

Q. Critically analyze the biological theories of criminality.

Biological perspective of criminality/ Crime Causation.

Biological school of crime causation revolves around the belief that humans are inherently, born criminals due to physiological, anatomical features. This perspective dates back to 19th century Cesare Lombroso's works "The Criminal Man" - 1880.

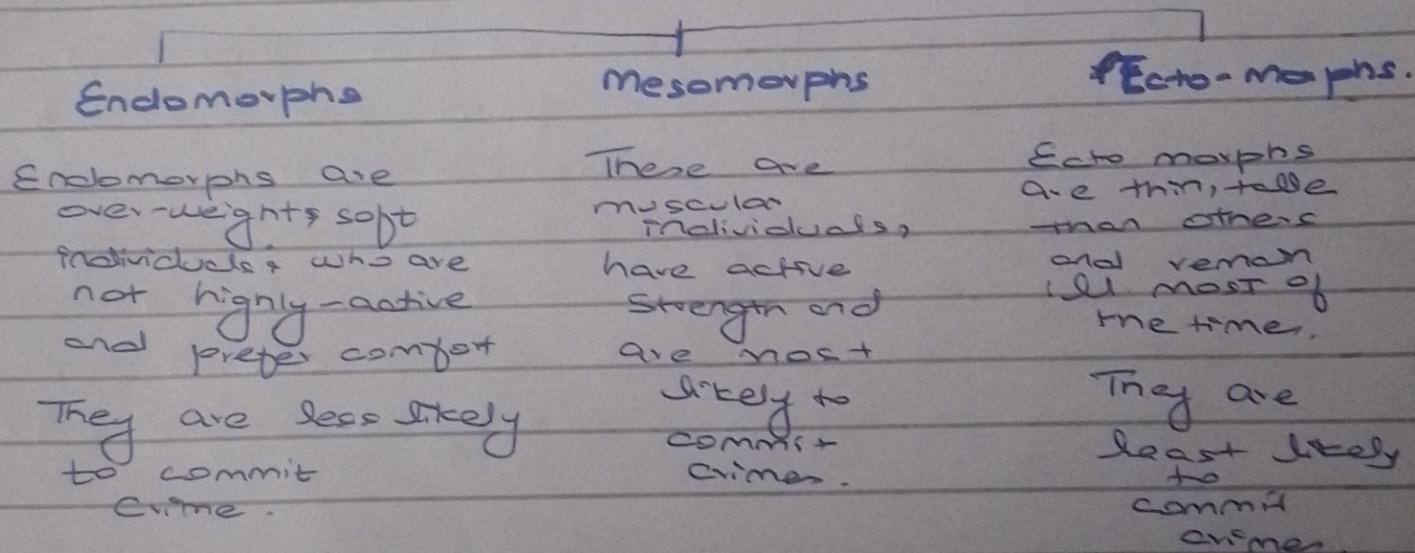
Main features of biological school of thought:
(Biological positivism).

- It claims that criminals are atavistic in nature. Ellwood defines atavistic as:
"Reproducing physical psychological characteristics of ancestors; He is a primitive man born in the modern world."

Cesare Lombroso studied the skulls of offenders and convicts; the study of skull is known as phrenology. He also discovered that criminal has 3mm more distance between their toes, than non-criminal.

Furthermore, he studied the facial expressions of criminals. He found that criminals had oblique eye lids, lower chins and jaws. Other biologists like William Sheldon also based his work on physiological features of criminals, deriving typology of human physique.

Somatotypology by William Sheldon



Contemporary theories in biological perspective includes the notions that:

a. An extra allele in chromosome pair is the cause of crime.

e.g. in XY, XX (one more Y).

b. MAOA (monoamine oxidase A) - is the cause of criminal behaviour, aggression.

Critical Analysis of Biological Perspective:

Biological perspective laid the foundation of scientific evidence in the criminology but it neglected many attributes that may cause criminality. These includes:

a. Psychological processes:

Charles Goring criticized biological perspective when he studied three thousand English convicts. He observed that they had no physical differences from non-criminals. Rather, they had defective intelligence. Moreover, Sigmund Freud's theory of psychodynamics states that childhood traumas causes weak ego in individuals. Resulting in poor capability to refine Id.

b. Racist stereotypes:

Biological perspective initially studied convicts based on empirical research. It showed certain groups were the main culprits of crimes in society, creating racial stereotypes. e.g. - mongolians appeared to be thieves and Negroes, rapists.

c. Neglected Ecological factors:

Biological positivism neglects the ecological factors that results in difference in the levels of crime in different societies due to difference in structural and cultural factors. As social disorganization theory suggests that youth living in disintegrated neighbourhoods, with absence of social Responsibility Mechanisms have more tendency to be delinquent.

d. Gave a reason for crime:

As neutralization theory suggests that youth has the tendency to redefine their criminal behavior and present it as acceptable. Biological theory gave a reason to habitual criminals to resort to crime by presenting biological, physiological feature as the cause of crime, making it difficult to control criminal behavior.

e. Neglects other environmental factors:

Biological perspective does not pay attention to other environmental factors such as socio-economic causes, in crime causation. Thus, decreasing the scope of

Criminology.

Conclusion:

Biological positivism puts emphasis on the nature aspect of crime causation, labeling criminals as "born evils". It limits the scope of the subject and how crime is perceived; in turn, limiting the alternative solutions and preventive measures to stop the crime and contain the criminal behavior.