

INCESSANT CHATTER: RECENT PARADIGMS IN CRIMINOLOGY

The Pendulum of Ideas

"In the absence of a verified body of knowledge, criminology has consisted of one aetiological and correctional bandwagon after another ...

One principle defies refutation in the history of criminological thought. This principle is that any perspective, no matter how outlandish, tends to surface appropriate to its temporal resurrection." (Simon Dinitz, 1979, pp.109-110)

Two images of the criminal recur throughout the last hundred years: the moral actor freely choosing crime set against the automaton - the person who has lost control and is beset by forces within or external to him or her. There is no necessary political evaluation to either picture; conservative and anarchist share the view of the moral criminal, but for one he is fallen humanity and for the other the hero: both Lombrosian and Social Reformer share the image of the determined criminal, but for one the causes are biological effects; the other defects of society. Images of free will - sometimes romanticised and always elevated as the universal essence of humanity - contrast with notions of pathology: the 'sick' criminal, the person who, because of circumstances, *lacks* humanity.

The history of criminology is one of incessant competition between these two equally abstract images of man, each a caricature of reality. On one side there has been an idealism which granted the human actor free will, rationality and unfettered moral choice; on the other, a vulgar materialism which portrayed the criminal as determined, non-rational and regarded morality as a metaphysic. Thus the wilful, rational actor contrasts with the determined, propelled actor. One abstract metaphysic is set up against an equally absurd "scientific" datum. These two gross abstractions have shadow-boxed with each other throughout the history of our subject; one mirror image shaping itself up against the other. In the beginning of criminology as a discipline, classicism and positivism arrayed themselves in such a fashion. The fight between structural functionalism and labelling theory had resonance of such a contest and, of course, today the re-emergence of new and idealistic forms of neo-classicism (e.g. 'the new administrative criminology justice model') and virulent, if atavistic, forms of neo-positivism (e.g. right realism) repeat the same combat with a ghastly inability to realise that history is repeating itself. And at each historical juncture the theorists claim paradigm change - from the positivist revolution of Enrico Ferri, to the new scientific revolution of the 'born again' Lombrosians of the present period. This

is exactly what Pitrim Sorokin, many years ago, described as a combination of 'amnesia' and 'the discoverers complex', where the aspiring social scientist is unaware of or forgets the past and rediscovers ideas already long known. And to this one might add that the *debates* of the past, for example, over the possibility - or not - of reducing the social to the biological, are also erased from the memory - so that the path of knowledge is not so much progressively linear, but rather forms a continuous circuit of *déjà vu*.

It is important to stress at this juncture that this pendulum of fashion within the subject involves theories which are veritable mirror images of each other as much as they are repeats of the past. As has been frequently pointed out, critique very often becomes mere conceptual inversion (see Young, 1975; 1979; Bottomley, 1979; Spitzer, 1980).

The Problem Of Partiality

Partiality is a perennial characteristic of criminological theory. It can involve taking the criminal at one single point of time and denying the past circumstances which brought about the crime or the future possibilities. It can involve a fixation on the distant past so that present circumstances are annulled. It can involve a focus on macro-structure of society and its legislation and ignore the rule-breaker altogether - and, of course, it can focus on the criminal as if he or she was independent of humanly created rules. It can have criminal actors whose actions are prescribed by their bodies; it can have those who exist in some airy limbo of symbolism without any bodies whatever. It can point to simple actors whose choices are an artefact of the spatial obstacles and opportunities confronting them: it can have criminals who exist outside of the physical world of space and opportunity. It can take one part of the square of crime: offender, victim, police or informal control, and explain all crime in terms of one (or, at best, two) of these factors. It can be bone-headedly deterministic or can imbue human nature with pure reason. It can attempt to explain the criminological universe in terms of race, or class, or gender, or age, but scarcely ever a genuine, meaningful, cultural synthesis of them all.

In this article I trace the development of recent dominant paradigms in criminology. There are, of course, and always have been, criminologists who believe they are merely adding to the stock of knowledge, free from ideological preconceptions, but these are, inevitably, those who are most trapped within a paradigm - usually positivist. The great Anglo-Saxon tradition of empiricism is a form of theoretical blindness: the parading of a hidden agenda of atomistic caricatures of human nature and simplistic notions of social order. It acts as if two centuries of social philosophy had never existed. Yet it is only by spelling out the logic of a theoretical position that we can clearly judge the ability of a perspective to grapple with the facts of crime and create workable policies.

Social theory does not emerge out of the blue: it develops in distinct social and economic situations and is influenced by specific material problems, in the context of a particular array of ideas and socially defined problems. Academic debate has both an interior and an exterior

history. The interior history is the interchange between scholars buttressed by the material strength of departmental hierarchies and the underpinning of journal and publishing outlets, together with access of external funding. But however much this academic debate is frequently seen by its participants as autonomous, the interior dialogue is propelled by the exterior world. The dominant ideas of a period, whether establishment or radical, the social problems of a particular society, the Government in power and the political possibilities existing in a society - all shape the interior discourse of the academic. Nowhere is this more evident than in criminology and the sociology of law. Exterior problems of crime, of law-making, of political options and current ideas, all profoundly shape the theories emanating from the interior world of academic criminology and legal scholarship. Both the establishment academic, propelled by the direction of local and national government funding and the critical scholar contesting the ever-changing orthodoxies of theory and practice, clash on a terrain determined by the specificity of their society. It is no accident, therefore - to take three radical currents - that abolitionist theory takes root in the liberal welfare democracies of Scandinavia and the Netherlands (Hulsman, 1986; Scheerer, 1986), that left realist theory emerges in a Britain concerned with a radical reappraisal of social democracy (Young and Matthews, 1992), and that legal guaranteeism (Ferrajoli, 1989) enthuses Latin American criminologists in countries where the rule of law is precarious and fragile. None of this is to suggest a relativism of theory. Rather it is to point to its reflexivity. That is, theory emerges out of a certain social and political conjuncture: this generates points of sensitivity and areas of blindness which inhibit the development of a general theory applicable to all industrial societies - let alone the Third World. Yet theory, on the other hand, must be sharpened by its sense of locality if it is to take purchase on the particular social and political terrain of which it is part. To take left realism as an example, Ray Michalowski (1991) quite correctly separates out discussion of realism as a general theory and its practical applicability in the United States, as do David Brown and Russell Hobb (1992), in their discussion of the applicability of realism to the Australian context, whilst DeKeseredy and Schwartz (1992) point accurately to the way in which the realist currents in Britain and the United States are shaped by the glaring social contrasts between the two countries.

Underlying this debate is the problem of specificity (Young, 1992). Namely, that generalisations about crime and justice (e.g. the relationship between unemployment and crime) can only be formulated in specific political and social contexts and cannot be made without specifying the particular social characteristics of the offender and victim in terms of their position on the major social axes of age, class, ethnicity and gender. It is not possible to simply transpose findings from one country to another, or to generalise from men to women, white to black, working class to middle class, etc. Such a localism does not preclude generalisation, as many postmodernists would argue (e.g. Nicholson, 1990); it merely stresses that sociological generalisations must be grounded in the lived realities of the human actors concerned.

Criminology and the sociology of deviance went through an intensive development during the late fifties to the early seventies. Labelling theory, new deviancy theory, conflict theory, subcultural theory, control theory, neo-classicism, all blossomed in a most extraordinary creative ferment. It was a process which did not happen overnight, which happened in different ways and times in various advanced industrial countries, but which, in the long run, overturned the way in which, not only criminologists, but very many ordinary men and women in the street, viewed crime.

In the immediate post-war period there was a consensus, stretching across a large section of informed opinion of various political persuasions, that one of the major causes of crime was impoverished social conditions. Anti-social conditions led to anti-social behaviour. This dominant paradigm was positivism or, more precisely, social democratic positivism. Namely, that crime or other forms of anti-social behaviour can be greatly reduced by political interventions which seek to improve social conditions. The palpable failure of such theories, which I have termed the aetiological crisis of criminology, is, to my mind, the key concept in understanding the development of criminology in industrial countries. For the exact opposite to the conventional wisdom happened: slums were demolished, education standards increased, full employment advanced and welfare spending increased: the highest affluence in the history of humanity achieved, yet crime increased. In Britain, for example, in the years 1951 to 1971, the real disposable income per person in the UK increased by 64%, whilst the number of crimes known to the police rose by double that: 172%.

Nowhere has the aetiological crisis been expressed more pointedly than by James Q Wilson, President Reagan's crime adviser and a writer with a new right perspective on the world:

"In 1960 if one had been asked what steps society might take to prevent a sharp increase in the crime rate, one might well have answered that crime could be curtailed by reducing poverty, increasing educational attainment, eliminating dilapidated housing, encouraging community organization, and providing troubled or delinquent youth with counselling services. Such suggestions would have not only a surface plausibility, but some evidence to support them. After all, crime was more common in slum neighbourhoods than in middle class suburbs and the latter could be distinguished from the former by the income, schooling, housing, and communal bonds of their residents. To improve the material conditions of inner-city life would, of course, require a high level of national prosperity combined with programs aimed specifically at inner-city conditions. There was a confident conviction at the highest level of the administrations of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson that this prosperity would be achieved and these programs devised.

They were right. Early in the decade of the 1960s, this country began the longest sustained period of prosperity since World War II. A great array of programs aimed at the young, the poor and the deprived were mounted. Though these efforts were wholly consistent with - indeed, in their aggregate money levels, wildly exceeded - the policy prescription that a thoughtful citizen worried about crime would have offered at the beginning of the decade.

Crime soared. It did not just increase a little; it rose at a faster rate and to higher levels than at any time since the 1930s and, in some categories, to higher levels than any experienced in this century.

It all began in about 1963. That was the year, to over-dramatize a bit, that a decade began to fall apart." (J Q Wilson, 1975, pp.3-4)

But it was not only on the conservative side of the political spectrum, nor only amongst Americans, that the conventional wisdom on crime was in tatters.

The Nature of the Aetiological Crisis

First let me clarify the problem of the aetiological crisis. Basically, social democratic positivism maintains that crime is a result of poor social conditions. Bad behaviour is a result of bad social background. Such a belief system was -and, of course, still is - a major component of contemporary social thought, and is a staple of the conventional wisdom with regards to crime. It underscores much of social work, of the thinking behind the role of the Welfare State as ameliorating social problems, of the political attitudes of American 'liberals', Western democratic socialists and of Marxists, East and West. And the consensus as to this belief extends to the more 'wet' or progressive parts of conservative parties in Western democracies. In a weak form, social positivism merely argues that as affluence increases - and with it high educational levels, housing conditions, urban planning, etc. - crime will automatically decrease. In the stronger social democratic form, it calls for the State to intervene to ensure that wealth is distributed equitably and for pockets of poverty to be eliminated, as well as specific rehabilitative and integrative measures to be directed towards the offender.

Social positivism thus believes that we must tackle what it sees as the *root* causes of crime and that these are social. The tradition of social positivism stretches right across the history of criminology, from the grounding of the discipline in the work of the moral statisticians such as Adolphe Quetelet (1842) in the first half of the nineteenth century, through to the Chicago School, to modern subcultural theory. Problems of aetiology can, of course, occur from several directions, not merely the rise in crime concomitant with affluence. It occurs when:

1. There is a decrease in crime over time with increased poverty or unemployment;
2. Crime or delinquency is found to be greater or equal amongst middle class people than the poor;
3. Crime is found to be greater in wealthy areas than in poor areas.

The particular way in which such anomalies present themselves to social positivism varies in time and in place. For example, with Quetelet it was the disparity between the urban and rural areas, where the cities were relatively more affluent than the country whilst in modern American criminology the problem of middle class juvenile delinquency has been important (see, for example, J & H Schwendinger, 1985). But the major problem in most advanced countries in the

post-war period, has been the crisis of rising affluence and Welfarism concomitant with crime and delinquency.

The Aetiological Crisis and World Criminology

It is my contention that it is the aetiological crisis, and attempts to explain or deny it, which has been the major dynamic behind developments in criminology in the post-war period. This is not to say that it was uniformly felt across world criminology as a discipline. This ignores the way in which, criminologically, very different things were happening in different countries, and the way in which the discipline, as constituted, both emanates from and focuses upon a very select few countries. In some advanced industrial countries the aetiological crisis was non-existent. In Japan, for example, up until recent years, the crime rate went according to plan. That is, it dropped with prosperity and any 'normal scientist' of a social democratic mould would have found his or her world relatively unperturbed. In many parts of the Third World, particularly in Latin America, the crime rate has spiralled awesomely, as has gross poverty and immiseration. There are no surprises here.

In others, it arrived in very different guises: the persistence of crime in the Soviet Union after the 'achievement' of socialism was a different order of problem to the rise in the United States where the Welfare State was comparatively minimal in its implementation. It also arrived at different times: it was an early puzzle to the socially reconstructed Welfare States of Western Europe. It was delayed in countries such as Spain and Portugal which remained, until the mid-seventies, under the thrall of Fascism. Lastly, in some countries, particularly in Scandinavia, the rise in crime, although marked in percentage terms, started from such a low base that crime was never a really great problem as it was in other countries such as the United States.

Table 1.1

THE AETIOLOGICAL CRISIS IN VARIOUS INDUSTRIAL COUNTRIES		
Aspect	Variation	Country
Timing	Early	UK, USA
	Late	Spain, Portugal, Greece
Qualitative	Welfare State	UK, West Germany
	State Socialist	USSR, East Germany
	Minimal Welfare State	USA

Presence	Absent	Japan, Third World
	Marked	USA, UK

The Rising Crime Rate in Europe in the Immediate Post-War Period

Let us start at the period in Europe just after the war. It is important to stress how rising crime rates in certain circumstances appear far from anomalous from the perspective of social democratic positivism. Initially within the war-torn countries of Europe the rise in the crime rate was seen as unsurprising (see I Taylor, 1981, Chapter Two). As Hermann Mannheim put it, writing at the London School of Economics in 1947:

"It would be altogether wrong to regard the rise in crime as something extraordinary or particularly alarming. It is nothing but the natural result of six years of total war with all its inevitable moral, psychological and economic repercussions, and there is consequently nothing original in the many official and unofficial attempts to explain the present situation. The general cheapening of all values, loosening of family ties, weakened respect for the law, human life and property, especially property of the State and of big firms, scarcity of all consumer goods, the black market, and the resulting rise in prices, rationing and the well-justified austerity policy of the Government, easy accessibility of many bomb-damaged houses, and lack of strained police officers and, finally, the activities of deserters are, usually, maybe rightly, put forward. It was Mr Chuter Ede, the Home Secretary, who said, 'No one would have a thought of stealing a second-hand shirt in 1939; today the sight of a shirt on a clothes line has become a temptation'." (H Mannheim, 1955, p.110)

But the trend persisted and the first explanation which gained currency involved a transposition of the war. Thus it was argued that a 'delinquent generation' had been created which had passed through the early years of their lives during the war and whose delinquency was appearing ten or more years later. (In Britain see L Wilkins, 1960; in Denmark, K Christiansen, 1964.) Whatever rational kernel there is to the higher delinquency rates of certain birth years when compared to others, it is obvious that this particular theory had a very restricted shelf-life. For the crime rate continued to increase, both amongst youngsters and adults, despite the receding aftermath of war.

It is, as we have seen, in Western European countries which had passed through the period of social reconstruction after the war, where the rise in the crime rate was most puzzling.

Die Wohlstanskriminaliteit: Welfare Criminality

It is important to understand how worrying the rise in crime was in those European countries, where both the Welfare State had grown rapidly, and social reconstruction had proceeded apace. For a generation of committed European social democracies, the social reconstruction after the war and the institution of the Welfare State simply did not add up to

an increase in the crime rate. Let us take John Barron May's important book, *Crime and Social Structure*, written in 1963:

"It is commonly supposed that while crime in the past is understandable if not excusable, in modern times it ought not to exist. Social critics frequently point out that at a time of increasing material progress, when the provisions of the social services have never been so inclusive and extensive, the official criminal figures show a substantial upwards trend. In the past, it is assumed, poverty, bad housing, the lack of many supposedly necessary social and physical amenities, together account for the existence of an embittered, hostile and criminal minority who developed feelings of antagonism, despair and frustration to such a degree that they fought against their existing regime in order to wrest for themselves and their families the means of existence. The drunkenness, despair and depravity of slum-dwellers in the midst of prosperous Victorian society led social reformers to the naïve hope that if only the averse physical and material conditions could be eliminated, criminality would also be checked and contained. Such hopes have been cruelly disappointed. For crime and higher living standards have advanced hand in hand, and the amount of known crime has actually about doubled over the past twenty years.

General dismay has resulted from an awareness of these facts. Typical of many such headings is one that appeared in *The Observer* not long ago, AFFLUENCE AND CRIME ADVANCE TOGETHER, *The Observer*, 56 March 1961.

A recent Home Office Report, *Penal Practice in a Changing Society*, commences on a similar note of puzzled dismay:

'It is a disquieting feature of our society that in the years since the war, rising standards in material prosperity, education and social welfare have brought no decrease in the high rate of crime reached during the war: on the contrary, crime has increased and is still increasing.'

This is an understandable complaint and one frequently heard from enlightened people who care about the quality of life in our society and who are saddened by the implications of increasing lawlessness, even, and perhaps especially, among children and young people. When one addresses conferences of teachers, magistrates or social workers, the same question inevitably emerges. How can you reconcile the existence of full employment, the Welfare State and increased criminal activity?" (J B Mayes, 1963, pp.192-3)

Similarly, T R Fyvel, writing at the same time, in his best-selling book *The Insecure Offenders*, put it:

"How much significance should we read into this wave? There may be still some who doubt its magnitude. But as far as Britain is concerned, British juvenile crime figures have certainly shown one of the steepest increases of all, and the chief point is that they have risen against a background of steadily expanding welfare services. As Mr R A Butler, (Home Secretary for much of this period) put it sorrowfully, the rise came 'after years of the most massive social and educational reform for a century'. This rise has already dispelled some traditional views on the causes of crime. A generation ago it was still widely held that even if poverty was only one among the main causes, the delinquency figures would at least roughly follow the curve of economic dislocation and unemployment. today this link has clearly been severed." (1962, p.14)

Fyvel noted now such a paradoxical wave of criminality had occurred throughout Europe to such an extent as to give rise to the German word 'Die Wohlstandskriminaliteit'. For, as Swedish criminologist Bo Svensson nicely put it, "In the 20th century ... the criminality of the destitute has been superseded by what may be called welfare criminality." (1986, p.118).

The Immediate Reaction to the Crisis

But this has taken us too far ahead. Let us concentrate on the most immediate reaction to the aetiological crisis. This involved a revival of the neo-classicist approach to crime and a reformulation of positivism from a social to an individual focus. Let us take the shift in positivism first. Here we can see how failure of sociological positivism and the aetiological crisis was evident, not just in the existence of crime and delinquency, which should simply not have been there, but on the future of policies based on social intervention. Steve Box captured this well when he wrote his famous essay on the discovery of the disease, 'hyperactivity', in children:

"The State, as a custodian of moral and legal boundaries, searches for ways of containing and controlling anti-social behaviour, and, naturally, it supports those groups or professions who come up with the possible solutions. But if they fail to deliver the goods, they are rejected and another group or profession conscripted to replace them. so it was with those advocating solutions based upon sociological positivism. They were given their chance, and in the wake of their failure came those with solutions based on biological positivism.

For example, during the late fifties and early sixties a number of prominent sociologists assembled extremely plausible accounts of delinquency and other forms of youthful misconduct, focusing mainly on social processes of street-gang life - Cohen (1955, and Cloward and Ohlin (1960). Largely on the basis of these 'theories' Federal and Local government enthusiastically sponsored delinquency-prevention programmes centred around the idea of neutralising or co-opting gang membership. However, 'street-gang work' hardly proved effective. Indeed, in a recent appraisal of this intervention strategy, Klein writes that it has 'proven only slightly successful, ineffective or even contributory to gang delinquency. They have employed inadequate resources in combating an entrenched foe. Some of their normal and almost necessary practices have acted as boomerangs, effectively increasing gang cohesiveness and delinquency' (Klein, 1971, p.55). Another venture, based upon sociological positivism, was the Mid-City Youth Project. In assessing this, Miller wrote: 'It is now possible to provide a definite answer to the principal evaluative research question - was there a significant measurable inhibition of law-violating or morally disapproving behaviour as a consequence of project efforts? The answer, with little necessary qualification, is "no". All major measures of violent behaviour - disapproved actions, illegal actions, during contact court appearances - provide consistent support for a finding of "negligible impact".' (Miller, 1962, p.512). Other major examples, such as the Mobilisation for Youth in New York, based upon Cloward and Ohlin's (1960) analysis of gang delinquency and opportunities, and the Chicago Area Project loosely based on Shaw's urban research findings, were also unable to demonstrate a substantial improvement in the behaviour they were ostensibly designed to reduce.

By the end of the seventies the promise of sociological positivism was either seen as counterfeit because programmes based on it failed to reduce delinquency and youthful misbehaviour (Lerman, 1975; Wilson, 1975) or totally impractical because they required social reform on a scale that the dominant class was quite unprepared to contemplate (Schure, 1973). Thus, whilst lip service was still being paid to these

types of programmes, there was already a preparedness to look elsewhere for alternative solutions to the delinquency problem. One of these was already under way and only required more funds and official certification to mushroom; this was a new version of biological determinism - the conception that delinquents and pre-delinquents were essentially ill, either mentally or, as in the case of hyperactivity, physically and organically, and required treatment, especially drug therapy." (S Box, 1980, pp.116-117)

Such a 'medicalisation' of social problems has, especially amongst juveniles, continued and expanded to date and has provided the material basis for the continuing existence of biological positivism long after Lombrosianism had been - repeatedly - proclaimed dead. Indeed, some of the best known criminology books espouse a biological determinist position (e.g. H Eysenck, 1970; C R Jeffrey, 1980). But there are limits to individual and biologically based determinism, but: 1) it can explain only a small proportion of the problem of crime and is particularly inadequate at dealing with its rise; 2) individual therapy is expensive; 3) biological reductionism is political dynamite, even to politicians of the New Right. But by far the most obvious and immediate reaction to the aetiological crisis, in the face of the growing evidence of failure in terms of social democratic explanations and interventions in crime control, was neo-classicist methods of intervention. More police, prisons - a more effective justice system. none of this meant losing completely notions of conditions which predisposed people to delinquency, but these conditions became more mitigating circumstances than excuses for avoiding punishment.

Most immediately in Britain was the movement to 'short, sharp, shocks' for a proportion of delinquents. Thus Fyvel writes:

"These figures appeared to surprise even the most experienced social and penal workers. For example, the unforeseen increase in delinquency in the male seventeen to twenty-one age-groups was reflected by an equivalent rise in the Borstal population which went up from 2,800 at the beginning of 1956, to over 5,000 at the end of 1960. Unprecedented measures had to be taken to absorb this new clientele, and Mr Butler's White Paper of January 1959 accordingly introduced the biggest prison-building programme for young adult offenders, including plans for the building of eight Borstals, together with eight of the new detention centres, designed to administer 'a short, sharp, shock' to the evidently more recalcitrant young offenders of the new age." (F R Fyvel, 1963, p.17)

The Crisis in Penalty

If biological and individualistic explanations of crime had explanatory and political limits, neo-classicism had even greater problems which were to reverberate throughout criminology in the late seventies. Indeed, it is possible to talk of a double-barrelled crisis in criminology: firstly, the crisis of aetiology in the sixties, followed afterwards by a crisis in penalty.

In the seventies, faced with the continuing rises of crime rate and a fiscal crisis in the cost of police and prisons, politicians in the United States became greatly interested in the most effective use of resources. The greatest focus of research was directed to policework involving particularly the work of the RAND organisation and the Police Foundation. Their findings were to

have a devastating effect on subsequent criminology. For they pointed out, amongst other things, that:

- Increased police does not necessarily reduce crime rates or increase clear-up;
- Saturation policing does not reduce crime, but only increases displacement;
- Improving response times to emergency calls does not effect the likelihood of arresting criminals;
- Crimes are not solved through criminal investigations but largely through public witnessing;
- The kind of crime which the public is most fearful of are rarely encountered by the police on patrol;
- Neither random motor patrols nor foot patrols had any effect on the crime rate.

This summary of findings I have culled from Jerome Skolnick and David Bayley's incisive book, *The New Blue Line*. They write:

"Those findings are devastating. They mean that the primary strategies followed by American police departments are neither reducing crime nor reassuring the public. Like other public institutions - schools, the Defense Department, prisons - the police often devote resources to traditional but bureaucratically safe approaches that no longer work - if they ever did. That probably explains why additions of money or personnel have slight measurable effect on security. How could they, when existing strategies seem largely bankrupt? The studies clearly imply that protection needs to be provided by citizens themselves, and that their assistance is essential in capturing and prosecuting the people who victimise them. The job for the police, therefore, is to work with the public so as to ensure that those things happen, to develop specific and articulate approaches that can achieve results." (1986, pp.5-6)

It was a double-barrelled failure in both of the conventional wisdoms of crime control: social democratic positivism and neo-classicism. If better conditions did not work, neither did better (i.e. more apposite) punishment. If more housing did not reduce the crime rate, neither did more police. If the rehabilitative prison regime had failed, so had the 'short, sharp, shock'. If, on the left part of the middle ground, there was an aetiological crisis with regards to the causes of crime, there was a parallel intellectual crisis on the right part of the consensus over the failure of policing and prisons.

The subsequent development of criminology is, as I have argued, an attempt to come to terms with the crisis. It resulted in a wealth of debate and an intense level of disputes. But, at the same time, there was a measure of agreement that the old ideas of social democratic positivism and neo-classicism had failed. It is difficult to imagine a criminology where Howard Becker, Richard Quinney, James Q Wilson and Ron Clarke were on the same side of the barricades, but this, to an extent, was what happened. Let us first look at the parameters of the debate. The first response to the aetiological crisis outside the traditional paradigms of positivism and classicism is

various varieties of what I call 'the great denial'. That is, criminologists simply deemed that there had not been a real increase in crime or criminality. At least for them, the aetiological crisis had not occurred.

The Great Denial

Throughout the sixties the US crime rate rose remorselessly and in Britain the increase had become seemingly inexorable. How could anyone in their right mind doubt that the curve was actually going up? They were able to do so, of course, because the interpretation of the statistical curves of crimes known to the police on which official statistics are based, is a very complex entity. The Great Denial had many facets, all of which had in common the denial that crime or criminality had 'really' risen. It had gone up simply because there were more police or more laws, or more things to be stolen, or people had more prosperous public lifestyles with greater exposure to crime, or we were less tolerant of crime. Typical replies to 'why has the crime rate risen?' were:

MORE STATE ACTION	Because of rising numbers of police all that has happened is that more people are being arrested and, as there is a considerable dark figure of crime unknown to the police, the official statistics can rise without there being a rise in 'real' crime
MORE LAWS	Because of more legislation on the statute book, there are more possible crimes
MORE SENSITIVE	People have become more sensitive to crimes such as violence, therefore more are being reported to the police
MORE VICTIMS	Because of increased affluence there are more things to steal and people go out more, living more exposed lifestyles. As opportunities have risen, so have crimes.

And, of course, as well as theories based around denial, there were the conservative and social democratic theorists who believed that the rise was 'real' and was because of an increase of offenders caused by, in the first instance, a welfare state that was soft on punishment and undermined authority and, in the second instance, a welfare state which had allowed relative inequalities to persist. In a way, the recent history of criminology theory is dominated by how the various social and political strands made sense of the early sixties. They spoke in many voices - some of them widespread and established, others restricted to tiny academic circles - but they all address, are a response to, the aetiological crisis and the associated problems of penalty.

What is immediately apparent is that any of the above changes can affect the crime rate. For, if we deconstruct the concept of crime rates we will find we have the following variables:

1. Number of likely offenders;
2. Number of likely victims;
3. Variation in tolerance levels of public or police about crime. That is, informal and formal definitions as to what is or is not serious crime;
4. Variation in the actual levels of control exerted by public and police on crime. That is, levels of informal and formal control.

Any one or a combination of these can alter the crime rate. The problem is that most theories have focused upon only one part of this process and largely ignored the others. I have shown schematically in Table 1.2 how various contemporary theories have focused on part of the process. None of them could be exclusively correct, all of them are undoubtedly involved, although the weighting one would give to each part of the process is an empirical matter demanding investigation.

This was how the various theoretical traditions responded immediately to the aetiological crisis and the crisis of penalty in the 1960-1980 period. It is out of the ferment of this debate that the paradigms prominent in the last ten years arise.

Table 1.2

EXPLANATIONS OF THE AETIOLOGICAL CRISIS AND CRIMINOLOGICAL THEORIES, 1960-1980

Part of the Criminal Process		Mode	Movement	Type of Theory	Key Concepts	Exemplary Theorists
The Criminal Act	Offender	Individual	Increase in Offenders	Individual Positivism	Under-socialisation	H Eysenck (1964)
	Victim	Social		Subcultural Theory	Relative Deprivation	R Cloward and L Ohlin (1960)
		-	Increase in Victims	Opportunity Theory	Opportunities and Lifestyle	L Gould (1969) L Wilkins (1964)
The Reaction Against Crime	Definition	-	Decrease in Tolerance of Deviancy	Neo-Durkheimian	Tolerance Level	K Erikson (1966)
	Control	Informal	Decrease in Informal Control	Control Theory	Control	T Hirschi (1969)
		Formal	Increase in State Reaction	Labelling Theory	Moral Panic	H S Becker (1963)

CURRENT PARADIGMS OF CRIMINOLOGY

I am going to briefly outline the four major approaches to criminology which have become predominant in the last ten years: left idealism, the new administrative criminology and realism of the right and of the left. They represent, once again, attempts to solve the crisis of aetiology and penalty. They take strands of the sixties' debate and wove them together in each of their discourses. They all represent responses to the aetiological crisis and are all descendants of paradigms which emerged during the sixties. Thus the lineage of left idealism is labelling theory, of the new administrative criminology: control theory, of right realism, neo-positivism and of left realism: subcultural theory. They have certain aspects in common: they all play down the role of the police in the control of crime and put a great stress on the public informal system of social control, they are all critical of the existing prison system and they all reject traditional positivism and classicism.

In order to compare these theories systematically I will examine them in terms of their:

- Concepts of Human Nature and Social Order
- The Causes of Crime
- The Impact of Crime
- The Role of the Police
- The Role of the Public
- The Crises in Aetiology and Penalty

Left Idealism or Radical Social Constructionism

"Whenever you scratch a twentieth century Marxist nine times out of ten he (*sic*) turns out to be a left idealist." (Sebastiano Timpinaro, 1973, p.101)

"Here, also, the Left must clear up its mind. In secure and secluded places, some marvellously abstract notions afloat. It might even be supposed that the increase in crime was wholly fictional, a pretext orchestrated by the media to legitimate ruling-class and racist measures, or was of interest only as a symptom of the crisis of the 'capitalist formation' in this 'overdetermined conjuncture'. But whatever conclusions are reached as to the actual increment of offences; whatever diagnosis is made as to the social and economic predicament of offenders; whatever objections are upheld against the punitive ('exemplary') measures of the courts - there remains an objective record of suffering, loss and fear. For example, even if women are more ready to report rape and sexual assault than before, thus inflating the number of recorded offences, it does appear that there are parts of our cities in which women are afraid to walk alone, when they were not afraid before. And if this is so, then it is an intolerable offence against civilized life and personal liberty." (E P Thompson, 1980, p.173)

Left Idealism is a spectrum that reaches from liberals to the hard left: it is part of social constructionism, a persuasive way of looking at the world which is evidenced, not only in criminology, but in every aspect of social life in Western society. In essence, it elevates the role of the State and of ideas emanating from it and other powerful institutions as a major way in which consciousness is structured and behaviour directed (see Young, 1979; Lea and Young,

1984). Its roots lie in American labelling theory, although its development has been greatest in Europe, where it is associated with an abolitionist position. That is, a policy which would take much 'crime' out of the orbit of criminal law and which would abolish the prison. Appropriately its greatest development has been in countries with low crime rates, where the aetiological crisis was experienced less dramatically than in the United States.

Left Idealism is evident throughout the social sciences. In the sociology of education it is exemplified in the work of Bowles and Gintis (1976) in the United States, and Michael F Young (1971) in the UK; in mass media studies it is associated with the work of the Glasgow Media Group (1976) and the radical phenomenologists (e.g. Tuchman, 1978); in social problems theory with the work of the social constructionists (Kitsuse and Spector, 1973; Pfohl, 1977). It is evident also in the work of radical feminists, both working in the field of crime and in other areas of social life (e.g. Kelly and Radford, 1987). Indeed, much radical feminist work parallels that of socialist criminologists, merely substituting women for the working class as a historical subject (see Nicholson, 1990).

A central feature of Left Idealism is the priority of administration over structure. It views society as determined by the administration of the State rather than by the actual structural positions that individuals find themselves in. The youth is propelled by being labelled delinquent rather than by his impoverished circumstances; the pupil under-achieves because of the school, not because of his or her class background and likely future; mental hospitals, not life outside, turn people mad; violence on television causes violence in the streets, not that machismo violence is a product of the marginalisation of working class youth.

Human Nature and the Social Order

At heart, Left Idealism is a form of radical social contract theory. People are equal, free, rational agents who, in a just society, would come together and form a consensus which would be the basis of State power and the organisation of society. Yet the present world is palpably unjust: it is riven with the inequalities of class, gender and race. Because of this, people in subordinate positions constantly create subcultures of resistance as they see through the inequalities of society. Yet the paradox remains why, in a world so palpably unfair, does capitalist society maintain itself: why do not the vast majority of people subjugated by class, gender and race come together and create a genuine social contract of equals? The Left Idealist answer to this stresses, first of all, the power of ruling class ideas. A series of institutions, from the mass media to the school, from the criminal justice system to the panoply of 'consensus' politics, circulate a 'dominant ideology' (see Abercrombie *et al*, 1980), which upholds the values of capitalism, of the patriarchal nuclear family, of a Euro-centric notion of racial superiority. Institutionalised classism, sexism and racism are encountered from cradle to grave. Our notions of 'normality' are socially constructed by these master institutions, whether it is our images of appropriate gender roles, the contented consumer, the docile worker, or the honest citizen. To an extent such a consensus is

a mystification because the actual social world has a rainbow pluralism: a cultural diversity, differing definitions of sexuality, a plurality of 'family' structures and, above all, a constant resurgence of fightback from the subordinate orders. And it is this fightback which necessitates the central need for coercion. The police, the courts and the criminal justice system are ever necessary in the need to control such an intransigent population. On one hand, then, the inculcation of the 'normal' and, on the other, the ever present need to control and stigmatise 'the deviant'. The velvet glove of the soft, ideological machine of social control contains within it an iron fist of coercion. The various institutions of society, whether primarily ideological (the school and the mass media) or coercive (the criminal justice system) hang together in a *functioning* whole which perpetuates the present social order.

The Causes of Crime

For Left idealists the cause of crime is obvious: it is caused by inequality in the poor and greed in the rich. It is not tied to one class and therefore the equation of more-poverty-more-crime is misleading, for in terms of the corporations and the rich, more crime is a product of their affluence.

Working class crime against property has, therefore, this quality of obviousness:

"The position of black labour, subordinated by the process of capital, is deteriorating and will deteriorate more rapidly according to its own specific logic. Crime is one potentially predictable and quite comprehensible consequence of this process - as certain a consequence of how structures work, however, 'unintended', as the fact that night follows day." (S Hall *et al*, 1978, p.390).

Note here a simple social positivism: crime is an obvious and inevitable consequence of the struggle to live: it is a product of absolute, rather than relative, deprivation. And such a belief is echoed in fine detail by revisionist historians who view both crime and the law as a reflex of class interests (e.g. D Hay, 1977). And, if working class crime is obvious, ruling class crime, whether corporations or the police, is both endemic and simple. The specificity of situations which create crime amongst certain executives in particular corporations and precise moments of time is ignored, whilst detailing the material predicaments which give rise to police malpractice is seen merely as a mistaken use of 'bad apple' theory.

The Impact of Crime

Crime is ubiquitous - it is everywhere - in an unequal society: criminal statistics showing a greater rate of crimes amongst the poor and ethnic minorities merely exhibit the bias of the police and judiciary against these groups. The rise in crime is an epiphenomenon - a side effect - of more police (see Carr-Hill and Stern, 1979): there is no means of accurately telling if there has been any rise in crime. Left Idealism does not usually suggest that crime is not a problem (e.g. Scraton, 1987; 1987), rather that the problem is grossly exaggerated and misleads people as to the real problems in society, e.g. poverty and exploitation. Indeed, by blaming the poor for crime,

it ends up in blaming the poor for their poverty (see Ryan, 1976). And the poor are seen as double victims, both in terms of their poverty and in that they are then stigmatised as offenders by the State.

The Role of the Police

In Left Idealism the central role of the police is seen not, so much as the control of crime, as the control of order. Thus, English commentators on the 1984 miners' strike wrote:

"There can be little doubt that the British police force is primarily a public order force; its role in crime prevention and criminal apprehension is secondary. One unfortunate effect of the police's ceaseless propaganda is that many working-class people have been convinced over the years that the police are in reality a force which protects their welfare and their property. The miners' strike, however, is quickly educating people to what the state and the police establishment consider the real priorities of their time, money and deployment." (Coulter *et al*, 1984, p.135)

And the revisionist historian, Douglas Hay, admonishes us:

"Historians have accepted the assumptions of the reformers, which are also those of modern criminology: that the criminal law and the police are no more and no less than a set of instruments to manage something called crime ... Criminology has been disinfected of grand theory and class purpose. Much of it has thereby become ideology." (1977, p.24, n.2)

The expansion of the police force is seen, therefore, as predominantly a response to problems of political order. Strikes, demonstrations, the control of those 'labelled' terrorists (in the UK the troubles in Northern Ireland), and the subjugation of the black and ethnic minority populations are seen as keys to understanding the development of policing (e.g. Brake and Hale, 1991). Crime is used as an excuse to fuel the expansion of the police and the 'widening of the net' of social control. And even where seemingly positive initiatives are generated, hidden agenda are detected.

The Role of the Prison

The standard history of the prison was one of reform and its failure - this in the classicist tradition from Beccaria to Radzinowicz. Against this, a 'revisionist' reading of the history and development has grown, arguing that, far from humanitarian progress, the real meaning of the prison was to create divisions within the working class (see Cohen and Scull, 1985). This revisionist interpretation is shared by many socialist historians and contemporary Left Idealists today. In no other branch of radical criminology has functionalism taken such a root and developed such a taken-for-granted quality as in the debate on the possibility of prison reform. How can it be, it is asked, that such an inefficient instrument in terms of reform, can continue for over a century of blatant failure? The answer to this, in the best tradition of functionalism, is that the prison is, in fact, far from a failure, but a functional necessity in the perpetuation of capitalism. All of the

major radical writers on prisons explicitly take up a functionalist explanation of its persistence (e.g. Mathieson, 1974; Fitzgerald, 1977; Melossi and Pavarini, 1981).

Such left functionalist theory of the failure of the prisons can be seen clearly in Jeffrey Reiman's brilliant polemic against the prison and the class society, *The Rich Get Richer and the Poor Get Poorer*, where he describes what he calls the Pyrrhic Retreat Theory of the criminal justice system. Thus he writes:

"[This] theory veers away from traditional Marxist accounts of legal institutions insofar as such accounts generally emphasise the repressive function of the criminal justice system, which my view emphasizes its ideological function. On the whole, Marxists see the criminal justice system as serving the powerful by successfully repressing the poor. My view is that the system serves the powerful by its failure to reduce crime, not by its success. Needless to add, insofar as the system fails in some respects and succeeds in others, these approaches are not necessarily incompatible. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that in looking at the ideological rather than the repressive function of criminal justice, I shall focus primarily on the image its failure conveys rather than on what it actually succeeds in repressing. To these remarks should be added the recognition that since the 1960s, a new generation of Marxist theorists, primarily French, has begun to look specifically at the ideological function performed by the institutions of the state. Most noteworthy in this respect is the work of Louis Althusser and Nicos Poulantzas." (1979, pp.6-7).

Thus he locates his position - as with so much Left Idealist work - as one influenced by Althusserian functionalism. And he indicates clearly that the function of the 'future' of the prison is to help divide and rule the working class:

"the message is two-pronged: (1) By focusing on individual criminals, the criminal justice system diverts attention away from the irrationalities and injustices of our social and economic institutions. (2) By focusing on poor criminals, the criminal justice system diverts attention away from the rich and powerful who most profit from our social and economic institutions, and the failure to reduce crime at all reinforces this by diverting fear and hostility on to the poor. The sum total of this is to divert attention both from the injustice of the social order and from those who occupy positions of power and privilege in that order." (1979, pp.167-8)

The capitalist system generates a surplus population which is unable to find labour. The criminalisation and incarceration of this population has functions on a number of levels. Firstly, it removes them from disturbing the productive process, then it blames such a need for 'sanitisation' on their individual qualities. Secondly, it distracts the attention of the working class away from ruling class crime and general social inequality onto this scapegoat population. Thus a failure of capitalism is turned ideologically into a success (see M Fitzgerald, 1977).

The Role of the Public

The public are seen as being the recipients of policing rather than the instigators or demands on the police. At least, this is true of the working class and less powerful members of the

community. The priorities of the police are those of the police bureaucracy or their paymasters in Government in the local and national State.

The effect of the stereotype of crime purveyed from the police through the courts to the mass media is to create moral panics in the population, creating an irrational fear of crime and facilitating a justifiable expenditure on the police.

The Crisis of Aetiology

For Left Idealism there is no crisis in aetiology - or in policing, or prisons for that matter. In fact the intellectual task of Left Idealism is to challenge and expose this sham. Both sides of the equation are social constructs socially generated by the powerful: the crime statistics are a product of police preference, the reason why the prisons are full of working class people, not middle class, is because working class behaviour is defined as criminal, and working class people are arrested rather than those higher up in society. The rise in crime statistics merely shows that more State resources are at the disposal of the police and the judiciary. Thus crime waves are moral panics engendered by the media and orchestrated by the police.

There is thus no aetiological crisis: firstly because there is no rise in crime, secondly because the notion of crime being caused solely by the poor is false. There is a crisis in policing, on the other hand, but it is a crisis of the police getting out of hand. For example, the sub-title of Phil Scraton's book (1985) is *The State of the Police: is Law and Order Out of Control?* But it is not a crisis of crime control because this is not the primary role of the police in the first place (see T Bunyan, 1976). Finally, there is no crisis in penalty: because the prisons are not there to succeed in terms of rehabilitation. They are there to segregate, to label, to irrevocably stigmatise. The high recidivism rate is a success story (e.g. Foucault, 1980; Mathieson, 1976).

My preliminary criticisms of the revisionist and Left Idealist position are briefly as follows:

a) The Autonomy of the Control Institutions:

"It would be a bizarre type of theory that completely ignored that the expansion of the crime control system over the past two decades ... is a direct response to increasing official crime rates." (S Cohen, 1985, p.91).

Left Idealists grant the control institutions an extraordinary autonomy. Their expansion is seen to occur independent of crime itself. Yet even if the official rate of crime were a complete fiction, independent of the 'real' crime rate, the exponential rise in crimes known to the police in countries such as Britain and the US must have a knock-on effect on the pressures on police caseloads, courts and of prison overcrowding. It turns causality on its head if we are to think otherwise. But all too many discussions of the police and the prison, whether by liberals or full-blown Left Idealists, seem to be fixated on the criminal justice system, as if the system began at

the prison gate, or the courtroom, or the police encounter on the street, without it extending to the incidence of crime itself. Thus the work of Steven Box and Chris Hale on the relationship between crime, unemployment and the rate of imprisonment is often misleadingly interpreted as showing that the ideological fears of magistrates and judges concerning unemployment, were the sole propellant of the expansion in incarceration. Yet they quite clearly state:

“This does not, of course, mean that unemployment is the major determinant of imprisonment levels: *clearly the crime and conviction rates have that honour.* Nonetheless, it is clear that the number of persons immediately imprisoned ... would not be as high if the judiciary did not increasingly imprison persons in excess of that warranted by the conviction rate.” (1986, pp.86-87, emphasis added).

Similarly, the phenomenon of ‘widening the net’, of the plethora of alternatives to prison expanding at the same time as the rise in numbers imprisoned (A Vass, 1990), is best seen as predominantly a bureaucratic response to an ever-increasing workload and the problem of the disposal of offenders. Indeed, as Tony Bottoms has clearly shown, the proportional use of imprisonment in the UK has declined over the last fifty years, albeit there being something of an upturn in the last decade (1983). It is the numbers of those who have been convicted that has largely created the problem of prison overcrowding. Yet the attraction of elevating the machinations of the criminal justice system to a central causal role remains unabated. Indeed, as John Lowman wryly notes: “Bizarre as it might be, Cohen does not, in fact, offer any analysis of changing rates of ‘crime’ in discussing the expansion of control.”(1992, p.158, *n.4*).

b) Roots of Crime: It Ignores Social Disorganisation and Individualism

Crime is, by and large, a result of the breakdown of social solidarity. This was as true in the 19th century as today. The idea, then, that the prison was introduced and continues as a strategy of the powerful to individualise the collective fightback of the surplus population is a position which remains at the level of appearances. It is correct on one level and completely inaccurate on the other. First of all it makes massive assumptions as to the collective nature of such cultures and the level of organisation. Secondly, it assumes that more than a small amount of crime represents this collectivity. The truth is that the majority of crime is an individualistic response - it does not have to be individualised by powers-that-be. One might not like the *sort* of individualistic analysis which 19th century reformers or contemporary members of the working class, for that matter, tacked on to offenders - but that is not the same thing as denying individualism and disorganisation. Social and material situations can create individual, anti-social outcomes - to recognise this fact is not to hold any court for classicist or positivist theories. As we have seen, these theories pick up on what is one movement of a contradictory phenomenon and create either the abstraction of free-willed individualism in its place, or that of the pathological, determined criminal. Classicism and positivism, the two polarities of bourgeois thought, are each cast in the mode of analytical individualism - and each reflect one-sided images of reality.

The reformers did not individualise the criminal, for it was an individualistic mode of behaviour in the first place. They merely put it in an incorrect context. There is no reason, therefore, to invent a conspiracy on their part of turn collective resistance into individual effect. And their interpretation struck ready chords within the working class and the offender himself - as it continues to do so today. This was the basis of its ideological effectiveness: its partial roots in reality. Thus Michael Ignatieff comments:

“If we return to what reformers said they were doing, it becomes clearer to me now that it was when I wrote *A Just Measure of Pain* (1978) that the adoption of the penitentiary in particular and the institutional solution in general cannot be explained in terms of their supposed utility in manufacturing social divisions within the working class. This is because at bottom reformers, like most of their own class, understood deviance in irreducible individual rather than collective terms; not ultimately as collective social disobedience, however much distress and collective alienation influenced individuals, but a highly personal descent into sin and error. Given this individualist’s reading of deviance, the appeal of institutional solutions lay in the drama of guilt which they forced each offender to play out - the drama of suffering, repentance, reflection and amendment, watched over by the tutelary eye of the chaplain.” (1985, p.92)

Ignatieff is correct in his denunciation of the revisionist notions of conspiracy, but he does not go far enough; for the delusions which the reformers held about crime were grounded in reality.

A central problem with Left Idealist histories of the evolution of the prison and criminal law is their tendency to focus on the atypical instances where there was widespread collective opposition and ignore the vast majority of instances where no such resistance existed. Thus smugglers, costermongers, poachers, bootleggers, became the focus of attention, not thieves, rapists, burglars and murderers. John Langbein picks this up with venom when he writes of Douglas Hay’s 1975 work on 18th century English criminal procedure:

“We may come close to understanding how [he] went astray if we reflect upon [the way] in which Hay takes it for granted that the criminal law lacked the adherence of the lower orders. To be sure, there were corners of the criminal law that did not command universal regard. The source of Hay’s undoing, I suspect, is that the only part of the substantive criminal law with which he was deeply acquainted when he wrote his essay was the uniquely class-based and arbitrary game law. There certainly was popular dissatisfaction with the game law (and not confined to the poor), but to extrapolate from that bizarre scheme (*much* of it misdemeanour) to the whole of the law of felony would be a grievous error, just as it would be folly in our own day to equate public attitudes towards marijuana offenses and, say, automobile theft. When Hay speaks indifferently of stealing wood from a Lord’s park and sheep from a farmer’s fold, he is making that sort of error. The property crimes that were of major consequence in the workload of 18th century criminal courts - in particular the theft of livestock, shop goods, and personal and household belongings - were those about whose blameworthiness there was a moral consensus that knew no class lines. That is why men of the non-elite could predominate (as prosecutors and jurors) in convicting persons who committed property crimes.” (1983, p.15)

c) Division Within the Working Class: It Ignores Agreement

The collective opposition to ruling class law is, thus, focused upon rather than the vast majority of crime which involves individualistic adaptations and which were, and are, in general collectively condemned. It is important to underline that the majority of conventional crime is intra-class rather than inter-class. This is so today and it was so at the birth of the penitentiary in the 19th century. It is quite insufficient for idealist revisionist authors to catalogue that the majority of people in prison are working class - for so are their *victims*. And, as victims, they become frequently involved in using prosecution against other working class people who offend against them. The history of criminal law - and of the police and prisons - involves a considerable degree of working class complicity and co-operation. This is what makes the notion that the State manufactures crime within the working class so ludicrous. Ignatieff is very clear about this:

“As regards imprisonment, the divide-and-rule argument seems to me now to have fallen prey unwittingly to the problem inherent in what criminologists call ‘labelling theory’. The notorious difficulty with this approach is that it makes the state’s sanctions the exclusive source of the boundary between the deviant and the respectable. This would seem to ignore the degree to which, in the 19th as in the 20th century, the moral sanctions condemning murder, rape, sexual and personal assault were prior to and independent of the punitive sanctions, commanding assent across class lines. In punishing these offences, the state simply ratified a line of demarcation already indigenous to the poor. Even in the case of petty property crime, it is not clear that the criminal sanction was labelling acts which the poor excused as an inevitable response to distress or which they justified in the vernacular of natural justice. The poor, no less than the rich, were victims of property crime, and any study of London police courts in the 19th century shows that they were prepared to go to law to punish members of their own class. If a constant process of demarcation was under way between criminals and the working classes, it was a process in which the working classes themselves played a prominent part, both in their resort to law and the informal sanctioning behaviour which enforced their own codes of respectability. Doubtless there was a sympathy for the first-time offences and juveniles convicted for minor property offences during hard times; doubtless there were offenders whom working people felt were unjustly convicted. Certainly repeated imprisonment did isolate the criminal from his own class. But it is a serious over-estimation of the role of the state to assume that its sanctioning powers were the exclusive source of the social division between criminal and respectable. The strategy of mass imprisonment is better understood in class terms as an attempt by the authorities to lend symbolic reinforcement to values of personal honour which they themselves knew were indigenous to the poor.” (1985, pp.90-91).

It might be argued that all that is being reflected is the division between the respectable working class and the poor - between the unemployed and the surplus population. The former support crime control: the latter are criminal. All of these distinctions are inaccurate. Most poor people are respectable; very few unemployed are committed criminals. Crime of a very professional nature is a completely minority phenomenon, crime of a more minor nature is frequent amongst the lower working class, but is a product of disorganisation and almost universally deplored. It is just another slur upon the unemployed to suggest that criminality is a generally approved mode of behaviour. As with so many of the conventional wisdoms of criminology, it is completely exploded when one adds the question of gender. A constant of the social disorganisation of the slum is violence against women. This has contributed towards half of the homicide statistics, virtually all of the instances of rape, and a large proportion of serious assaults. All of these have

always, rightly, been regarded as serious offences. Are we really to believe that the majority of poor people ever thought otherwise?

**d) The Indispensability of Prison:
It Ignores Its Lack of Function and Possibility of Alternatives**

The problems with the left functionalist theory of the prisons parallel that of functionalist theory generally. As the prison is seen as essential to the functioning of capitalism, reform is not on the cards. This results in an inability to take alternatives seriously or, indeed, to allow for the real difficulties in constructing alternatives to prison. Ignatieff, in a critique of the functionalism inherent in his earlier work, writes:

“When applied to prison history, this model implies that institutions ‘work’, whereas the prison is, perhaps, the classic example of an institution which works badly and which nonetheless survives in the face of recurrent scepticism as to its deterrent or reformatory capacity. Instead of looking for some hidden function which prisons actually succeed in discharging, we ought to work free of such functionalist assumptions altogether and begin to think of society in much more dynamic and historical terms, as being ordered by institutions like the prisons which fail their constituencies and which limp along because no alternative can be found or because conflict over alternatives is too great to be mediated into compromise.”
(1985, p.96)

Thus, if we wish to look at the causes of the prison, we can see it clearly in the interplay between the reformers’ conception of crime - itself grounded partially in reality - conflicts and convergences between the demands for control from a wide section of the population, the fears of the propertied, and the economics of the situation. Similarly, the demands for alternatives today meet resistance from the working class, scepticism from government, from the point of view both of their own ideas on crime and of the possibility of losing votes, and extremely conflicting ideas of what should be done emanating from both the abolitionist and reformist camps. The mere suggestion of setting up a halfway house in a community sends shivers of apprehension in the public; and there are a thousand different approaches to run it successfully.

But none of this is to suggest that the prison is necessarily functional to the powers that be, let alone to the working class. This is a quite separate question from causality and has to be assessed as such. Thus it is important to assess dispassionately the likely deterrent effect of prison on various types of offenders (e.g. see Jill Box-Grainger’s discussion of sentencing rapists, 1986). The deterrent effects both on the offenders and would-be offenders are far from as obvious as both abolitionists and the law and order lobby would have us believe.

e) The Limitations of Idealism

“There has been around for a decade or more a general rhetoric which passes itself off as a ‘Marxism’. Sometimes this is expressed in sophisticated and intellectual form, sometimes as old-style Leninism, sometimes just as an unexamined vocabulary co-existing with other vocabularies ... common elements in their rhetoric are some of the following: first, there is a platonic notion of ... the ideal capitalist state ... This state is inherently profoundly authoritarian, as a direct organ of

capitalist exploitation and control, and any inhibitions upon its power are seen as 'masks' or disguises, or as tricks to provide it with ideological legitimation and to enforce its hegemony. It may ... follow that any symptoms of authoritarianism are seen as disclosing a 'crisis of hegemony' and may even be welcomed as unmasking the 'true' (i.e. platonic) character of the state, and as signalling the 'conjecture' in which a final class confrontation will take place ... And this may ... consort with a loose rhetoric in which civil rights and democratic practices are discounted as camouflage, or the relics of 'bourgeois liberalism'. And to cut short the list, this very often goes along with a wholesale dismissal of *all* law and *all* police and sometimes with the sappy notion that *all* crime is some kind of displaced revolutionary activity.

This is not the place to engage in philosophical wrangle. I will simply say that these are all half-truths which have a continual tendency to degenerate into rubbish. What is more to the point is that this rhetoric can be seen to unbend the springs of action, and to discount the importance of any struggle for civil rights. If *all* law and *all* police are utterly abhorrent, then it cannot matter much *what kind* of law, or *what place* the police are held within; and yet the most immediate and consequent struggles to maintain liberty are exactly about kinds and places, cases and precedents, and the bringing of power to particular account." (E P Thompson, 1973, p.xi)

It is important to stress that the term 'idealist' refers to philosophical idealism: it is not a critique of utopian thinking (see MacLean, 1991). Such thinking is idealist because its voluntaristic notion of action denies the material situations - with the exception of the intervention of the State - in which human beings construct their reality. It is, furthermore, idealist because it puts too strong an emphasis on social control through ideas, whether by mystification or hegemony. Hence its obsession with 'politically correct' language and the re-labelling of deviant groups: the blind become re-designated 'visually challenged', etc.

It is idealist because it views the State as a platonic essence: not as the site of contradiction and struggle, nor as an entity which is responsive to changes in civil society. Hence, the extraordinary autonomy which State agencies are seen to have from the problems which they are set up to tackle.

It is idealist because it romanticises the norms and cultures of subordinate groups (see Matza, 1969). Rather than tracing how adverse material conditions create social disorganisation amongst the poor and the underprivileged, it creates an "unflawed historical subject, whether it is the working class, blacks, women, gays or ethnic minorities" (Young, 1982). It conjures up 'communities' where community is barely existent (e.g. P Scraton, 1985; cf K Pryce, 1979), and it postulates alternative family structures where the family has been decimated (e.g. E Lawrence, 1982; cf W J Wilson, 1987).

Lastly, it is idealist because it denies that human beings have a bodily reality which ages, differs by gender and varies physiologically between individuals. It confuses the argument against biological reductionism and the rejection of biology.

The New Administrative Criminology

“No-one would suggest that the criminal justice system and other formal systems of social control are without impact. This would be facile: the organisations which comprise the criminal justice system are social institutions which sustain a sense of public and consensual morality. Nor would criminologists deny any absence of scope for improving the equip of the criminal justice system - which may in the long term consolidate popular acceptance of the system and thus its effectiveness. Most of them, however, as well as an increasing number of politicians, administrators and practitioners, now accept that there is little promise in attempts to reduce present levels of crime through different kinds of therapeutic intervention through exploiting the deterrent effects of punishment. Many also accept that the case for reducing overall levels of crime through improvements in policing or increases in police resources has been overstated (see Clarke and Hough, 1980, for a review). And though research has had less to say on these issues, it is now becoming recognised that there are great practical and political difficulties with policies of diversion and decriminalisation as a means of reducing levels of ‘crime’, as popularly defined. Finally, there are growing doubts about the impact of liberal programmes of social reform outside the criminal justice system, whether these are broad social policies to reduce inequalities thought to be criminogenic or more localised schemes to increase social solidarity or improve police-community relations. Few people would question the value of these on other grounds, but their effectiveness in preventing crime is still more a matter of faith than fact.” (R Clarke and P Mayhew, 1980, pp.2-3)

I have detailed elsewhere the emergence of the New Administrative Criminology as the major paradigm in establishment approaches to crime (1986, 1988). What is important to note is that its main thrust has been to sidestep the aetiological crisis by suggesting that the causes of crime are either relative unimportant or politically impossible to tackle. There is no need to explain the rise in crime: it is obvious that there is a rise. Rather we must find ways of stemming its impact. The question becomes what is the most cost-effective way of making control interventions, an emphasis “on the purely technical cost-benefit ratio aspects of crime: the opportunities for crime available in the environment, and the high risks attached to criminal activity” (Downes and Rock, 1982, p.194). It is important to note how Administrative Criminology was a result of the double failure of orthodox criminology. This double crisis was quite clearly perceived in the research of Ron Clarke and his co-workers at the Home Office (see above). The concept of situational crime prevention coupled with rational choice theory which they have pioneered to meet this challenge is - whatever its theoretical limitations - an innovative paradigm of great importance. Whatever else, it has hammered home to criminologists the earthy facts of space and actual experienced choice at a particular point in time, to a criminology all too content to live in abstractions.

The New Administrative Criminology was developed largely in Britain, centring around the work of a team of researchers at the Home Office. In the last decade it has successfully supplanted social democratic positivism as the key theory of establishment criminology. Despite this, there are some striking similarities between Left Idealism and Administrative Criminology. Both would deny the aetiological crisis, and both are, of course, opposed to the social democratic criminology of the immediate post-war period and the penal and policing policies of neo-classicism.

Human Nature and Social Order

This paradigm rejects both social positivism, with its search for the causes of crime rooted in problems of the wider society, and neo-classicism, with its emphasis on deterrence and the criminal justice system. Yet it is substantially rooted in neo-classicism - the "administrative criminology" of the beginning of the century (Taylor *et al*, 1973; Vold, 1958) - both in its notion of rational actors and in its conception of a resolved social contract - hence the appellation: the New Administrative Criminology. Its key revision on classicism is its notion of limited rationality. Influenced by the economist, Herbert Simon, and his followers (1978), who rejected the full rationality commonplace in economic theory and stress that decision-making processes reflect "the observed limitations of people's capacity to acquire and process information. In particular, it is thought that people tend to economise on this scarce capacity by adopting rules of thumb, or 'standing decisions' which eliminate the need completely to analyse every new decision" (P Cook, 1980, p.220. See commentary in Trasler, 1986). This is underscored by work into the social psychology of a wide range of areas, such as family planning, behaviour, voting, and consumer research (Tuck and Riley, 1986; Fishbein and Coombs, 1974; Tuck, 1976).

Rationality is, thus, limited whether one is talking of consumer choice in the supermarket or criminal choice in the housing estate. In neither instance does it involve the maximisation of choice implicit in either micro-economics or classical legal theory. Consistent with classicism, however, is the insistence that both 'normal' behaviour and criminal behaviour is indistinguishable and that the distinction made by traditional positivism between criminals and non-criminals is inadmissible. Much talk about crime is over-pathologised. They do not deny that pathology does occur, only that it is greatly exaggerated; furthermore, it "does not exclude the operation of pathological motives acting in concert with rational means to secure irrational ends" (Cornish and Clarke, 1986a, p.3). Here they are clearly correct: the activities of serial killers, for example, may combine extremely rational planning with incomprehensible ends. And here we have a distinct break with neo-classicist legal principles involving a division between the rational and the non-rational actor which, by invoking concepts of rationality such as *mens rea*, finds itself in the courtroom unable to easily classify the sanity of such criminals as Peter Sutcliffe, or Brady and Hindley. Lastly, they point to the fact that much expressive crime, whether it is 'wanton' vandalism, football hooliganism, domestic violence, or homicide, is distinctly rational in its patterning of timing, targets and planned intentions (Cornish and Clarke, 1986b).

With regards to the problem of social order, the New Administrative Criminologists rarely concern themselves with the wider question. Their affinity is clearly with Travis Hirschi's control theory (1969), which reverses the question of why people commit crimes and asked why people do not commit crime. Its characteristic answer is that of Hobbesian social theory, namely that people will commit crime in the absence of restraints. Indeed, Hirschi (1986) details how both theoretical approaches share basic assumptions about human nature and social order. The problem of partiality is thus present: the focus is on social reaction ('constraints'), not on action (motivation). Yet an adequate theory must explain both: indeed, even the power of constraints are dependent

on the motivation of actors and their appraisal of their legitimacy. And, of course, to view criminal action as merely an epiphenomenon of lack of restraints precludes the discussion of causes of criminology in the wider context of the prevalent inequalities of wealth and power.

The Causes of Crime

Clarke, in his major statement of this position, writes:

“Conventional wisdom holds that crime prevention needs to be based on a thorough understanding of the cause of crime. Though it may be conceded that preventative measures (such as humps in the road to stop speeding) can sometimes be found without invoking sophisticated causal theory, ‘physical’ measures which reduce opportunities for crime are often thought to be of limited value. They are said merely to suppress the impulse to offend which will then manifest itself on some other occasion and perhaps in even more harmful form. Much more effective are seen to be ‘social’ measures (such as the revitalisation of communities, the creation of job opportunities for unemployed youth, and the provision of sports and leisure facilities) since these attempt to remove the root motivational causes of offending. These ideas about prevention are not necessarily shared by the man-in-the-street or even by policemen and magistrates, but they have prevailed among academics, administrators and others who contribute to the formulation of criminal policy. They are also consistent with a preoccupation of criminological theory with criminal ‘dispositions’ and the purpose of this paper is to argue that an alternative theoretical emphasis on choices and decisions made by the offender leads to a broader and perhaps more realistic approach to crime prevention ...

“Nevertheless, the dispositional bias remains and renders criminological theory unproductive in terms of the preventative measures which it generates. People are led to propose methods of preventative intervention precisely where it is most difficult to achieve any effects, i.e. in relation to psychological events or the social and economic conditions that are supposed to generate criminal dispositions. As James Q Wilson (1975) has argued, there seem to be no acceptable ways of modifying temperament and other biological variables and it is difficult to know what can be done to make parents more inclined to love their children or exercise consistent discipline. Eradicating poverty may be no real solution either, in that crime rates have continued to rise since the war despite great improvements in economic conditions. And even if it were possible to provide people with the kinds of jobs and leisure facilities they might want, there is still no guarantee that crime would drop; few crimes require much time or effort, and work and leisure in themselves provide a whole range of criminal opportunities.” (R Clarke, 1980, pp.136-137)

For Administrative Criminology the fatal flaw of social democratic positivism was the notion that crime is **caused** by social conditions. Rather, in the vast majority of instances, crime is not caused by antecedent conditions, it is opportunistic; being committed where situations arise which present possibilities of crime. All previous criminology is seen as being pervaded by a ‘dispositional base’, a search for causes which dispose people to crime whether these are social factors, as in positivism, or administrative labels, as in labelling theory. Most crime is not only opportunistic, it is much less strongly motivated than positivism - whether individualistic or social - has suggested. Because of this it can be deterred by structural barriers: for example, steering locks in cars, better locks and bolts on houses, greater surveillance from, for example, neighbourhood watch or ticket inspectors.

The Impact of Crime

Administrative Criminology does not deny that there has been an increase in crime, but this is largely a product of more petty crimes being reported to the police than previously, whilst the number of opportunities for crime has risen in terms of possible targets and means of committing crimes (see R Clarke, 1984). Furthermore, it stresses its comparative rarity in terms of the average risk of crime (Hough and Mayhew, 1983), and that serious crime - especially violence - is a very small part of all crimes (Hough and Mayhew, 1985).

The major data base for the New Administrative Criminology was the British Crime Survey, carried out in successive sweeps since 1982. The administrative criminologists saw their role as an attempt to reduce exaggerated fears of crime. thus they write of the thinking behind the British Crime Survey:

“Another attraction lay in the survey’s promise as an antidote to public misperceptions about crime. It was thought within the Home Office that distorted and exaggerated ideas of crime levels, trends and risks were widespread among the public. A survey-based index of crime would demonstrate the possibility - if not reality - of statistical inflation; information on crime risks would demonstrate the comparatively low risks of serious crime, and puncture inaccurate stereotypes of crime victims. In other words, the survey was envisaged in part at least as a way of achieving what might be called the ‘normalisation’ of crime - to help create a less alarmist and more balanced climate of opinion about law and order.” (Hough and Mayhew, 1988)

Let us look at their empirical findings:

“The first British Crime Survey revealed:

- a robbery once every five centuries (not attempts)
- an assault resulting in injury (even if slight) once every century
- the family care to be stolen or taken by joy-riders once every sixty years
- a burglary in the home once every forty years.

“The survey further argued that the popular picture fuelled by the politicians, the media, and even the police (as they campaign for more men and resources) is an exaggerated one. Most lawbreaking is petty and therefore the police would be better advised to adopt a preventive approach - to improve public and community relations - rather than the ‘crime-fighter’ approach that predominates.” (M Slattery, 1986, pp.70-71)

This is an extract from Martin Slattery’s excellent introduction to ‘official’ social statistics which sums up very well the position of New Administrative Criminology on effects of crime. note the notion that fear of crime is a problem on a par with crime itself and what we have termed the moral symmetry conception of victimisation (Lea and Young, 1984). Namely, that victims and offenders are very similar in social characteristics in sharp contrast to the notion of the predatory offender and the innocent victim.

The Role of the Police

The New Administrative Criminologists recognise the limited role of the police in controlling levels of crime. In areas of serious crime they are seen as effective, but in terms of the marginal effects of increasing the number of police officers on reducing the overall crime rate, they are sceptical. For example, in terms of beat policing, Clarke and Hough write in their summary of the literature: "There is little evidence that increasing the frequency of foot patrols actually reduces crime - although this may achieve other important objectives in terms of public satisfaction and feelings of security." (1984, p.6)

The police role is very much dominated by public demand. Over 90% of crimes are brought to police attention by the public (Hough and Mayhew, 1985, Chapter Three). Furthermore, the range of demands is wide and includes crime only as a minority component. Service demands such as lost property, advice, asking directions etc., predominate over crime-related demands. Because of this, it is incorrect to measure police performance merely in terms of crime.

The Role of the Public

The public have a dominant role in policing. Public demand-led clear-up is very greatly determined by public witnessing, and much less so by direct police detection. Because of this, simple increases in police manpower are not cost-effective in dealing with crime. What is vital is public-police co-operation, which is the reason for the emphasis on Neighbourhood Watch. Furthermore, the public themselves can prevent crime more directly and effectively than the police by target-hardening their homes (making them more difficult targets for burglars) and by more cautious behaviour whilst outside their homes.

Thus, situational crime prevention involves physical limitations (target-hardening), physical changes which bring about greater informal surveillance (i.e. housing design which increases defensible space) and public surveillance (basic conditions, Neighbourhood Watch). What it does not involve is social crime prevention in the sense of changing social conditions which might lead up to crime (e.g. unemployment, poor housing). Its advantage is that it stresses informal rather than policing as the major focus of control and, above all, that it emphasises the actual spatial nature of crime, both in terms of opportunities and surveillance. Sociological criminology, like sociology in general, has been, until recently, extraordinarily remiss in the neglect of physical space as a major parameter of social - and criminal - interaction (see Gregory and Urry, 1985).

The Aetiological Crisis

For the administrative criminologists there is no aetiological crisis. First of all the notion of aetiology - of crime being caused - is a 'dispositional bias'. Secondly, as we have seen, the rise in crimes known to the police is, by and large, regarded as being the result of greater public reporting. It is the increase in public willingness to report less serious crimes which eats up the dark figure and largely causes the 'crime wave'.

Problems of Causes and Displacement

The New Administrative Criminology restricts its interventions to only one side of the equation of crime. It is unwilling to countenance intervention on the level of causality. Furthermore, such a restriction does not allow a full understanding of the motivation for crime. Yet it is difficult to prevent crime if one does not know the underlying force behind the commitment to crime of the actors involved. Lastly, it creates problems of fully understanding the phenomenon of displacement. Whilst acknowledging that displacement exists, its commitment to the administrative solution to crime (the 'technical fix') does not allow it to face up to criticisms that the underlying causes of crime will always lead it to emerge elsewhere.

In fact, any intervention has its costs. Different crime control measures have to be measured against:

- 1) how effective are they compared to each other?
- 2) how effective is the marginal increase in resources in one area rather than another? and
- 3) what is the cost of the measure in terms of other desiderata, for example, the quality of life or the exercise of civil liberties?

A realist policy must acknowledge that there are various methods which, if properly tested, monitored and costed, can reduce crime. But any one method, however effective, will have declining marginal returns if taken too far and too exclusively. Furthermore, any one method, be it public surveillance through Neighbourhood Watch, extra police on the streets, or target-hardening, will have costs which impact on the quality of life and the freedom of citizens. Present government policy, by putting too great an emphasis on target-hardening and ignoring the conditions which give rise to crime, has created an imbalance in intervention. It has focused on reducing the opportunities for crime, not on its causes. On one half of the equation rather than on both of its sides.

Every social intervention inevitably has unintended repercussions. The cost of crime control has to be measured against the degree of displacement of crime occurring and the effect on the quality of life (e.g. from the aesthetics of target-hardening to the civil liberties aspect of intensive policing.) An effective intervention will have a crime displacement which is quantifiably lower, qualitatively of a less serious nature and which directs crime away from the most vulnerable social groups. (In the area of drug control, see Dorn and Smith, 1987.) Its social cost will have to be weighed against any losses in the quality of life. Realistically, we have to politically decide what level of crime is tolerable when weighed against such social costs.

Right Realism: The Work of James Q Wilson

James Q Wilson is a central figure in recent American criminology. He is the author of the best selling *Thinking About Crime*, numerous articles and books on crime, and was an adviser to the Reagan Administration. His work is immensely influential in the United States and in Britain. As

we have seen from the quote at the beginning of this article, he engages himself precisely with the problem of the aetiological crisis. And he sees himself as rejecting both 'liberal', social democratic positivist notions of crime prevalent in the United States of the sixties, and conservatives who merely believed in more police, more prisons and more power to the judiciary.

What is interesting, from our point of view, is how different the response of establishment criminology in the United States is from that of Britain. For there is a wide gulf between British Administrative Criminology and American Right Realism. Part of this is because of the very different 'exterior' circumstances of the two countries, particularly the much higher crime rate in the United States and the existence of an American intellectual climate which is weak on the left but strong on the right.

The Cause of Crime

Wilson places his theory precisely in the mainline of criminology. He does not deny 'causes' of crime, he admits himself almost 'overdetermining' in the number of causes he can muster. Despite this, Wilson is not eclectic, for the fundamental basis of his theory lies consistently in modern behaviouristic theories of conditioning. That is, his response to the crisis of aetiology is not to retreat away from causality, as have the British administrative criminologists, but - together with Richard Herrnstein - to develop the theory of individual positivistic criminology pioneered by writers such as Hans Eysenck. Basically this starts from the premise that the simplistic, hedonistic calculus proposed by classicist criminology, where the actor weighs up the rewards of crime compared to the punishments, would scarcely deter people from, say, stealing. For punishment is so uncertain that crime would be often undetected and usually in the individual's self-interest. However, this bleak possibility of a war of all against all is lessened by early conditioning in childhood, when rules are internalised. Here they agree with Eysenck's slogan that 'conscience is a conditioned reflex' (1986, p.48). This being said, such a conscience depends on conditionability and the effectiveness of the family in conditioning the children. That is on the individual's physical constitution and thus susceptibility to conditioning, and the quality of conditioning he or she receives primarily in the family situation. Rising up to the wider levels of analysis, the peer group, the work situation, the criminal justice system and the culture itself, will all play upon this basic conditioning process. as Wilson and Herrnstein succinctly put it:

"The larger the ratio of the rewards (material and non-material) of non-crime to the reward (material and non-material), the weaker the tendency to commit crimes. The bite of conscience, the approval of peers, and any sense of inequity will increase or decrease the total value of crime: the opinions of family, friends and employers are important benefits of non-crime, as is the desire to avoid the penalties that can be imposed by the criminal justice system. The strength of any reward declines with time, but people differ in the rate at which they discount the future. The strength of a given reward is also affected by the total supply of reinforcers." (1986, p.61)

Important, then, are the individual's socialisation and the possible rewards and punishments associated with crime. thus, for Wilson and Herrnstein:

“It is not difficult to think of reasons why crime rates change; on the contrary, it is too easy. While the theory we have presented helps us resist the natural tendency to favour a partial explanation to the exclusion of other possibilities, it does not enable us to choose among these possibilities. Almost every factor we consider seems to point us in the same direction. It seems plausible that when crime rates go up it is because criminal opportunities are denser, more valuable, and more accessible, because youthful would-be offenders are more numerous, less inhibited by conscience, more impulsive, and less persuaded that the distribution of wealth is equitable, and because the benefits of avoiding crime have become more delayed, less certain, or less substantial. In the language of social science, the explanation of increasing crime rates is overdetermined.” (1986, p.425)

How do they select from such an overdetermination? They plump for three major factors:

“We suggest that long-term trends in crime rates can be accounted for primarily by three factors. First, shifts in the age structure of the population will increase or decrease the proportion of persons - young males - in the population who are likely to be temperamentally aggressive and to have short time horizons. Second, changes in the benefits of crime (the accessibility, density, and value of criminal opportunities) and in the costs of crime (the risk of punishment and the cost of being both out of school and out of work) will change the rate at which crimes occur, especially property crimes. Third, broad social and cultural changes in the level and intensity of society’s investment (via families, schools, churches, and the mass media) in inculcating an internalised commitment to self-control will affect the extent to which individuals at risk are willing to postpone gratification, accept as equitable the outcomes of others, and conform to rules.” (1986, p.437)

It is important to stress Wilson’s neo-positivism - greatly enhanced by his work with the psychologist, Richard Herrnstein. Traditionally, the determinist base of positivism has been set against the voluntaristic nature of classicism. Thus a therapeutic approach to policy has contrasted with an emphasis on deterrence (I Taylor *et al*, 1973; G B Vold, 1958; H Eysenck, 1970). Such an opposition has no logical basis, for if positivism is based on a motivational structure generated by punishments and rewards in the process of primary socialisation, there is no reason why such punishments and rewards (including deterrence) should not be effective in later life. Wilson’s work acknowledges this, as does the recent shift in Eysenck’s theory of criminality (Eysenck and Gudjonsson, 1989), and the revitalisation of positive criminology by Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1987.

The Impact of Crime

Wilson has no problem accepting that the crime rate has gone up. His response is, therefore, very different from establishment criminology in Britain. His realism consists of recognising the massive problem of crime in American society and the foolishness of those who would suggest otherwise. Thus he lampoons the liberal denial of the aetiological crisis, the pretence that nothing has changed in terms of rates of crime, and even that the crime issue itself was merely a covert way of expressing racist sentiments. He notes wryly:

“However, by 1970, enough members of the liberal audience had had their typewriters stolen to make it difficult to write articles denying the existence of a crime wave.” (1975, pp.83-84)

Realism: Limited Possibilities

A conclusion one might come to from Wilson’s analysis is that there is very little that can be done to tackle crime. constitutional factors are difficult to deal with, the age of biological engineering is scarcely here yet; the proportion of young men in the population is a fixture which society has to live with; the effectiveness of child-rearing - particularly the incidence of single parents - is not something that can be changed overnight. Much of that which encourages crime in the United States, as Wilson freely admits, is part and parcel of the expressive and individualistic culture of modern America. That is not for changing. And as to the effects of policing and punishment: Wilson is in the forefront of those sceptical about their effectiveness. What do we need instead? Wilson’s realism stresses the importance of marginal gains rather than utopian goals and on carefully monitored intervention rather than ‘throwing money’ at the problem.

Thus he writes:

“If we grant that it is possible to try to improve the criminal justice system without apologising for the fact that those efforts do not attack the ‘root causes’ of crime, the next thing to remember is that we are seeking, at best, marginal improvements that can only be discovered through patient trial-and-error accompanied by hard-headed and objective evaluations.

There are, we now know, certain things we can change in accordance with our intentions, and certain ones we cannot. We cannot alter the number of juveniles who first experiment with minor crimes. We apparently cannot lower the overall recidivism rate, though within reason we should keep trying. We are not yet certain whether we can increase significantly the police apprehension rate. We may be able to change the teenage unemployment rate, though we have learned by painful trial-and-error that doing this is much more difficult than once supposed. We can probably reduce the time it takes to bring an arrested person to trial, even though we have as yet made few serious efforts to do so. We can certainly reduce any arbitrary exercise of prosecutorial discretion over whom to charge and whom to release, and we can most definitely stop pretending that judges know any better than the rest of us how to provide ‘individualized justice’. We can confine a larger proportion of the serious and repeat offenders and fewer of the common drunks and truant children. We know that confining criminals prevents them from harming society, and we have grounds for suspecting that some would-be criminals can be deterred by the confinement of others.

Above all, we can try to learn more about what works and, in the process, abandon our ideological preconceptions about what ought to work.” (1985, pp.253-254)

The Role of the Police

Wilson has developed an influential position on the relationship between policing and crime control. Baldly stated, the hypothesis maintains that policing is effective not through a direct effect on the control of crime, but rather in facilitating the maintenance of social order.

Furthermore, where disorderly behaviour (for example, that of drunks, rowdy youths) is not controlled, the neighbourhood enters a spiral of decline in which the law-abiding emigrate from the area, informal social controls weaken, and crime itself begins to rise. So police involvement in 'order maintenance' facilitates, in the long run, the process of crime control. Police presence facilitates the growth of informal neighbourhood controls on crime by giving the area a general sense of security.

Wilson divides police work into three types: law enforcement, order maintenance, and public service. The latter is concerned with traffic control, rescuing cats from trees, distributing lost property, and so on. Wilson sees it as mere historical contingency that the police should be concerned with such work and quickly eliminates it from his analysis. It is the distinction between law enforcement and order maintenance that is central to his argument. For Wilson:

"The problem of order, more than the problem of law enforcement, is central ... The patrolman's role is defined more by his responsibility for **maintaining order** than by his responsibility for enforcing law. By 'order' is meant that absence of disorder, and by disorder is meant behaviour that either disturbs or threatens to disturb the public peace or that involves face to face conflict among two or more persons ... a noisy drunk, a rowdy teenager shouting or racing his car in the middle of the night, a loud radio in the apartment next door, a panhandler (down-and-out) soliciting money from passers by, persons wearing eccentric clothes and unusual hair styles loitering in public places - all these are examples of behaviour which the public (an onlooker, a neighbour, the community at large) may disapprove of and ask the patrolman to 'put a stop to'. Needless to say, the drunk, the teenager, the persons next door, the panhandler and the hippies are likely to take a different view of the matter, to suggest that people 'mind their own business', and to be irritated with the cop who intervenes.

Some or all of these examples of disorderly behaviour involve infractions of the law; any intervention by the police is at least under cover of the law and in fact might be viewed as an enforcement of the law. A judge, examining the matter after the fact, is likely to see the issue wholly in these terms. But the patrolman does not. Though he may use the law to make an arrest, just as often he will do something else, such as tell people to 'knock it off', 'break it up', or 'go home and sober up'." (1986, pp.16-17)

Order is the priority in police time; it involves, Wilson argues, three times as much time as law enforcement. It is a more difficult task and yet it is the job at which police are most effective. Extra police on the beat may not reduce the crime rate immediately, as George Kelling, in his study of Newark, New Jersey, showed, but it considerably reduces people's fear of crime. there are, according to this line of argument, several reasons for this apparent paradox. First, disorder itself frightens people. Second, in the long run disorder begets more disorder, and more disorder produces crime. that is, when order maintenance breaks down, the natural informal control mechanisms - the social antibodies of the community - are weakened, and real increases in crime ensue.

Historically, the police function from city night-watchmen onwards, has given priority to order. It is only, according to Wilson and Kelling, in response to the rapid rise in crime in the United States

in the recent period that crime control has become of major importance. This has involved a shift from the police officer as maintainer of order, improvising the ground rules in accordance with the customs and habits of the community, to the police officer as functionary of the rule of law, directed by the justice department and hemmed in by legal rules and official procedures. This transition has been to the detriment of order. Strict justice and the rules of due process do not facilitate the maintenance of order. Wilson and Kelling write:

“Until quite recently in many states, and even today in some places, the police make arrests on such charges as ‘suspicious persons’ or ‘vagrancy’ or ‘public drunkenness’ - charges with scarcely any legal meaning. These charges exist not because society wants judges to punish vagrants or drunks, but because it wants an officer to ... remove undesirable persons from a neighbourhood when informal efforts to preserve order in the streets have failed ...

Once we begin to think of all aspects of police work as involving the application of universal rules under special procedures, we inevitably ask: ‘What constitutes an undesirable person? ... A strong and commendable desire to see that people are treated fairly makes us worry about allowing the police to rout persons who are undesirable by some vague parochial standard. A growing and not so commendable utilitarianism leads us to doubt that any behaviour that does not ‘hurt’ another person should be made illegal. And thus many of us who watch over the police are reluctant to allow them to perform, in the only way they can, a function that every neighbourhood wants them to perform.” (1982, p.35)

What is necessary, then, is to award priority to order, and not to judge the police solely on their ability as crime fighters. We must concentrate our resources in those areas ‘at the tipping point’ and ‘where the public order is deteriorating but not unreclaimable’ - not necessarily those with the highest crime rates, which may have gone past the point of no return. Police officers must be trained in managing street life as much as in law and due process. and we must, Wilson and Kelling insist, oppose campaigns to decriminalise the so-called harmless behaviours: ‘Public drunkenness, street prostitution, and pornographic displays can destroy a community more quickly than any team of professional burglars.’ (1982, p.38)

It is important to note the political targets of such an analysis. Wilson and Kelling are opposed to traditional conservative policies of heavy policing. But, more revealing, they also set themselves against liberal notions of crime control. First, they oppose the decriminalisation of minor crimes and so-called crimes without victims. Second, their analysis widens the sphere for social control by seeing the control of deviant behaviour, both illegal and legal, as important in the maintenance of order. Third, it views the liberal emphasis on rights and due process as counter-productive and is critical of both the possibility and the desirability of right management controls on the police. Lastly, the analysis emphasises social control by both the community and the police as the key to crime control, rather than hoping to reduce crime through measures aimed at the elimination of poverty and deprivation.

Role of the Public

Wilson sees the informal control as the most powerful force of social control. The police role is, so to speak, to jump-start the informal control system back into action in those areas where it has broken down and which are, of course, *ipso facto*, high crime areas. Effective police work *per se* in the traditional model of detection, should be directed to the high risk repeat offenders. Similarly, the courts and prisons should give high sentences to this small group of offenders in order to incapacitate them. Here Wilson agrees with his fellow conservative writer, Ernest van den Haag, that interests of order override those of justice. It is better to remove a recidivist from society proportionally to his criminal record than to judge him according to his last crime. The public, meanwhile, has an important role in Wilson's formulation of social control. Child-rearing itself is a vital part of the socialisation process, as is peer group pressure, and much should be done in terms of citizen organised control, such as Neighbourhood Watch and self-help public patrols.

The Aetiological Crisis

As we have seen, Wilson directly confronts the aetiological crisis. He highlights the dramatic rise in crime in the United States and pinpoints its causes. His realism addresses itself to: a) the limits of what can be done in terms of possible intervention; b) the paucity of our knowledge with regard to what works; and c) the importance of marginal gains.

Right Realism and Realpolitik

The Right Realism of James Q Wilson prioritises order over justice. This can be illustrated in four areas:

1. that police intervention should occur in terms of order on the streets rather than crime itself. For it is here that intervention would be seen to be effective, despite the fact that the individuals concerned have committed at least serious crimes - if crimes at all;
2. that public intervention should occur in those areas that have not yet 'tipped' into 'irrevocable' decay. That is *not* towards the most deserving areas, but those which are deemed rescuable;
3. that intervention to control drug use should not be directed to the addicts (who are past reclaiming), or the dealers, but at the first time users, who are able to be deterred. That is, against those who have the least culpability;
4. that repeat offenders, whom Wilson sees as making a particularly high contribution to the crime problem, should be 'incapacitated' by imprisonment on a dual track basis. That is, they should be punished, both in terms of the seriousness of their crime, and in terms of the public interest.

THE LEFT REALIST CRITIQUE

Left Realism, as a critique of existing criminological theory, emerged in the nineteen eighties (see Lea and Young, 1984; Currie, 1985; Young and Matthews, 1992). Its central aim is to be faithful to the reality of crime: to the fact that all crimes must, of necessity, involve rules and rule-breakers (i.e. criminal behaviour and reaction against it), and offenders and victims. The problem with previous criminology, according to Realism, is that it is partial. It has tended to focus on only part of the process of crime and not to encompass all of it. We have already seen how the reactions of different critical traditions to the aetiological crisis were partial. The focus was on the victim or on the offender, on the social reaction to crime or on the criminal behaviour itself. Realism intends to bring together all aspects of the process: in this, its approach emphasises synthesis rather than a simple dismissal of opposing theories.

Despite being extremely critical of the Right Realism of James Q Wilson, there are certain points of convergence between the two Realisms which it is useful to highlight before we commence the critique:

1. Both see crime as really being a problem, both see the public's fear of crime as having a rational basis, in contrast with Left Idealism and Administrative Criminology.
2. Both believe that the reality of crime control has been misconceived, particularly the centrality of the public-police relationship.
3. Both are realistic about what can be done about crime and the limitations of our present-day knowledge. Neither disdain marginal gains, whilst both discount utopian solutions.
4. Both emphasise the need for closely monitored research and intervention and are critical of the widespread tendency to 'throw money' at the crime problem without attempting to measure cost-effectiveness (see Lea *et al*, 1988).

Crime, Human Nature, and Social Order

The most fundamental tenet of realism is that criminology should be faithful to the nature of crime. That is, it should acknowledge the *form* of crime, the *social context* of crime, the *shape* of crime, its trajectory through *time*, and its enactment in *space*.

- 1) The FORM consists of two dyads, a *victim* and an *offender*, and of *actions* and *reactions*: of crime and its control. This deconstruction gives us four definitional elements of crime: a victim, an offender, formal control, and informal control.

Realism, then, points to a square of crime involving the interaction between police and other agencies of social control, the public, the offender, and the victim.



Crime rates are generated not merely by the interplay of these four factors, but as *social relationships* between each point on the square. It is the relationship between the police and the public which determines the efficacy of policing, the relationship between the victim and the offender which determines the impact of crime, the relationship between the State and the offender which is a major factor of recidivism, etc. I shall return to this later, but suffice it to say that the relationship between the four points of the square (offender, victim, State agencies, and the public) varies with differing types of crime (see J Lea, 1992). For example, a hallmark of critical criminology is its pinpointing of the irony of the frequent symbiotic relationships between control agencies - whether formal or informal - and crime. For example, the way in which the burgled public create the informal economy which sustains burglary, or the police create, through illegalities, a moral climate which spur delinquents into crime.

Secondly, it should be stressed that, in pinpointing the fact that crime rates are produced by such an interaction, one is merely describing the process. It does not involve acceptance of the existing patterns of criminalisation. Crime rates are a product, therefore, of changes in the number of putative offenders, and the number of potential victims, and the changing levels of control exercised by the official agencies of control and the public. No explanation which does not embrace all these four factors can possibly explain crime rates. Let us focus, for the moment, quite simply on the relationship between social control in all its manifestations, and the criminal act consisting of the dyad of victim and offender.

If we examine changes over time: Realists would point to these *necessarily* being a product of change in criminal behaviour *and* changes in the sensitivity to crime. The increase in the rate of violent crime *by definition* must involve changes in violence. None of this makes it any less 'real': for this is exactly what crime rates *really* are. This being said, the exponential increases in crimes occurring in most Western countries cannot merely be a product of increased sensitivity to crime. Any dark figure of the crime unknown to the police would have been taken up long ago by the rise in crimes known to the police, and other indices, such as homicide rates and serious property crimes, indicate rises even if we use earlier thresholds as our measure. Thus, present rises in rates of violence in countries

such as England may well be a product both of an increase in sensitivity to violence *and* a rise in violent behaviour.

Realist criminology indicates that crime rates are a product of two forces: changes in behaviour and changes in the forces of social control and the definitions of what is seriously criminal. These two social dimensions are not necessarily co-variant. It is quite possible, for example, for vandalism to increase but people to become less concerned and more tolerant about litter, graffiti, etc. It is possible for acts of violence in a behavioural sense to decrease, yet people become more sensitive to violence. When Durkheim wrote:

“Imagine a society of saints, a perfect cloister of exemplary individuals. Crimes, property so called, will there be unknown; but faults which appear venial to the layman will create there the same scandal that the ordinary offence does in ordinary consciousness. If, then, this society has the power to judge and punish, it will define these acts as criminal and will treat them as such.” (1964, pp.68-69)

he was writing about one possible option. His work has been interpreted by influential writers, such as K Erikson (1966) and Leslie Wilkins (1964), to mean that there is always a *fixed* proportion of any behaviour which is defined as deviant within any normative community. Realism rejects this. In our time we have, in all probability, a tendency towards an *increase* in anti-social behaviour coupled with a *decrease* in tolerance of deviance. A whole host of ‘new crimes’ have been discovered: violence against women, child abuse, racial violence. It is quite possible to argue for what Norbert Elias called the ‘civilising factor’: an increase in sensitivity to anti-social behaviour, whilst noting at the same time that there has been a decrease in civilised behaviour (cf van Dijk, 1989).

At heart, this points to the possible disjunction of definitions of what constitutes intolerable behaviour and the ability to control such behaviour. Thus the social reaction side of the equation consists of two distinct elements - often falsely conflated - the definitional element (i.e. the definitions of what is criminal and tolerable behaviour) and the control element (i.e. the actual level of control that occurs with regards to any type of offending). It is quite possible, therefore, for definitions of crime to become less tolerant, whereas, at the same time, the ability to control criminal behaviour actually decreases.

Of course, social control and criminal behaviour are, in their substantive constituents, more elaborate than simply two formal dyads that make up the square of crime.

Social control involves agencies, ranging from the state to the public: from the police, the educational system, social services, the mass media, the work-place, the family, the peer group, to the informal control between strangers in the street. The recognition of the importance of informal, public systems of control and the central place of non-policing agencies involved in the control of crime, is a central input of recent criminology. It goes

without saying that the effectiveness of such a system of social control is dependent on the relationship between each agency (the police-public relationship being a vital area which has been widely analysed) and that conflicts exist - and will, in any democracy, *always* exist - between different agencies.

- 2) The SOCIAL CONTEXT consists of the immediate social interaction of these four elements and the setting of each of them within the *wider* social structure. Such an agenda was set out within *The New Criminology* (Taylor *et al*, 1973). Namely, that the immediate social origins of a deviant act should be set within its wider social context and that such an analysis should encompass both actors and reactors. Realism takes this a stage further, insisting not only that actions of offenders and the agencies of the State must be understood in such a fashion, but that this must be extended to the informal system of social control (the public) and to victims.

Note the stark contrast here with Right Realism. For Wilson, potent causes of crime are seen as autonomous from the social structure. For example, the family and parents are blamed as if they did not exist within a social situation which undermines the family (see E Currie, 1985), and the 'permissive' ethos of modern society, which he upbraids, is seen as separate from the realities of a market society (see E Currie, 1990).

- 3) SHAPE. Crime is a series of relationships. Each type of crime presents a different network of relationships; if we compare illegal drug use, burglary and assault, for example, we note markedly different structures. Drug dealing has a well-known pyramidal shape; burglary involves numerous victims and regular fences; assault may well be a one-off case of victimisation. Furthermore, the natural history of crime involves differences in the content of these relationships. Crime involves both co-operation and coercion. In the case of drug use, every step of the pyramid is consensual; in the case of burglary, dealing in stolen goods is consensual and the actual act of stealing coercive; in the case of assault, it is a purely coercive act.

- 4) The TEMPORAL aspect of crime is the past of each of the four elements of the square of crime and their impact on each other in the future. A Realist approach sees the development of criminal behaviour over time. It breaks down this trajectory of offending into its component parts and notes how different agencies interact. Thus we can talk of 1) the *background causes* of crime; 2) the *moral context* of opting for criminal behaviour; 3) the *situation of committing crime*; 4) the *detection of crime*; 5) the *response to the offender*; and 6) the *response to the victim*. Criminal careers are built up by an interaction of the structural position the offender finds him or her self in and the administrative responses to his or her various offences. These involve both material changes in the offender's structural position and the exchange of ideal (or 'rationalisations') for offending (see A K Cohen, 1965; D Matza, 1964). But, of course, such moral careers are not confined to the

offender. Other points of the square of crime change over time. Policing practices change in their interaction with offenders; the public's fear of crime in the city creates patterns of avoidance behaviour which, consciously and unconsciously, develop over time; victims - particularly repeated victims, such as in domestic violence - change the pattern of their life as a consequence of such an interaction.

Crime as an activity involves a moral choice at a certain point in time in changing determinant circumstances. It has neither the totally determined quality beloved by positivism, nor the wilful display of rationality enshrined in classicist legal doctrine. It is a moral act, but one which must be constantly assessed within a determined social context. It is neither an act of determined pathology, nor an obvious response to desperate situations. It involves both social organisation and disorganisation. Realism eschews both the romanticism of Left Idealism which grants exaggerated levels of organisation and rationality to deviant behaviour, and the desiccated scientism of positivist criminology which does just the reverse (see Young, 1987; Matza, 1969).

- 5) The SPATIAL DIMENSION of crime is the material space in which this process enacts itself. All crime has a spatial dimension, and the geography of crime varies widely in terms of the specific crime. Drug dealing has an international dimension, a national distribution and a focus on specific areas of the city. Burglary occurs widely across a locality and subsists on a hidden economy which is locally based. Assault has no wider spatial dimension. It occurs, however, frequently in specific areas. For example, in terms of assault by a stranger, it has a pronounced geographical focus which is made evident, both in the incidence of assault and the fear of victimisation, manifest in the avoidance of certain areas. Just, then, as specific crimes involve differing structures of relationships, they also involve particular structures in space.

Left realism, therefore, suggests that the control of crime must involve interventions at all points of the square of crime (e.g. through better policing, greater community involvement, protecting and empowering the victim and dealing with the structural problems that cause offending). But it prioritises intervention on the level of causes of crime over actions which take place *after* the crime has been committed (see Young and Matthews, 1992).

Causes of Crime

Realism sees the causes of criminal behaviour in relative deprivation. Crime can, therefore, occur anywhere in the social structure and at any period, affluent or otherwise - it is simply not dependent on absolute levels of deprivation or the level in the social structure of the offender (see J Lea, 1992). This being said, it is certain parts of the poor, particularly the lower working class and certain ethnic minorities, who are marginalised from the 'glittering prizes' of the wider

society, that the push towards crime is greater than elsewhere in the structure (see Lea and Young, 1984).

To put an emphasis on relative deprivation as a cause of crime is not to retreat into mono-causality. Of course there are many causes of crime. Even within the tradition of anomie theory, subcultural theorists have tended to unduly emphasise relative deprivation, the disjunction between aspirations and opportunities, over anomie as a lack of limits, a product of an individualism, where "From top to bottom of the ladder, greed is aroused without knowing where to find its ultimate foothold. Nothing can colour it since its goal is far beyond all it can attain" (Durkheim, 1952, p.256). And certainly one can contrast the anomie of the disadvantaged, which is largely concerned with relative deprivation from the anomie of the advantaged, which is often a product of a limitless pursuit of money, status, and power (see Young, 1974; Simon and Gagnon, 1986; I Taylor, 1990). This being said, relative deprivation is an extremely potent cause of crime, for it is:

- 1) Not limited to lower working class crime because relative deprivation can, and does, occur throughout the social structure;
- 2) Not merely concerned with economic crime, because subcultures of violence amongst the poor and the violence of better off men occur precisely as a response to relative economic deprivation;
- 3) Not concerned with absolute poverty, and thus pinpoints the paradox of those crimes of the poor which focus on status goods. As Elizabeth Burney pointed out, in her study of street robbery:

"Poverty is, nevertheless, not the immediate motive for street crime, since most offenders do not lack necessities: rather, they crave luxuries. The outstanding characteristic of young street offenders is their avid adherence to a group 'style', which dictates a very expensive level of brand-name dressing, financed by crime." (1990, p.63. See also E Currie, 1990).

As we have seen, the problem of the causes of crime is one which has perplexed criminologists and confused public opinion throughout the century. This is not the place to enter into the complexities of this subject, but it is pertinent to point to three notions which inform the debate, that is: absolute deprivation, total determinism, and mechanistic causation. All of these concepts are central to social democratic positivism and are fundamentally mistaken.

There is no evidence that absolute deprivation (e.g. unemployment, lack of schooling, poor housing, etc.) leads *automatically* to crime. the crime rate was minute in the nine-teen thirties, despite very high levels of poverty. Realist criminology points to relative deprivation in certain *conditions* as being the major cause of crime. that is, when people experience a level of

unfairness in their allocation of resources and utilise individualistic means to attempt to right this condition. It is an unjust reaction to the experience of injustice. Needless to say, such an experienced injustice, coupled with an individualistic 'solution' can occur at different parts of society: like crime itself, it is certainly not a monopoly of the poor.

Such individualistic responses of 'every man for himself' are particularly prevalent at certain times rather than others. They were the dominant political ethics of the laissez-faire capitalism of the mid-nineteenth century, which saw the crime rate at its highest in history; it is the ascendant ethos of modern-day Britain, with its rising crime rate, and it is particularly prevalent in the United States, which has by far the highest crime rate of any advanced industrial society.

The notion that certain social conditions lead to crime is associated with the notion of total determinism. To say that poverty in the present period breeds crime is not to say that all poor people are criminals. Far from it: most poor people are perfectly honest and many wealthy people commit crimes. Rather, it is to say that the rate of crime is higher in certain parts of society in certain conditions. Crime, like any other form of behaviour, involves moral choice in certain restricting circumstances. It is not inevitable in any particular circumstances. That is why an ethos of individualism has such an effect on public morality and the incidence of crime. conversely, however, crime is not merely a matter of moral choice: a wickedness distributed randomly throughout the world. Material circumstances differ widely in present-day society - some would suggest far too widely - and this greatly affects the crime rates.

To say that crime is causal is, therefore, not to suggest a mechanistic notion of causation: like, for example, when we push a table - the table moves. Rather, that because of the subjective element, certain circumstances facilitate increases in crime amongst parts of the population. Because of this, simple attempts to relate social factors such as unemployment to crime will, inevitably, fail, however sophisticated their statistical techniques. Unemployment leads to discontent in those situations where people experience their circumstances as unjust, unnecessary and, above all, *preventable*. Discontent leads to crime where individuals feel marginalised socially and politically. There are various, quite pronounced, reasons why such marginalisation and relative deprivation has increased in the present period. Furthermore, we have a generation which has grown up used to Keynesian interventions in the economy, and which consequently sees unemployment, not as part of the natural order, but as very much a political product. To them unemployment and relative impoverishment is no longer a fact of life, it is a failure of society and of government.

The common problem of mechanistic notions of crime causation is that it assumes an *immediate* causation. But if we consider that it takes time for people to evaluate their predicaments and even longer for them to build up alternative solutions, then the notion of an immediate causation becomes ludicrous. Unemployment *now* does not relate to crime the day after tomorrow.

Subcultures of youth, for example, build up and develop appraisals of their situation, but they may not flourish until several years after the initial problem of unemployment. Perhaps, even more significantly, the development of a hidden economy, including a level of illegal activity, will take a considerable time to build up. Thus to correlate crime and unemployment at one moment of time completely obscures the fact that human evaluation and enterprise take *time*.

The implications of this understanding of causality are of vital importance. Specifically, we have in our cities conditions of unemployment with no foreseeable future for young people and where the concept of 'youth' merely extends itself into those aged thirty and beyond. In such a situation relative deprivation is manifest in the contrast with the increasingly wealthy strata of those in work, and is underscored by the gentrification of our large cities which allows comparison to be easily available and, indeed, unavoidable.

The reality of the human predicament is the construction of choice in determinate circumstances. Because of this causality presents itself as complex, sometimes distant, and because of the human ability to reinterpret the world, always potentially reversible. It is not surprising that Administrative Criminology reacts to such complexity by simple disavowal or that Left Idealism simply *retrospectively* finds any choice obvious. Wilson's Realism is more of a problem; it does not deny causality. In fact, it embraces a multitude of causes. What he does deny is, perhaps, the most obvious cause of crime: inequality of wealth and power, both in terms of class and in terms of patriarchy.

Finally, with regards to Wilson's emphasis on human constitution and crime, Realism does not reject the fact of correlations between biology and crime, whether one is talking about body shape, hormone systems, size or age. In rejecting biological reductionism, theories such as Left Idealism and Labelling Theory, throw the baby out with the bathwater and reject biology itself. It is a fact that larger, more powerful people commit more violence than smaller people, that their male hormones correlate strongly with violence, that the well-muscled are more of a threat than the plump and unfit. You do not, after all, cross the street at night to avoid old ladies. Realism does not deny the correlations between biology and crime, that men are more violent than women, and the young more violent than the old. Rather, it says, the causes of patriarchal violence against women or the machismo of lower working class youth are rooted in social situations, not biology.

The Problem of Specificity

Both neo-positivism and the New Administrative Criminology seek generalisations which are independent of culture. A discussion of whether maternal deprivation leads to crime or if beat policing is effective would be typical endeavours. Left Idealism, with its sense of the obviousness of criminological generalisation, enters the field of general laws with an abandon which would alarm the most staunch positivist. Of course, unemployment leads to crime; it is self-evident that

the recession has led to the rise in heroin use amongst young people, etc. Such a mechanistic relationship between objective conditions and human behaviour is absurd. It is central to a Realist position that objective conditions are interpreted through the specific subcultures of groups involved. This is the nature of human experience and social action. Generalisation is possible, but only given specific cultural conditions and social understandings. Thus, to be precise, the problem of specificity refers to generalising about crime, law, or victimisation from one country or one social group and assuming that one's conclusions apply to all countries or social groups. It is being unable to see how general variables come together in a very specific form in any particular situation. This results in work which is not only inadequate as a generalisation, but is lacking in its ability to cope with what is special about the precise constellation of factors which delineate any particular situation. Lack of specificity is a heuristic failure, both on the level of the general and the particular.

Realism focuses on lived realities. It is concerned with the material problems which particular groups of people experience in terms of the major social axes of age, class, gender, and race, and spatially with their locality. It is these structural parameters which give rise to subcultures. Realism has a close affinity with subcultural theory (e.g. Willis, 1977; Cohen, 1965). Subcultures are problem-solving devices which constantly arise as people in specific groups attempt to solve the structural problems which face them. The problems are evaluated in terms of the existing subculture and the subculture changes over time in order to *attempt* a solution to those perceived problems (see Lea and Young, ch.3, 1984; Young, 1974). Crime is one form of subcultural adaptation which occurs where material circumstances block cultural aspirations and where non-criminal alternatives are absent or less attractive.

Social Constructionism, Positivism, and Everyday Life

In focusing upon lived realities, Realism is in sharp contrast to vulgar materialist explanations of crime (such as individual or social positivism) or idealist explanations.

The major problem of social constructionism is that it is not constructionist enough. Their focus is almost entirely top-down. The mass media create moral panics, the identity of various deviant groups is forged for them by the powerful, the criminal justice system create criminal statistics (e.g. Lidz and Walker, 1980; T Duster, 1970; L Hulsman, 1986). In fact, all human behaviour is socially constructed. It is constructed by people in their everyday life, in the context of their subcultures, albeit in material circumstances only in part of their making, and in an idealistic context where pre-existing social scripts are widespread.

To take opiate use, for example, the user takes opiates because it fits his or her subcultural problems or concerns. These, in turn, are a product of the structural position of the user (see Young, 1971). Subcultural theory posits the way in which individuals socially construct 'solutions' to the problems confronting them. Realist subcultural theory accepts the fact that dominant ideas

(such as the 'sickness' model) can gain currency in this construction. But only because such ideas fit the predicament of the user (see Auld *et al*, 1986). Different opiate users in different predicaments construct very different patterns of heroin use. It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that there is a varying social reaction to different types of use (e.g. the 19th century middle class female opiate user; the 20th century ghetto black junkie; the physician addict) because they are engaging in totally different constructions of opiate use; none of which is to suggest that the various social reactions are appropriate. Indeed, Realism highlights the repeated ineffective and often counter-productive social reactions to opiate use, deviant behaviour and crime in general. But social reactions, the constructions of the powerful, are inevitably geared to social constructions on the ground level. You cannot write a history of social control without an adjacent history of changes in the crime to be controlled. Yet such top-down histories are a trademark of social constructionism. Even more inaccurate is the notion that there is an essence of a phenomenon against which top-down social constructions simply vary. Troy Duster, for example, in his *Legislation of Morality* (1970), creates a scenario where he identifies the essence of different reactions against nineteenth century, white, female opiate use and twentieth century, black, heroin use as merely a function of the prejudice of the powerful. This displays what Woolgar and Pawluch (1985) have neatly termed 'ontological gerrymandering'. That is, that there is a 'real' essential form of a particular type of deviant he, usually located in the past (in this case nineteenth century opiate use), against which is contrasted that which is subsequently constructed by social intervention. In this fashion, constructionism relapses into positivism - the very position which it seeks to criticise. Positivism, of course, posits the unchanging essence of phenomena (e.g. heroin use can be understood by looking up its characteristics in a pharmacopoeia). For positivists, crime is a 'fact out there', independent of values (e.g. Eysenck and Gudjonsson, 1989). Social definition is seen as merely reflecting the essence of the phenomenon, social intervention as having little intimate bearing on its nature.

Realism, then, does not deal in abstractions: the principle of specificity demands that explanation be grounded. It is not just that the concept of 'crime' embraces a motive of types of behaviour and varieties of legal regulation; each 'type' of crime and each form of regulation must be specified if we are to make any progress in understanding their interaction. Opiate addiction, as we have seen, can mean many different things in particular subcultures. Burglary can involve the rational calculation of the professional or the opportunism of the young lad. Domestic violence can involve a variety of sub-species, each with its own life cycle. And, turning to social control, beat policing can involve many greatly different activities from the aggressive to the consensual; Neighbourhood Watch can be a uniting or a divisive intervention. All of this suggests the necessity of typologies which cut across legal or formal definitions, but, going further, that these typologies must be grounded in the particular lived realities of the phenomenon under investigation. It does not exclude generalisation, it merely argues that generalisation must be socially based and explanations which are abstracted out of context have very little chance of aetiological success because they ignore the very social context which determine them.

The Impact of Crime

Realists are critical of the supposed disjunction between fear of crime and risk of crime which forms such a background of conventional thinking about crime. many of the glaring 'irrationalities' centre around the high fear of crime of women and of old people, despite the low risk rates. The contrast is always made with the low fear of crime of young men, despite their having the supposedly highest risk rates of any social grouping. Realists point to the fundamental flaw of believing that there is an easy answer to what is a 'rational' level of fear of crime. isn't the low level of fear of young 'machismo' males an irrationality? Can the social scientist predetermine what a rational level would look like (see Young, 1988b).

The Realist method is not to look at the risk of crime in general - as does administrative criminology. For general rates obscure by adding very low risk groups to groups with very high risks. Rather, the Realist method delineates how crime is focused on certain geographical areas and certain groups within those areas. For example, blacks rather than whites, and poor people rather than the rich. The most vulnerable in our society not only have the greatest risks of crime, but also the impact of crime on them is greater because of their lack of money and resources. Lastly, the people who suffer most from crime tend to suffer most from other social problems (e.g. physical and mental illness, bad housing, etc.). The effects of crime *compounds* with other problems.

The Role of the Police

Realists argue that Wilson is wrong to suggest that crime control will be achieved by prioritising order over justice. Society is held together to the extent that it is seen by its members to be just. When significant agencies of society, such as the police or the courts, act in a way which violates this sense of justice - by arbitrary arrest, harassment, or punishment incommensurate with the crime - then public alienation is likely to occur. And the part of the population most likely to be alienated is, paradoxically, the one most vital for social control. First of all it is amongst those parts of the working class, particularly the young and often ethnic minorities, who have already suffered the economic marginalisation of unemployment. The extra marginalisation of harassment on the streets etc., is often the last straw that breaks the camel's back - the point where economic marginalisation is transferred into crime. Secondly, the effectiveness of the police is dependent on public co-operation, particularly a willingness to provide information and to witness in court. To the extent that the police and the courts develop a reputation as being arbitrary and unjust, they alienate a section of the community who, often extremely law-abiding themselves, are vital to the successful functioning of the judicial system.

Thus, whilst Wilson argues that control of order leads to control of crime, Left Realists argue that order achieved without justice can, in fact, foster crime. And when Wilson argues that the control and incapacitation of the 'dangerous' criminal is more important than the strict axiom of

punishment fitting the crime, Left Realists argue that the precise reason why the judicial system does not at present work effectively is the systematic violation of standards of justice in the interests of order.

The Role of the Public

The reality of crime control is that the public play a central role, both in terms of the informal controls of daily life and in their co-operation - or lack of it - with the police. Realists point to the central problem of crime control being that there is a breakdown of community in high crime areas. You cannot give the control of crime to the community like Left Idealists would argue (e.g. Scraton, 1985), for no such community exists. Furthermore, target-hardening is least likely to occur in the poorest areas because of the high costs. The privatisation of crime protection which the Administrative Criminologists prefer is least likely to occur in the most crime ridden areas. Indeed, they are vulnerable to displacement from the target-hardened houses and areas of the wealthy. Realists would agree with Wilson that the informal control system has to build up, but point to the widespread evidence that his police-initiated schemes are likely to precipitate disorder rather than reinforce it (see Kinsey *et al*, 1986).

Realism and the Aetiological Crisis

Realism has no doubt that there has been a rise in crime - although this reflects the reality of crime involving changes in both behaviour and tolerance to crime. It faces the crisis of aetiology square on: crime is caused by inequalities in the social structure, but it is experienced injustice, relative deprivation - not absolute 'objective' deprivation - which predisposes towards crime. And crime occurs in situations where there are no feasible alternatives to solving relative deprivation. This is why crime rates are higher in countries without social democratic alternatives (on the U.S. see E Currie, 1985).

For Realism, then, the control of crime involves interventions on all levels: on the social causes of crime, on social control exercised by the community and the formal agencies, and on the situation of the victim. Furthermore, that social causation is given the highest priority, whereas formal agencies, such as the police, have a vital role, yet one which has, in the conventional literature, been greatly exaggerated. It is not the 'Thin Blue Line', but the social bricks and mortar of civil society which are the major bulwark against crime. good jobs with a discernible future, housing estates that tenants can be proud of, community facilities which enhance a sense of cohesion and belonging, a reduction in unfair income inequalities, all create a society which is more cohesive and less criminogenic.

The distinguishing features of radical realism, when compared to the realism of the right, is the appraisal of the relationship between social order and social justice. For those on the right, order takes priority over justice: an orderly society will be one that is more just, however imperfect. And such a programme justifies unjust interventions, such as selective incapacitation, a dual

track system of penalty, the harassment of those committing incivilities in order to maintain a neighbourhood, etc. Left Realists argue that it is wrong to suggest that crime control will be achieved by prioritising order over justice. Society is held together to the extent that it is seen by its members to be just. When significant agencies of society, such as the police or the courts, act in a way that violates this sense of justice - by arbitrary arrest, harassment or punishment incommensurate with the crime - then public alienation is likely to occur. And the part of the population most likely to be alienated is, paradoxically, the one most vital for social control. First of all it is amongst those parts of the working class, particularly the young and often ethnic minorities, who have already suffered the economic marginalisation of unemployment. The extra marginalisation of harassment on the streets etc., is often the last straw that breaks the camel's back - the point where economic marginalisation is transferred into crime. Secondly, the effectiveness of the police is dependent on public co-operation, particularly a willingness to provide information and to witness in court. To the extent that the police and the courts develop a reputation as being arbitrary and unjust, they alienate a section of the community who, often extremely law-abiding themselves, are vital to the successful functioning of the judicial system.

Thus, whilst Right Realists argues that control of order leads to control of crime, Left Realists argue that order achieved without justice can, in fact, foster crime. And when Wilson argues that the control and incapacitation of the 'dangerous' criminal is more important than the strict axiom of punishment fitting the crime, Left Realists argue that the precise reason why the judicial system does not at present work effectively is the systematic violation of standards of justice in the interests of order.

Net Widening Versus Net Reducing

Realists distinguish themselves, both from Left Idealists who oppose any net-widening of State intervention, and traditional conservatives, who simply want to widen the net. There are areas of social control where the net should be drastically reduced (e.g. minor drug offences, juvenile 'status' crimes). There are others where we would adamantly call for net-widening. Corporate crime, industrial pollution, racist attacks, child abuse, domestic violence, are a few of them. And, in general, the police and social service responses to the poor is inadequate - in this case it is a *safety net* that needs widening. None of this net-widening need necessarily involve the traditional responses of police and prisons - though in some cases it certainly should.

Crime and Politics

To solve the problem of crime, therefore, involves political solutions. It is not that target-hardening and more locks and bolts do not help combat crime. Administrative criminology is effective, but only to an extent: for there are problems of crime being displaced elsewhere and distinct limits in terms of cost-effectiveness. A DES report 'Crime Prevention in Schools', indicated that the cost of target-hardening against vandalism soon becomes prohibitive and, indeed, 'excessively target-hardened environments are thought to encourage more damage

eventually than they prevent' (1987, p.37). For after a certain stage, locks and bolts alienate and serve to feed sources of discontent rather than eliminate them. Furthermore, target-hardening has aesthetic and lifestyle costs: we condemn many old people, for example, to be virtual prisoners in 'safe' houses, free from crime, but with a vista of iron bars and a barrier of ansaphones. At some point women must reclaim the night: emphasis on safety, caution, and restriction on lifestyle are only temporary measures. In a civilised country women should be able to get out when they please. The solution to crime as the Realists argue, is political. Strangely, other criminologists would agree: it is simply they're unwilling or unhopeful as to the possibility of such political intervention occurring:

"The question for the causes of crime is an intellectually stimulating, though, thus far, rather confusing, endeavour. To the extent we have learned anything at all, we have learned that the factors in our lives and history that most powerfully influence the crime rate - our commitment to liberty, our general prosperity, our child-rearing methods, our popular values - are precisely the factors that are hardest or riskiest to change. Those things that can more easily and safely be changed - the behaviour of the police, the organisation of neighbourhoods, the management of the criminal justice system, the sentences imposed by courts - are the things that have only limited influence on the crime rate.

In a sense, the radical critics of American society are correct: if you wish to make a big difference in crime, you must make fundamental changes in society. But they are right only in that sense, for what they propose to put in place of existing institutions, to the extent they propose anything at all except angry rhetoric, would probably make us yearn for the good old days when our crime rate was higher, but our freedoms were intact." (J Q Wilson, 1985, pp.250-251).

"Prosperity, therefore, far from allaying the necessity for crime, tends to exacerbate it further in a society which has institutionalised the goals of financial reward and free enterprise. If economic prosperity increases over the next quarter of a century, we can look forward to rising crime rates as the probably concomitant. Crime is intimately bound up with the social structure. If we seriously want to eliminate or greatly reduce its incidence, then we must alter the social system. We must create a new society. But the price we will have to pay may be too high for many of us to contemplate. Revolution is not an easy or comfortable experience.

I would myself advocate the reconstitution of society. I would like to see our political institutions overhauled and renovated to bring them into line with agreed moral purposes. But I must confess that I see no prospect of this happening. It seems that the most we can reasonably hope for is that we should try to work out together some modus vivendi which will produce the minimum discomfort and crime with the least social dislocation for us all." (J B Mays, 1963, pp.206-207)

Two writers: one an American right-winger writing in the nineteen eighties; another a British socialist writing in the nineteen fifties; both in strange agreement across country, politics and time. If you want to profoundly change the crime rate you must profoundly change society. In the end moral barometers are most easily affected by change in political climate. One person steadfastly resists change; the other hoped for it but reluctantly surmised that such change was unlikely.

Crime involves politics: it does so because it is politics which determines the social conditions which cause crime, the degree to which the justice system is egalitarian, and the definition of what are crimes in the first place, and what weighting of gravity we place on one crime against another. In a sense all criminologists recognise this. Wilson basically contends that if one wants the benefits of American capitalism, then one must put up with a certain and high level of crime. Few British conservatives would have the gall to write this. But he is undoubtedly correct, although the benefits of a free enterprise culture are a matter for debate. Wilson then proceeds to evolve a series of measures which would step beyond the bounds of justice in order to defend the existing order. In a sense he is once again correct, as a conservative, if one does not wish to fundamentally restrict the economic and judicial system, then coercion and discipline are the only alternatives to maintain order. This frequently does not work: coercive policies tend to increase disrespect for law rather than the reverse, but it is at least the logical conservative alternative. The New Administrative Criminologists, on the other hand, hope that locks and bolts, better surveillance, tighter security, will hold the world in check without changing anything. The policies of 'normalising crime' seek to calm the public, the implementation of target-hardening seeks to make us safer. But whatever real gains can be made by situational crime prevention, there are limits. There is a point where the cost-effectiveness and impingement of freedom of security measures can become counter-productive.

For the Left Idealists, nothing can be achieved outside of dramatic political change. This prospect of waiting for a far and distant utopia is hardly consoling in terms of the real problems which vulnerable sections of the population now face. Left Realist argues that gains are possible but they must be part of a co-ordinated strategy involving a multi-agency approach. To tackle crime, interventions have to be made on the level of family support, employment, youth facilities, design change, changes in police patrol methods, target-hardening, victim support, etc., involving the agencies of local authorities, the police, voluntary groups, educational authorities, etc. (see Lea *et al*, 1988). Such a co-ordination must be democratic in its nature and attempt to effect the distribution of economic resources and judicial decisions. The aetiological crisis is not solved simply by more money or better conditions, but by resources distributed equitably as part of just politics. It is only where justice is seen to be done that the mainsprings of crime are severed - such a policy of reform demands co-ordination, a democratic multi-agency approach, and careful monitoring.

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