

The Difference Between Spiritual and Naturalistics Explanation of Crime

Jenny Paige Johnson

Longwood University

Introduction

Spiritual Explanations of crime happens when the criminal action is explained by a “spiritual influence”, or a “higher power”. Naturalistic Explanations of crime explain when the criminal action happened due to real life events, materialistic things and objects. Both of these types of explanations stemmed from early civilization, but have adapted to the modern eye. Both of these explanations are used to better understand why criminals commit the crimes that they do.

Spiritual Explanation

Spiritual Explanations relies on the influence of a higher power. Spiritual Influences on Crime started in the Middle Ages, when feudes would arise. The feudal lords created what was known as “trial by battle”. In these battles, a representative from both sides would fight, and the winner was believed to have been given the victory by the Gods, the loser’s family wouldn’t be able to do anything else regarding the feud. This was “unfair”, because the families involved in the feud chose a representative, and if they picked a good enough warrior, they would win no matter if they were wrong or right, and they could continue to commit crimes. Another known example of the early spiritual explanations of crime included the accusation of a woman being a witch. The accused would be tied up and tossed into blessed water, and if she was innocent she would sink, and if she was guilty she would float. This is wrong either way because the women would be killed one way or the other.

The next instances of spiritual explanations happened around 1692, in the New World. This was during the “crime waves”. These crimes were said to be acts of either witches, or a higher evil, like the devil, which are examples of a spiritual “higher power”. (Bernard, Snipes, Gerould, and Vold, pg. 2)

Another spiritual explanation or influence in crime, is the modern prison system and their methods of reformation. In prisons, prisoners were given the Bible to read, so that they could understand what they did wrong, and change for the better. Many prisons still operate like this, in hopes to reform inmates. Also, some prisons may offer religious counseling opportunities, for the inmates to reform, or understand their crime.

Naturalistic Explanation

The Naturalistic Explanation of crime as previously stated, is where a criminal action is believed to happen due to real life events, materialistic things and objects. Naturalistic explanations started with the Greeks, and each of their own philosophies. “For example, Hippocrates provided a physiological explanation of thinking by arguing that the brain is the organ of the mind. Democritus proposed the idea of an indestructible unit of matter, called the atom, as central to his explanation of the world around him.” (Bernard, Snipes, Gerould, and Vold, pg. 3) Both of these examples show that an object is used to explain something. For instance, Democritus uses the atom to explain everything around him, and Hippocrates explains that the brain is the explanation of thinking.

Naturalistic explanations have been the structure for Roman Law, and the Hebrew doctrine. “For example, Roman Law combined the spiritualism of Hebrew tradition with the naturalism of the Greek tradition to provide a natural basis for penalties as well as for rights.”

(Bernard, Snipes, Gerould, and Vold, pg. 3) It also guided the divine right, for order of kings rulings. (Bernard, Snipes, Gerould, and Vold, pg. 3)

Naturalistic explanations are also created, tested, and observed because it is real and physical. These naturalistic explanations are also a part of Scientific Theories. “In general, they make statements about the relationship between the observable phenomena.” (Benard, Snipes, Gerould, and Vold, pg. 4) This means that a scientific theory can create a natural explanation through observation of materialistic things, and everyday lives.

Conclusion

In conclusion, both Spiritual Explanation, and Naturalistic Explanations are relevant in both the history, and today’s view on crime. Both have shaped our criminal justice system in some way. Spiritual explanation has shown that criminals do what they do because of some higher belief of power, or Gods, and Naturalistic explanation has shown us that criminals do what they do because of a materialistic thing, or an event pushing them to do so.

References

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