

# The Classical School in Criminology

Emerging in the 18th century during the Age of Enlightenment, the Classical School fundamentally transformed the understanding of crime and punishment. This intellectual movement sought to establish a more rational and just approach to criminal justice.

# Pre-Classical Perspectives on Crime

1

## Supernatural Beliefs

People believed religious or supernatural factors caused criminal activity.  
Primitive cultures thought violating rules was the action of devils or evil spirits.

2

## Lunar Influence

The moon, especially when full, was believed to trigger criminal activity. This connection between the full moon and crime is primarily due to a Classical School theoretical model.

3

## Barbaric Punishments

During the Middle Ages, common punishments included beheading and torture. These primitive forms of punishment and execution were quite barbaric.





# The Age of

## Thomas Hobbes' Rational Theory

Proposed ideas that came to define the Age of Enlightenment, suggesting a drastic paradigm shift.

## Human Rationality

Declared that human beings are rational beings who choose their destiny by creating a society.

## Social Contract

Citizens agree to abide by rules or laws set forth in return for protection.



CESARE BECCARIA

*Da una Pittura*

# Cesare Beccaria: Father of Criminal Justice

## 1 On Crimes and Punishments

Beccaria's 1764 publication marked the origin of the Classical School of Criminology.

## 2 Enlightenment Philosophy

His writing emphasized rationality in legal policy, the social contract, and utilitarianism.

## 3 Proposed Reforms

Beccaria claimed the true measure of crimes is the harm done to society and advocated for legally established punishments.

## 4 Legal Concepts

Introduced ideas of mens rea (guilty mind) and actus reus (guilty act).

# Beccaria's Views on Punishment

## Death Penalty Critique

Beccaria argued the death penalty was inefficient, ineffective, and violated the social contract. He believed it set an example of barbarity, potentially leading to a "brutalization effect" where homicides increase after executions.

## Deterrence Theory

Beccaria proposed three key elements of punishment: celerity (swiftness), certainty, and severity. He believed these factors significantly influence whether an individual will commit a crime.

## Types of Deterrence

Specific deterrence aims to prevent a particular individual from reoffending, while general deterrence seeks to deter potential offenders in the broader population.

# Beccaria's Enduring Legacy



## Fair Justice Systems

His principles laid the groundwork for modern criminal justice, emphasizing due process, clear laws, and judicial transparency.



## Human Rights Protections

Beccaria championed individual liberties, advocating against torture and arbitrary punishments, influencing human rights movements.



## Proportional Punishment

He introduced the concept of punishment proportionate to the crime, aiming for deterrence rather than brutal retribution.



# Jeremy Bentham's Contributions



## Hedonistic Calculus

Bentham proposed the weighing of pleasure versus pain in human actions.



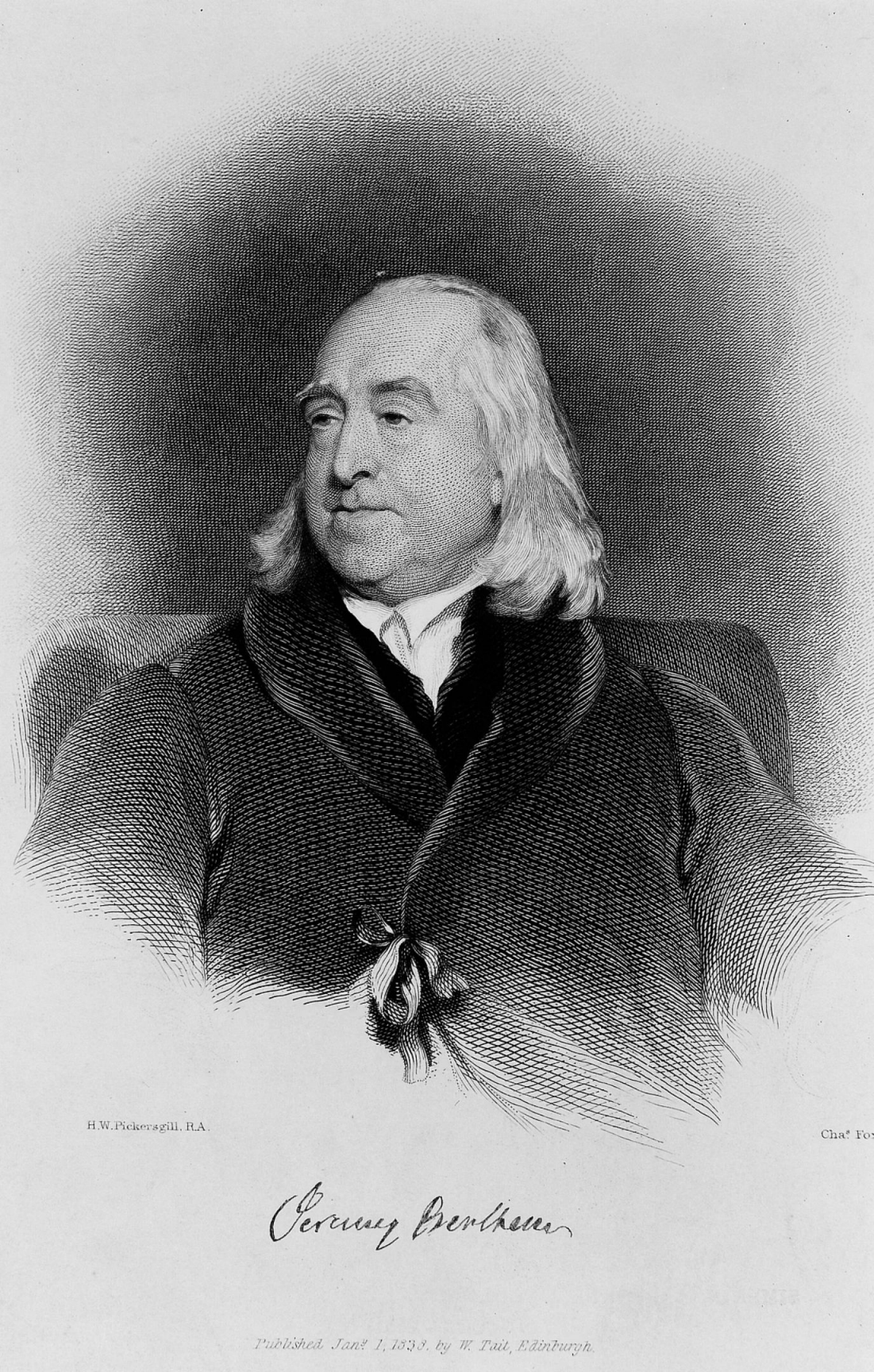
## Panopticon

Designed an "ideal" prison structure allowing constant observation of inmates.



## Utilitarianism

Advocated for a system of legal and penal reform based on the greatest good for the greatest number.



# Bentham's Panopticon: The All-Seeing Eye

Jeremy Bentham's most influential contribution to penal reform was the Panopticon, a revolutionary prison design. This circular structure aimed to achieve efficient surveillance and psychological control over inmates, impacting future institutional architecture far beyond prisons.

## Constant Surveillance

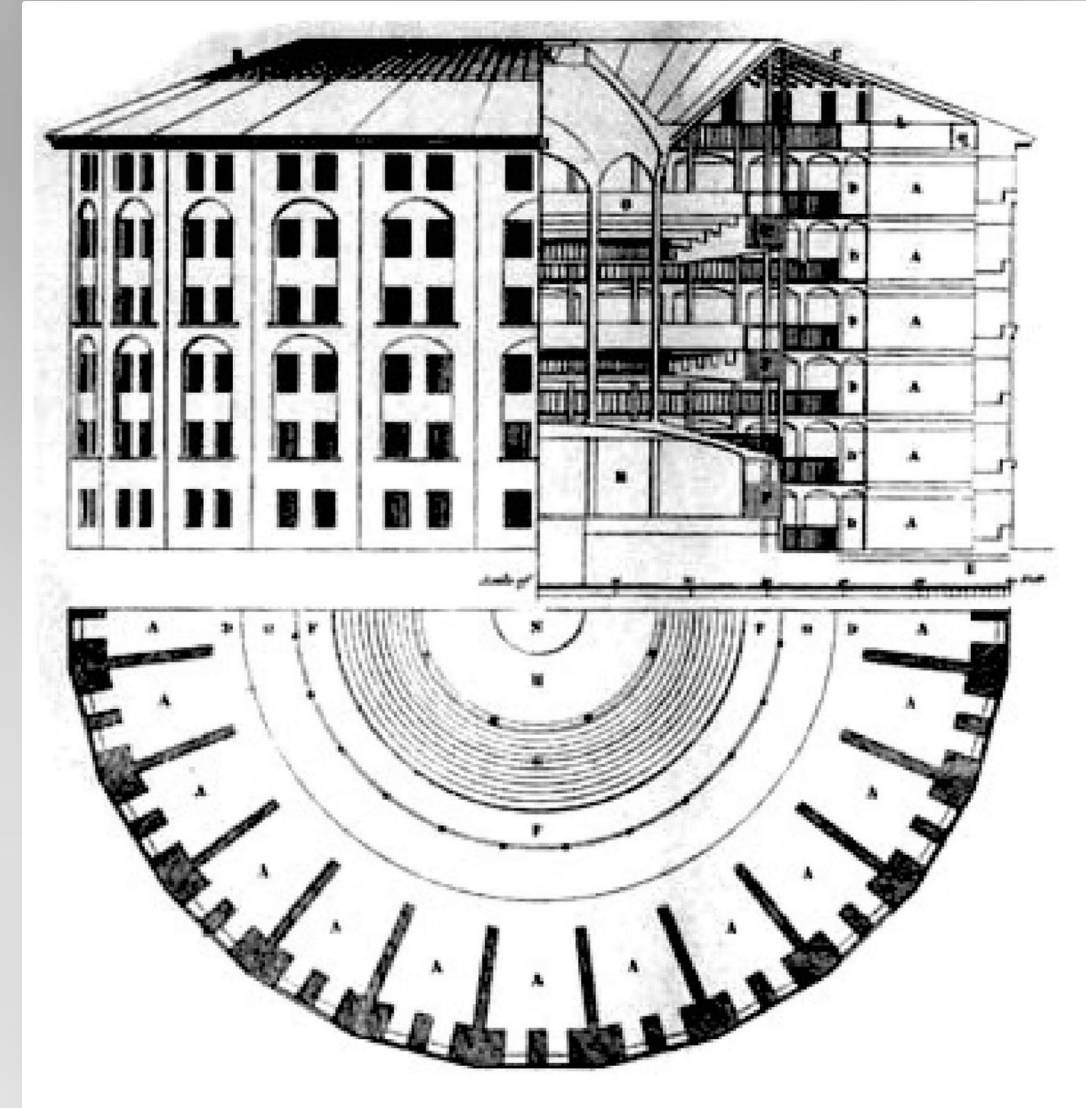
A central observation tower allowed a single guard to see all prisoners without being seen, creating a sense of omnipresent watchfulness.

## Induced Self-Discipline

The uncertainty of being watched at any moment was intended to compel inmates to regulate their own behavior.

## Efficiency & Economy

The design maximized oversight with minimal staff, making it a cost-effective model for managing large populations.



# Legacy and Influence

1

## Legal Reforms

Beccaria and Bentham's ideas influenced the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights.

2

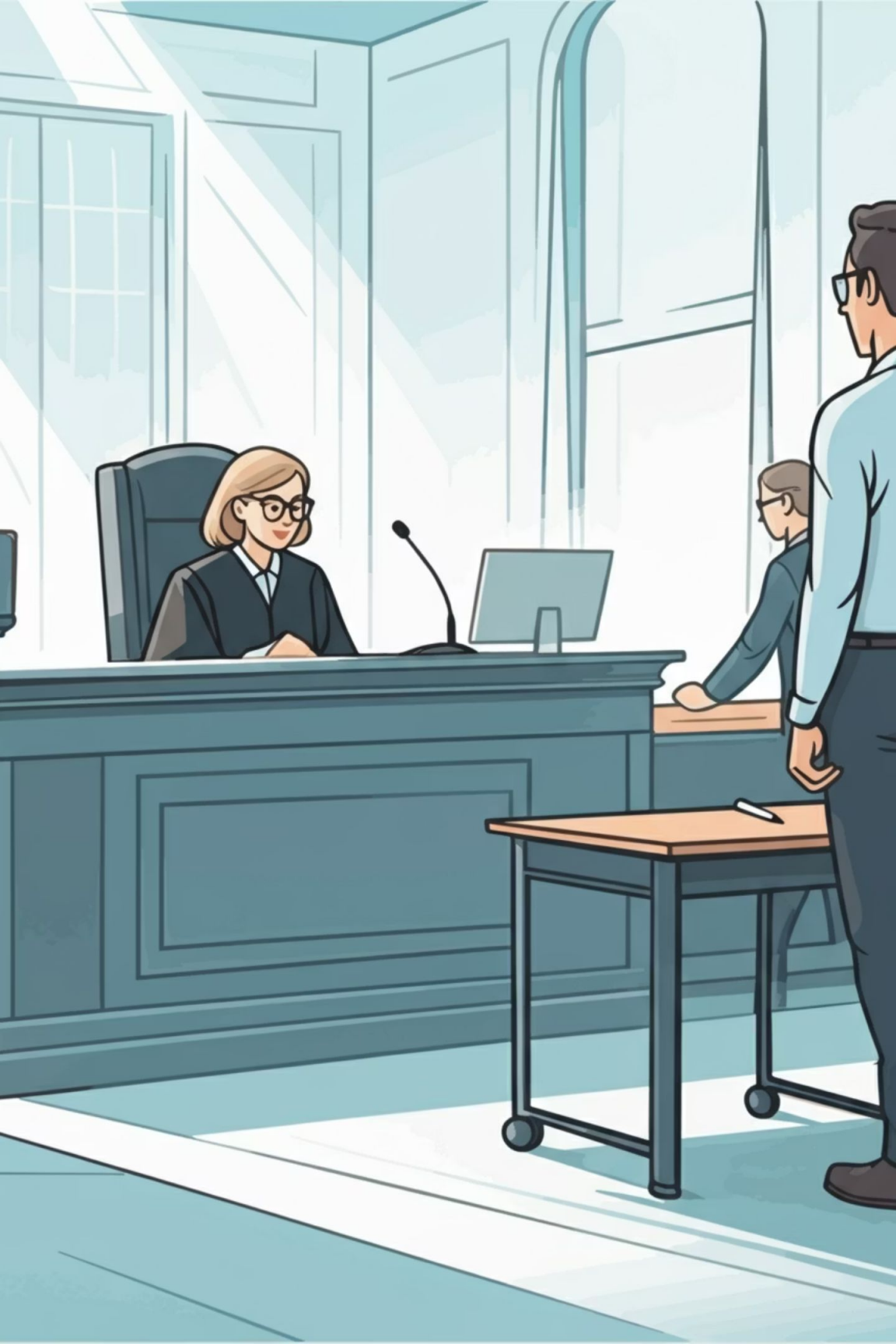
## Criminal Justice Philosophy

Their work shaped the philosophy and workings of modern justice systems.

3

## Punishment Theory

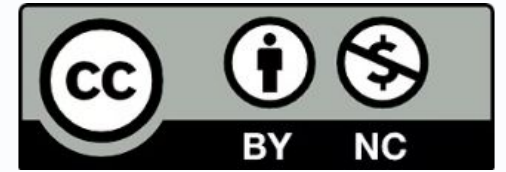
They advocated for punishment as a means of crime reduction and deterrence, not vengeance.



# Critiques and Policy Implications

| Weaknesses                                    | Policy Implications                    |
|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Ignored individual motives and circumstances  | Determinate sentencing                 |
| Disregarded factors beyond individual control | Truth in sentencing                    |
| Oversimplified human behavior                 | Fixed punishment for specific offenses |





# Conclusion

The Classical School of criminology, with its emphasis on rationality, deterrence, and legal reform, profoundly shaped the foundations of modern criminal justice systems. Although it influenced legal codes, punishment philosophies, and societal attitudes toward crime, the Classical School has been criticized for its oversimplification of human behavior and its neglect of individual circumstances. While the Classical School's core principles remain relevant, contemporary criminological thought has incorporated insights from various disciplines to address the complex nature of crime.