Rational Choice Theory: A Conceptual Study

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ABOUT THE STUDY

The utilitarian, classical school philosophies of Cesare Beccaria, which were made popular by Jeremy Bentham, are the foundation of rational choice theory. They argued that the risks outweighed any potential benefits for the offender and that punishment, if it were swift, certain, and proportionate to the crime, served as a deterrent. Beccaria argued in Dei delitti e delle pene for a logical approach to pennies. According to Beccaria, a judge's role was to simply confirm a defendant's sentence in accordance with the law. Beccaria saw punishment as the necessary application of the law to a crime. Beccaria also made a distinction between sin and crime, and he opposed the use of the death penalty as well as torture and other cruel practises because he did not see them as effective deterrents. The positivist and Chicago schools replaced this philosophy, and it wasn't until the 1970s that it was brought back by James Q. Wilson's writings, Gary Becker's 1965 article Crime and Punishment, and George Stigler's 1970 article The Optimum Enforcement of Laws. Criminals, like everyone else, think economically and weigh the pros and cons of committing a crime, according to the rational choice theory. By taking time, location, and other situational factors into account, they will also try to reduce the likelihood of crime. For instance, Becker acknowledged that many people are constrained by strong moral and ethical principles, but he also believed that criminals rationally understand that the advantages of committing a crime outweigh the disadvantages, such as the likelihood of being apprehended and convicted, the severity of the punishment, and their current opportunities. From the standpoint of public policy, one can draw the conclusion that the best course of action is to maximize the fine and minimize surveillance because the cost of raising the fine is marginally greater than the cost of raising surveillance. With this viewpoint, crime prevention or reduction strategies can be developed to make committing a crime more difficult, such as target hardening. Additionally, according to rational choice theories, escalating risk and the likelihood of being caught through increased surveillance, law enforcement visibility, street lighting, and other measures can help reduce crime.

CONCLUSION

Since Bentham believed it was possible to completely eradicate crime, one of the main differences between this theory and his rational choice theory, which had been abandoned in criminology, is that Becker's theory acknowledged that a society could not eradicate crime below a certain level. For instance, if 25% of the products in a supermarket were stolen, it would be very simple to lower this rate to 15%, quite simple to lower it to 5%, difficult to lower it under 3%, and almost impossible to lower it to zero. This demonstrates that in order for utilitarianism and classical liberalism to be practically applicable, their goals must be moderated and reduced to more modest proposals. These neoliberal rational choice theories serve as the foundation of the Market Reduction Approach to Theft, developed by Mike Sutton as a systematic toolkit for those attempting to draw attention to "crime facilitators" by addressing the markets for stolen goods that give thieves incentive to supply them with stolen goods.

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