empirically and as a positivist.⁹

⁴ ALEXANDER VON OETTINGEN, MORALSTATISTIK.

⁵ DE BAETS, LES INFLUENCES DE LA MISÈRE SUR LA CRIMINALITÉ.

⁶ JAEGER, ZUNAHME DER VERBRECHEN UND ABHILFE.

⁷ CATHREIN, MORALPHILOSOPHIE.

⁸ COLLECTED PAPERS OF BONGER I, p. XLV.

⁹ VALKHOFF. l.c. p. XXVII.

This must have caused some antagonism between Willem and the faith in which his parents lived. Willem Bonger must have felt deeply that the mild and pacific way in which they accepted religion and God, while at the same time crime, misery, illness and poverty existed, did not solve the problem of life. Therefore one can understand that he was attracted to the great idealistic movement of his time, Socialism, which promised to solve all human ills, in a human way, by changing the economic and social circumstances.

But even this mild antagonism to the faith of his parents, and still more to the other religions prevalent in his country, cannot explain why Bonger became a criminologist. There is more. The hereditary factor in Willem Bonger is largely to be ascribed to the family of his mother, Hermine Louise Weissman. This family came from Neustadt am Berg, in Württemberg, Germany. Here in the 18th Century lived a vine grower, named Martin Weissman. His son, Andreas, came to Holland in 1780 and married Dirkje Muller. This Andreas Weissman was an educated man with great culture. He had a gift for drawing, was very musical and read Schiller, Koerner, Racine and Voltaire. He had two sons, Gerrit Weissman, who became a vintner, and Adriaan Willem Weissman who went to South America (at seventeen), and a daughter, Hermine Louise Weissman (the mother of our Bonger¹⁰). This Weissman family was very gifted. The son of Adriaan Willem Weissman, born March 4, 1858, and named after his father, became a famous architect. In the Bonger family the mother Hermine Weissman dominated, her sister-in-law in the Weissman family, Mrs. Weissman-Stoethaan.¹¹ Since Willem Bonger was the youngest of ten children, it is not improbable that there was a strong relationship and tie to the mother. According to Mr. V. W. van Gogh: "The Bongers were amply gifted, but with the exception of Jo (the mother of V. W. van Gogh) and Andries, who went to Paris, they were all difficult people. Willem and his other three sisters had not achieved their independence in a normal way. The three sisters remained at home and did not marry."

It is not impossible that this strong tie connecting Willem Bonger with his mother created feelings of guilt which he suppressed in his sub-conscious. It may be an indication of this that as a boy of ten he often stood for long periods at the side of a toy-horse and thrashed it with a little whip,¹² an act which at that age is nearly pathological. Here perhaps lies one of the origins of Bonger's interest in criminology. Possibly his unconscious feelings of guilt required an explanation, and to give this within the limits which he could accept, he rationalized the origin of all criminal tendencies by finding the causes of these tendencies in the milieu. The strong *Mutter-Bindung* probably created protest-feelings against the authority of the mother which were satisfied by his joining the Socialist party. That his protest against the mother played an important rôle in his ideas he shows in his Doctor's thesis. There he considers it a mistake that the education of young children depends, for the greater part, upon the mothers. This is wrong, in his opinion, because the mother is only a "dilettante" in questions of education, and because the character of "the woman" is

¹⁰ All these data are to be found in the JAARBOEK XLII (1948) of the Genootschap Amstelodamum under the title *Memories of A. W. Weissman* published by V. W. van Gogh (the son of Theo van Gogh).

¹¹ Information given by V. W. van Gogh.

¹² Information of V. W. van Gogh.

seriously damaged by the inferior position she occupied during many centuries Bonger himself would not have had any sympathy with such a hypothesis about the origin of his becoming a criminologist. He was very sceptical about psycho-analysis and liked to ridicule this sort of psychology.

I think Bonger himself would have explained his choice of criminology in the same terms in which he discussed the origin and rôle of the great men in history.¹³ Bonger recognises that there are always only a few men who combine those talents and qualities required to make either a great artist, a great scientist, or a great leader. He is in agreement with Quetelet that the majority of men (\pm 85 per cent) do not even combine in themselves those capacities and qualities which would enable them to go further than a lower-school education and that only five per cent of men are qualified to go to a University. He does not deny the great influence of hereditary qualities and capacities, but states that even the man with great gifts does not become a genius or a talent save under certain social circumstances. "If Darwin," says Bonger¹⁴ "had not learned how to read or to write he would not have found the theory of evolution." "If Marx had not been born in the 19th century during the rise of industrial capitalism he would not have produced his theory of scientific socialism."

To a certain extent—but only that—the same is true for the fact that Bonger became a sociologist and criminologist. In his first years as a law student at the University of Amsterdam, he found a group of students interested in socialism and in social problems. Among these friends was K. H. Bouman, later Professor of Psychiatry in Amsterdam, who subsequently became very much interested in criminological problems.

Perhaps the greatest influence was his teacher of Criminal Law, Prof. Dr. G. A. van Hamel, well known to everybody who knows the history of criminal law. Van Hamel had founded the International Criminal Society (*Internationale Kriminologische Vereinigung—Union Internationale de droit pénal*) in 1888, with Fr. von Liszt and Ad. Prins. The principal idea of the members of this society was that the methods and measures to treat and fight crime must be derived not only from a juridical but also from an anthropological and sociological point of view. Without any doubt it was Van Hamel's idea that the law faculty of the University of Amsterdam in 1899 proposed offering a prize for an essay entitled *Un aperçu systématique et critique de la littérature concernant l'influence des conditions économiques sur la criminalité*.¹⁵ Two students of the University, Joseph van Kan and Willem Bonger, submitted papers. Van Kan's received the gold medal.¹⁶ Bonger's was only honourably mentioned. But van Kan afterwards specialized exclusively in Roman and Civil Law and History. Bonger remained a sociologist and criminologist throughout his life. Van Kan had succeeded in what he attempted; for Bonger it must have been a blow that he had not gained the prize.

Bonger was a very emotional man. His emotionality certainly was the most out-

¹³ BONGER: *Oter de rol der grote mannen in de geschiedenis* (On the role of great men in history); a stenogram of a lecture held on 1 Dec. 1928 for the Socialistic Debating Society in Amsterdam, published in THE COLLECTED PAPERS II p. 65.

¹⁴ I. c. p. 75.

¹⁵ A systematic and critical review of the literature concerning the influence of economic conditions on criminality.

¹⁶ LES CAUSES ÉCONOMIQUES DE LA CRIMINALITÉ, A. MALONIE, Paris 1903.

standing quality in his whole personality. It must have evoked in him a strong feeling of sympathy with all men who suffered. But at the same time he had some difficulty in his relations with other people. With his brothers and sisters, with exception of Jo, he had rather many conflicts.¹⁷ His children respected him very much, but were at the same time rather afraid of him.¹⁸ He had a little bit of contempt for those who thought along other lines than he did, and in such a case discussion with him was rather impossible, particularly on subjects about which he was not well informed.

Is it too far-fetched to suppose that the same causes, (particularly feelings of guilt and a strong *Mutter-Bindung*, protest against the authority of the parents), which, hidden subconsciously, make a man criminal can, when he has sufficient intellect, emotionality, and activity, result in the sublimation of these criminal tendencies and in transforming them into a particular interest in the origin of crime, which is then rationalised in some way or other, either by ascribing them to a certain "degeneration" and "atavism" as did Lombroso, or to the milieu as Bonger did, or to a combination of hereditary and pathological traits and milieu as did Aschaffenburg? In each case the criminologist must have a certain sympathy with crime and criminals, while avoiding himself these sympathies by suppressing them. Bonger certainly was an intelligent and emotional man and a very regular worker. He must have had a great sympathy for all sorts of people whom the world in general did not like: Jews, Negroes, primitive people and the poor. For all of them alike he has tried to prove that it was more the economic and social circumstances than hereditary and racial traits which either caused the greater incidence of criminality among them or at least caused what might seem a greater immorality. For the poor he has given his arguments in his study: *Criminalité et conditions économiques*. The first part of this was his essay for the Amsterdam law faculty, published in 1905 in a more elaborate form as a doctor's thesis. In 1916 it was translated into English and published in the American "Modern Criminal Science Series" under the title: "Criminality and Economic Conditions." Concerning the Jews in Holland and Germany, he made it clear that their criminality was different from that of other people, and that it certainly was less serious.

In his book, "Race and Crime" (in Dutch in 1939, in English in 1943 with a preface of Prof. John H. Wigmore) he explains the greater criminality of the Negroes by environmental influences.¹⁹ These influences are such that "a priori it is not necessary to ascribe their criminality to any other influence." Bonger was a typical one-track mind. Once he had recognised the influence of the milieu, he tried to explain every social phenomenon by it. Primitive man was the subject of his inaugural lecture as Professor at the University of Amsterdam. This lecture, entitled "The evolution of morality," shows us Bonger in all his force, and, one might say, in all his weakness. His force is demonstrated by his sharp criticism of the modern capitalistic organisation of society, which, according to him, leads to unlimited egoism. For the near

¹⁷ Information of V. W. van Gogh.

¹⁸ Information of his son Hendrik Bonger.

¹⁹ In my textbook on CRIMINOLOGY (published in Dutch, 3rd ed. 1952, p. 284) I drew attention to the fact that perhaps a greater sensuality and a lower degree of intelligence of the Negro might be racial and hereditary qualities which might not be wholly ascribed to environmental circumstances.

future Bonger saw, in 1922, cause for only the blackest pessimism. The second world-war has, to a certain extent, proved that he was right in this prediction. For the more remote future he is not so pessimistic.

"The process of growth most clearly points to the continual progress of organisation in society. Through this organisation, the evolution of morality must come into action. To say it with the words of Manouvrier: 'We must act in such a way that every man continually gets more and more interested in being useful to his equals and less and less in damaging them. That is the formula which we have to apply.'"

The direct and immediate effects of organisation on moral feeling Bonger does not rate very highly, but for the more indirect, remote effects he considers this organisation of the utmost interest. According to him between egoism and altruism lies a wide field of activity. When the various interests of all men run strongly parallel, then self-interest requires, not thwarting the interest of others, but promoting them. One might call this field that of solidarism and mutualism. The wider this field becomes, the less conflicts between men, the more possibility for a real development of the moral factors in the natural ability of mankind. Here we see clearly the weaker part of Bonger. He always saw everything in black and white. This was a result of his strong emotionality. For the near future everything was black. The capitalistic society "leads to unlimited egoism." The more remote future and the life of primitive people are seen in a much rosier light. Organisation will bring forth the field of co-operation and solidarism indicated by Bonger. But why should it do so? And the primitive people had much more fellow-feeling within their little "island of friends amid a sea of strangers and enemies"²⁰ than ever any society afterwards.

Bonger in this Inaugural Lecture jumps from primitive society to the modern world of the 19th century and denies that a real evolution of morals has taken place. That, perhaps, to suggest a few, the abolition of the ordeals in the middle ages, the substitution of prison for the death penalty, the abolition of the death penalty in many countries, the abolition of corporal punishment, the abolition of slavery and serfdom, the increasing recognition of the equality of all men, etc., were so many steps in the evolution of morality—these Bonger does not take into account. Rather grudgingly he admits that law and morality develop very slowly, much slower than technics, and though he does not deny that men themselves contribute to this development, here again his historic-materialistic-Marxist conviction plays a formidable rôle. He says: "The advancement of the material and spiritual level of the great masses is an event of the first order in world history: at one time they stood on a level on which moral life was scarcely possible, now at least they have attained that level."

But the explanation of the improvement is largely in material terms. "The opinion," he says, "that to act morally for non-moral reasons is without any ethical significance, seems to me untenable. In this way are not only the better characters attracted, but example and custom have their influence. But it is right to say that these are only secondary influences. This is why only slight consequences of a moral kind are connected with the changes in capitalistic practice . . ." The curious thing in his whole argument is that while he recognises that some men have better characters than others, he does not attach much value to the influence of these better characters.

²⁰ Quoted by Bonger from HOBHOUSE, *MORALS IN EVOLUTION I*, p. 280.

The reason for this is that Bonger always paid much more attention to the masses than to the individual. This he did in criminology to such an extent that he never wrote about any individual criminal. All his books and articles treat crime as a mass-phenomenon. And in his sociological work, as well, it is only society as a whole which he describes and tries to explain. He hardly ever wrote about an individual great man. Only to Lombroso, Marx and Adam Smith he devoted articles. Marx and Adam Smith he discussed as sociologists, Lombroso was only a subject for opposition.

In these articles, too, we recognise Bonger's most cherished ideas. He contests Carlyle's concept of great men, i.e. that from their spirit a *generatio spontanea* originates. "Abstractions," says Bonger, "are formed out of reality and not vice-versa; the human spirit, that of great men included, does not create out of a vacuum, but from reality."²¹

Bonger does not deny the influence of hereditary traits, but for great men as well as for criminals he denies the existence of "free will," and everything is to be explained by environmental circumstances. Now, even when we agree with him that the influence of a "free will" has always been much exaggerated, even if we recognize that particularly persons with defects in intelligence, character and temperament are for an overwhelming part forced to their acts and crimes by the circumstances under which they live, it certainly goes too far to deny every subjective force which plays a rôle in men themselves and particularly in great men.

The curious thing is that Bonger does not remain true to his own conception. For example, in his article about Marx he writes, shortly after his statement that the human spirit does not create out of a vacuum, the following sentences:

"Man has always had to fight against the scarcity in nature and its dangers. His very special intellect, his technical abilities and capacities procure to him the weapons for this fight: instruments are invented, division of labour asserts itself. The productive power of mankind rises. The stress of nature never ends, but at a certain level still other driving forces originate which put the whip to the creative power of man with a multiplied force. Thus the speed of social development differs in various periods and has become nowadays prestissimo. When the rise in the productivity of labour has reached a certain level, the economic relations between men change. The new relations are detected first by a few (with the finest moral tentacles), afterwards by more, then they are consolidated in rules which begin to push aside the earlier moral code and in the end eliminate it."

We are entitled to ask where do the "special intellect" and "the productive power of mankind," and the "creative power" and the "finest moral tentacles" originate.

Bonger has no answer, and perhaps none of us can give a scientific answer. Here only faith can give an answer. We have already seen that Bonger did not want to mix up science and faith. But then it is not justified to deny that the human spirit creates from a "vacuum" and to contend that it only creates from "reality." At least we must include the human mind and spirit in this reality, a reality which is not wholly consciously known to us.

Bonger himself was certainly a great man. Not one of the greatest in history, but his publications had great effect. It was due to him that criminology in Holland be-

²¹ *Marx als socioloog*, (Marx as a sociologist), COLLECTED PAPERS II, p. 6.

came a separate field of science. Particularly his small classic: "An Introduction to Criminology" (published for the first time in Dutch in 1932) was a great success. It was translated by Emil van Loo into English in 1936 and published by Methuen & Co. Ltd., London. Even to this day there is no other textbook which gives such a complete survey of criminology so compactly.

Through this little book and his doctor's thesis "Criminality and Economic Conditions," Bonger had a great influence on American and English authors. Just because of his one-sided view that economic conditions were of the utmost importance in criminality as a mass-phenomenon, he inspired others to make an elaborate study of these circumstances²² and he stimulated opponents, particularly psychiatrists and psychologists, to argue that the psychological and pathological causes of crime had their influence too, not only on the individual crime but also on crime as a mass phenomenon.

Bonger was a very independent scientist. He was never impressed by "the general opinion", by doctrines and dogmata, rather the contrary. On many points he had ideas which were far from generally accepted. This independence did not only show in his professional work in scientific criminology and sociology, but also in his political party (the Socialist party). Instances of this independence are his argument for a declining birthrate for Holland²³, his protest against the indignation of society on the subject of homosexuality²⁴, his opposition to the disdain which the Socialist party often showed for intellectuals²⁵.

Bonger really deserves a place among the great criminologists and sociologists because he fought against hypocrisy, untruthfulness, dilettantism. He was one of the first who proved that criminology and sociology may be exercised in a scientific way. In all his books and articles he gives a great mass of statistical proof. He was to a great extent a perfectionist, but not in his style of language. He wrote just as he spoke; emotionally and personally. But a perfectionist he was in the way he fought for his ideas. Once he had conceived an idea, he tried to make it clear and acceptable to everybody by gathering all the proof he could find for it. He certainly was an idealist. Truthfulness and altruism were for him the principal virtues. Just because of the impossibility for him to find the foundation for these virtues in religion he tried to prove, that they were human virtues, which mankind had conquered and was still conquering in a long evolution of society. It is always risky to sustain this. One fights in this way against the whole of Christianity, and that must cause for a man, born in Western Europe, and particularly in Holland, a certain feeling of guilt, even if he is convinced, as Bonger certainly was, that he is on the right way. Bonger himself probably would have denied this hidden feeling of guilt. On the contrary, he perhaps felt himself somewhat superior above all people, who considered faith as the basis of their science. It was just because of this that he was able to fight for a sociology and criminology as purely human parts of knowledge just like physics, biology, etc.

²² RECKLESS e.g. quotes Bonger seven times in his book on CRIMINAL BEHAVIOUR (1940), SUTHERLAND in his CRIMINOLOGY (1924) three times, BARNES and TEETERS in their NEW HORIZONS, 1945⁷ six times.

²³ In his article: *De stand van het bevolkingsraagstuk in Nederland* (The status of the question of population in the Netherlands) 1936, COLLECTED PAPERS II, p. 55.

²⁴ Preface written by Bonger to a book of COMMUTATOR, ON HOMOSEXUALITY, 1927 (in Dutch).

²⁵ In his article: *Intellectuals and Socialism*, 1925, COLLECTED PAPERS II, p. 192.

One may agree with him in this respect or not, but it is certain, that he proved, that a religious foundation for both these sciences may be deceiving, and that in each case we must never neglect the facts, which might lead into other conclusions.

This same respect for facts made him suspicious to most sorts of philosophy and metaphysical conceptions.

Thus doing, he gave to sociology and criminology the standing of causal sciences.

The first world war was a great shock to Bonger. He saw the war as the biggest crime that could ever be committed, and afterwards he tried in three articles to unravel the intricate question of to whom the guilt for this crime was to be ascribed²⁶. Bonger certainly hoped that there would never be a second world war. His son writes: He never was an absolute pacifist; though he loathed violence. He had at the same time a disdain for everything "half-soft." He was convinced that democracy must be defended by weapons. In the years just preceding 1939, many of his publications reflected his concern: "The problems of democracy" (1934), "The lie of antisemitism" (1935) and among others an article "The danger for Czechoslovakia" (in French) in the Czech *Sociologische Revue*. Shortly before 1939 he went on a secret government mission to the foreign offices of the three Scandinavian countries. Its objective was to stimulate them to give asylum more freely to greater numbers of Jewish refugees.

He was a fervent antagonist of all forms of dictatorship. After September 1939 his name was mentioned several times by the Bremer radio as an arch-enemy of Nazism. He refused to emigrate to America although he knew that an invasion of Holland by Germany would mean the end for him.

When, on the 10th of May, the German soldiers crossed the Dutch-German frontier he was fully prepared. He wrote to his son: "I don't see any future for myself and I cannot bow to this scum which will now overmaster us."

And in this way he found his death by suicide, the form of death which he himself had written of as the only one in which the human will plays a rôle.

²⁶ *The War and the Guilt* and *Diagnosis and Prognosis* (1917 and 1918), COLLECTED PAPERS I, p. 220 and 272.