

A comparison of the theories of crime causation of Cesare Beccaria and Emile Durkheim

Cesare Beccaria and Emile Durkheim are two prominent scholars in the field of criminology who have contributed significantly to our understanding of the causes of crime. In this essay, we will compare and contrast their theories of crime causation.

Cesare Beccaria was an Italian philosopher who is known for his work "On Crimes and Punishments" (1764), which is considered one of the foundational texts of modern criminology. Beccaria believed that crime was a rational choice made by individuals who weighed the benefits of their actions against the potential costs. He argued that the severity and certainty of punishment were key factors in deterring criminal behavior. Beccaria believed that punishments should be proportionate to the crime committed, and that the death penalty should only be used in cases of extreme violence.

Emile Durkheim was a French sociologist who is known for his work on the study of social solidarity and the division of labor. In his book "The Rules of Sociological Method" (1895), Durkheim argued that crime was a normal part of society and that it served a social function. He believed that crime was caused by a lack of social integration and that individuals who were not well-integrated into society were more likely to engage in criminal behavior. Durkheim also believed that crime could serve a positive function by reaffirming social norms and values and by providing a sense of solidarity among members of the community.

While both Beccaria and Durkheim were concerned with understanding the causes of crime, their theories differ significantly in their approach. Beccaria's theory emphasizes the role of rational choice and the importance of punishment in deterring criminal behavior, while Durkheim's theory emphasizes the role of social integration and the positive functions of crime.

In conclusion, while Cesare Beccaria and Emile Durkheim both made significant contributions to our understanding of the causes of crime, their theories differ in their approach and focus. Beccaria's theory emphasizes the importance of punishment in deterring criminal behavior, while Durkheim's theory emphasizes the role of social integration and the positive functions of crime. Understanding these different perspectives can help us develop more effective strategies for preventing and addressing criminal behavior in society.

