

The Classical School

Criminal Justice

Beccaria and Bentham: offending as choice, punishment as calculation.

Written against arbitrary punishment, not against offenders.

Core claims

Offenders weigh expected cost against benefit

Punishment should be certain and prompt

Severity beyond deterrence is wasted pain

Laws should be public, clear and applied equally

Torture and secret trials produce false guilt

Where it leads

Rational choice and deterrence research

Proportionate sentencing frameworks

Situational prevention: change the choice

Weak on offending that is not calculated

Assumes information offenders rarely have

Educational reference. Later research supports certainty of detection far more strongly than severity of penalty.